

## 11 The Intersection of Race and Queer Sexuality

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This bibliography is a gathering of works about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals in multiracial relationships and other works that deal with the intersection of sexual and racial identity among gays, lesbians, bisexuals, people of color, and "Whites."

The bulk of literature found here falls into the following distinct categories: (1) biography/autobiography/testimony, (2) literature by therapists and for therapists, and (3) theory and literary analysis, often referred to as cultural studies.

Only a handful of works of literature or film deal directly with interracial gay relationships. The most noteworthy works (which I mention now rather than in the body of the bibliography simply because there are so few examples) are *Vanishing Rooms*, a fine novel by the deceased novelist Melvin Dixon, and the movie *My Beautiful Laundrette*, whose main character is a young gay Pakistani/British male with a White lover whose gang affiliations leave one wondering why these two are together. Both of these works are readily available and treat the subject of gay interracial relationships quite well, given the complexities involved in such relationships.

Most of the resources compiled here are from academic journals and scholarly anthologies. As the compiler of this information, I am the first to acknowledge my lack of sophistication in thoroughly understanding some of these works, but particularly those that fall within the realm of cultural studies. I can only hope that the reader will find these annotations useful as a starting point, and not rely on them as a substitute for reading the original works. I could never claim to fully capture the essence of some of these complex writings with a brief description.

It is clear that the study of gay interracial relationships has a long way to go, be it from the sociological, psychological, historical, or literary perspective. Much of the psychological literature, for example, stresses the importance of this as an area of study and identifies issues

without providing any academic study or analysis. While these works present many creative ideas and arguments and reading this material is indeed worthwhile, all the same there is very little written at the pragmatic level. It was interesting to find, for example, that almost none of these works consist of formal studies that include sampling of populations, analysis of data, or conclusive findings that one could then test and refute or confirm. There is clearly room for further investigation and certainly a need for a deeper understanding.

Allman, Karen Maeda. "Unnatural Boundaries: Mixed Race, Gender, and Sexuality." In *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*, edited by Maria P.P. Root. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996.

This essay explores multiracial, queer identity through the lenses of gender, sex, and race. Arguing that each is a social construct that helps one define the world, the author notes that the "sex/gender system is profoundly and interdependently racialized and racializing; that race is also thoroughly engendered and engendering; and that compulsory heterosexuality depends upon rigidity in gender roles and is reinforced by the promotion of racial purity." Any intersection of race, gender, or sexuality that traverses traditional boundaries has the potential to create a sense of marginalization for the individual who is crossing those boundaries.

Almager, Tomas, Rudiger Busto, Ken Dixon, and Ming-Yeung Lu. "Sleeping with the Enemy? Talking about Men, Race and Relationships." *Out/look*, no. 15 (Winter 1992): 30.

A frank conversation held between four gay men of color—two Latinos, one Asian American, and one African American—all college-educated members of the *Out/look* editorial board, about interracial gay relationships. Among the topics discussed are the unique individual experiences of each person vis-à-vis coming out within the contexts of both their own culture and the dominant culture, and the tension between one's individual sexual desires and the growing pressure to maintain primary relationships within one's own ethnic group. Each participant provides a unique perspective from which to explore how race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation intersect with desire.

Aura, Jan. "Gender Orientation/Case Illustration of Toni: A 19-Year-Old Biracial Man." In *Child and Adolescent Therapy: A Multicultural-Relational Approach*, edited by Faith H. McClure and Edward P. Teyber, 219-250. Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt, Brace College Publishers, 1996.

In this book, intended for mental health practitioners, a model of child/adolescent therapy called the multicultural-relational approach is outlined. This approach recognizes that a plurality of cultural factors and experiences contributes to each individual's subjective worldview. Chapter 8 of this volume tells the story of a client named Toni, a biracial nineteen-year-old, and of his coming to terms with his sexuality and biracial ethnic identity. According to the chapter's author, "The resolution of positive identity formation depends on the ability of a person to feel belonging as an integrated member of various groups (broad social community, ethnic community, lesbian or gay community, friendship network, family, and possibly romantic partnership), while simultaneously maintaining autonomy and a unique sense of self." The author provides a detailed account of sessions held with this client, and how the author helped the client come to understand and accept his sexual and ethnic identity.

Chu, Wei-cheng Raymond. "Some Ethnic Gays Are Coming Home; or The Trouble with Interraciality." *Textual Practice* 11, no. 2 (1997): 219-235.

This essay provides a clear overview of the issues and controversies surrounding interracial romance among gay men, as manifested in various works of literature and film by American and British authors. This is one of several essays falling within the realm of critical theory/cultural studies that addresses the following question: "Is desire by men of color for White men a result of internalized racism and self-hatred?" The author analyzes literary works and feature films illustrating the various angles of the debate, and argues that the issues at play are too complex to be reduced to simplistic explanations and that further study and analysis are needed to fully understand the underlying dynamics of interracial relationships among gay men.

Collins, J. Fuji. "Biracial-Bisexual Individuals: Identity Coming of Age." *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 5, no. 3 (2000): 221-253.

Collins presents a study of the identity development of biracial, bisexual Japanese Americans. Based in grounded theory, the focus of the study is on how Japanese Americans perceive themselves in relation to other individuals, groups, and/or their environment. The

findings show that the degree of support or negative experience within one's social networks plays a primary role in influencing an individual to identify or not identify as biracial. The author also argues that there are parallels between identity development in biracials and bisexuals. The author concludes by pointing out the need to further study the intersection of race, sexual identity, and gender, especially as they relate to individuals who do not fit the "White, middle class" mold.

Connolly, Medira L., and Debra A. Noumair. "The White Girl in Me, the Colored Girl in You, and the Lesbian, in Us: Crossing Boundaries." In *Off White: Readings on Race, Power and Society*, edited by Michelle Fine et al. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Two psychologists, one Black, the other White, both lesbian, engage in a "deeply personal" dialogue on race, gender, and sexuality. They follow a "group relations perspective," which has theoretical roots in psychoanalytic and social systems theories and allows for an understanding of both the irrational and unconscious forces as well as the group processes involved in creating a denigrated other. The authors conclude that projecting and stereotyping are insidious processes and that what must happen to combat them is to accept all aspects of one's identity and to keep one's internal identities in dialogue with each other. Addressing these ultimately helps to combat the "isms": racism, sexism, and heterosexism.

Cutrone, Christopher. "The Child with the Lion: The Utopia of Interracial Intimacy." *GLQ* 6, no. 2 (2000): 249-285.

Full of quotations by writers like Adorno, Foucault, Hegel, and Fanon, this lengthy essay, written by a White gay male artist and writer, is a combination of philosophical and literary treatise on the notions of race and sexuality as they concern gay Black-White interracial intimacy. The author, having himself been attacked for including Black-White erotic content in his work, defends the rights of individuals who wish to cross racial lines and engage in interracial relationships, and calls to task those who argue that the use of Black imagery in essentially White artistic media is used in a racist manner. He argues that his essay "The Child with the Lion" "recognizes how intimate refuge can be found between those who would otherwise be estranged by race."

de Romanet, Jerome. "A Conversation with Melvin Dixon." *Callaloo* 23, no.1 (2000): 84-109.

Published posthumously (both de Romanet and Dixon passed away in the early 1990s), this is a fascinating conversation between professor of English and African American studies Jerome de Romanet and Melvin Dixon, also a professor of English and author of

several critically acclaimed literary works that deal with being gay and African American. A wide variety of issues are touched upon, including the issue of interracial intimacy between Black and White men in Dixon's novel *Vanishing Rooms*; Dixon's thoughts on the international impact of African American writers, particularly James Baldwin; and Dixon's thoughts on the state of the contemporary African American literary scene. This is a fascinating look at Dixon's views and experiences. While it is a lengthy piece, it is engaging to the end.

Foulke, Mary L., and Renee L. Hill. "We Are Not Your Hope for the Future: Being an Interracial Lesbian Family Living in the Present." In *Our Families, Our Values: Snapshots of Queer Kinship*, edited by Adam E. Goss and Amy Adams Squire Strongheart. New York: Haworth Press, 1997.

This is the story of an interracial lesbian couple who describe the many challenges that confront them as they strive to live happy lives. Included in the discussion are descriptions of relations with each woman's family and reactions to the couple's desire to have children. Differences between the two women are acknowledged and celebrated, not the other way around. Accordingly, they argue that "we are all different from the idealized norms, and we all benefit from questioning and dismantling those norms."

Freedman, Estelle B. "The Prison Lesbian: Race, Class and the Construction of the Aggressive Female Homosexual, 1915-1965." In *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History*, edited by Martha Hodes, 423-443. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

This article offers a historical review of the criminological literature on lesbianism in women's prisons and describes how views of it have evolved over the course of the twentieth century. Central to this discussion is the mythology around the Black lesbian in prison. During the first half of the twentieth century, for example, these women were usually described as playing the aggressive, male role and preying on White women, who were not viewed necessarily as lesbians themselves but as potential victims of this pathological behavior. Race thus substituted for gender in women's prisons, according to the authors. They note, however, a shift in emphasis after World War II, and argue that all lesbians became demanized and were portrayed in the criminological literature as menacing social types. By the 1960s, the focus on lesbians in prison had completely shifted from a focus on Black women to all working-class lesbians. An interesting historical look at how

notions of race and class have contributed to shifting views of lesbianism in prison settings.

Greene, Beverly. "Lesbian Women of Color: Triple Jeopardy." In *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Identities in Psychotherapy*, edited by Lillian Comas-Diaz and Beverly Greene. New York: Guilford Press, 1994.

Greene notes that very little mental health research has been done on lesbian women of color and that there is clearly a need for the exploration of the complex interaction between sexual orientation and ethnic and gender identity development. This article provides practitioners with a framework from which to begin looking at lesbians and women of color from a more diverse perspective and at lesbians of color with greater cultural sensitivity. In reviewing some general cultural characteristics of various subgroupings of lesbian women, such as Native American lesbians and Latina lesbians (although it is emphasized that there is much diversity in these communities), Greene discusses the dilemmas associated with interracial relations between women of color and White women. The author concludes by stating that mental health professionals must make themselves aware of the distinct combinations of stressors and psychological demands made on lesbians of color, particularly the potential for isolation, anger, and frustration.

Greene, Beverly, and Nancy Boyd-Franklin. "African American Lesbians: Issues in Couples Therapy." In *Lesbians and Gays in Couples and Families: A Handbook for Therapists*, edited by Joan Laird and Robert Jay Green. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996.

The authors bemoan the lack of research on Black lesbian issues, noting that research on lesbians has typically focused on White, middle-class women. Triple jeopardy, a term applied to these women, refers to being vulnerable to the social discrimination and internalization of all the negative stereotypes traditionally aimed at African Americans, women, and lesbians. In their discussion of the issues related to this group, the authors note that lesbians of color are more likely to be involved in interracial relationships than White women and that lesbian interracial couples face additional challenges such as increased public visibility and family pressure.

Grinker, Roy Richard. *In the Arms of Africa: The Life of Colin M. Turnbull*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

This is a biography of the late English anthropologist, Colin Turnbull. Known for his innovative studies of African tribal societies, he upset his colleagues by ignoring established boundaries set in his field. It was not unusual for him to become highly involved in the lives of the people he studied or to wake up in the arms of one

of his male hosts. He was an Oxford graduate and a homosexual with a Black gay lover named Joe Towles. While his attraction to Towles puzzled his contemporaries, as they didn't see the two as a good match, the author of this biography argues that Towles was an indispensable part of Turnbull's life and that Turnbull loved him dearly. A worthwhile, interesting story.

Hall, Lisa Kahaleole Chan. "Eating Salt." In *Names We Call Home: Autobiography on Racial Identity*, edited by Becky Thompson and Sangeeta Tyagi. New York: Routledge, 1996.

In this revealing autobiographical essay, Lisa Kahaleole Chan Hall takes the reader on an excursion through her multicultural, multiracial life, where we learn about her Hawaiian, American, African, and Chinese roots and her conflicts with the issue of identity. Compounding her conundrum is the fact that her physical features change over time, prompting her friends and acquaintances to question who she is, and she is left to wonder the same. Of particular note is her struggle with labels and her determination to find community. A well-told story of a lesbian woman coming to terms with the various aspects of her multicultural, multiracial self.

Kanuha, Valli. "Compounding the Triple Jeopardy: Battering in Lesbian of Color Relationships." In *Diversity and Complexity in Feminist Therapy*, edited by Laura S. Brown and Maria P.P. Root. New York: Haworth Press, 1990.

The author explores how racism in feminist and lesbian communities plus sexism and internalized oppression in communities of color contribute to the silencing of lesbians of color, especially those in abusive relationships. Acknowledging that the issues facing lesbians of color in violent relationships are complex, confusing, and painful, the author argues that therapists working with lesbians of color must understand these myriad issues, but more importantly they must understand the interface between violence, homophobia, and racism. Of particular interest is a discussion of the role of power dynamics and the use of violence in interracial lesbian relationships.

Kich, George Kitahara. "In the Margins of Sex and Race: Difference, Marginality and Flexibility." In *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*, edited by Maria P.P. Root. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996.

This article describes the experience of identifying as both bisexual and biracial. It also addresses the issue of marginality in relationship to the monoculture and the issue of flexibility, or being comfortable with ambiguity and paradox as a way of life, as well as the similarities of experiences one encounters as a biracial and bisexual

ual individual. The article provides a review of theories related to identity formation. According to the author, "The task is to see past the distorted and cloudy mirror of the majorities, through the crucibles of the struggles, experiences and relatedness of the chorus of the marginalized."

Leslie, Dorian, and Lauren MacNeill. "Double Positive: Lesbians and Race." In *Racism in the Lives of Women: Testimony, Theory, and Guides to Anti-Racist Practice*, edited by Jeanne Adleman and Gloria M. Enguidanos. New York: Haworth Press, 1995.

This article concerns the multiple oppressions confronting lesbians of color and how racism within the lesbian community and homophobia in communities of color impacts these women. It also focuses on identity development and the challenges of facing one's own internalized racism and homophobia. The article concludes with a discussion of interracial relationships and offers to interracial couples strategies for dealing with racism and homophobia.

Moraga, Cherrie. "The Breakdown of the Bicultural Mind." In *Names We Call Home: Autobiography on Racial Identity*, edited by Becky Thompson and Sangeeta Tyagi. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Cherrie Moraga writes about being "mixed-blood" and lesbian, about her Mexican / Indian / Mestiza heritage and her French / Canadian / White heritage. Through a series of vignettes that take the reader from New York to Mexico to Navajo country, she weaves stories about intimate relationships with other women of color and about the different sides of her family. Boldly stating her position, she writes: "I am that raging breed of mixed-blood person who writes to defend a culture that I know is being killed. I am of that endangered culture and of that murderous race, but I am loyal to only one. My mother culture, my mother land, my mother tongue, further back than even she can remember."

Otalvaro-Hormillosa, Gigi. "Racial and Erotic Anxieties: Ambivalent Fetishization from Fanon to Mercer." In *Postcolonial and Queer Theories: Intersections and Essays*, edited by John C. Hawley. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001.

Falling within the realm of cultural studies, this dense article relies heavily on postmodern social theory. In this case, the author uses the work of Frantz Fanon, author of *Black Skin, White Masks*, to argue that the notion of hybridity "creates possibilities for identifications that can lead to cross-race-class-gender-sexuality coalitions in the perpetual struggle against an imperial system that maintains multiple structures of repression in place." The author analyzes a variety of works, including the films of Isaac Julien, whose work deals with gay interracial themes. This article is written primarily

for those academics involved in critical theory, cultural studies, or queer studies.

Pearlman, Sarah F. "Loving across Race and Class Divides: Relational Challenges and the Interracial Lesbian Couple." *Women and Therapy: Couples Therapy: Feminist Perspectives* 19, no. 3 (1996, special issue): 25-36.

More lesbians are finding themselves in interracial relationships and as a result, are often confronted with unique challenges. These include issues of homophobia, racism, and limited social support systems. This article provides narratives of the story of two interracial lesbian couples to illustrate the challenges of dealing with race and class. The author recommends psychotherapeutic care that is sensitive to race, class, and culture. This approach allows for the articulation of perspectives, which reframes and depersonalizes power struggles.

Poon, Maurice Kwong-Lai. "Inter-Racial Same-Sex Abuse: The Vulnerability of Gay Men of Asian Descent in Relationships with Caucasian Men." *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services* 11, no. 4 (2000): 39-67.

Drawing from his experience working for several years with gay Asian men, Poon describes the need for greater understanding of abusive relationships in Asian-White interracial couples. The author notes that as victims of abuse, gay Asian men frequently do not seek help or do anything to end the violence, due to their internalization of cultural shame. The purpose of the article is to examine the issue of abuse and to raise public concern about the matter. The author discusses the risk factors that leave Asian men prone to violence in intimate relationships with White partners.

Scott, Darieck. "Jungle Fever? Black Gay Identity Politics, White Dick and the Utopian Bedroom." *GLQ* 1, no. 3 (1994): 299-321.

This article is set within the framework of cultural studies. Easier to read and more informative than others within this framework, the author confronts the issue of Black gay identity development and the issue of interracial attraction among Black and White men. Through a review of the literary writings and other works, he argues, as have others, that the complexities of human sexuality result in multiple realities and motivations.

Trujillo, Carla. "Confessions of a Chicana Ph.D." *Out/look*, 5, no. 3 (Winter 1992): 23-27.

In this first person narrative, Carla Trujillo discusses the development of her awareness of her own ethnic background as a Chicana, her attraction to women of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, and of the different challenges that come into play when one is in-

volved intimately with someone from one's own race versus someone from another race. She also discusses the issues that arise from class differences. While she argues that there may very well exist a certain degree of self-hatred among people of color who are only attracted to Whites, she also challenges the rhetoric of nationalism and contends that to be attracted to people from different races or classes does not necessarily mean one is full of self-hatred for doing so or has "issues" to resolve.

Weiner-Mahfuz, Lisa. "Organizing 101: A Mixed-Race Feminist in Movements for Social Justice." In *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism*, edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman. New York: Seal Press, 2002.

This is an essay by a lesbian woman of mixed-race heritage—Jewish and Arab—who shares with the reader stories about her family and the tensions experienced as a result of having parents whose cultures and politics are in conflict. She also discusses the many challenges she faces as an individual with roots in two cultures. While on the surface, she can pass as a White woman, she insists on acknowledging her full self. Accordingly, her "struggle and that of other mixed-race people is to not internalize these dualisms—Jewish/Arab Black/White Privilege/Oppression—and become paralyzed by a society that rejects our complexity in the name of keeping things simple and easy to categorize." An insightful look at identity politics.

Williams-Leon, Teresa. "The Convergence of Passing Zones: Multiracial Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals of Asian Descent." In *The Sum of Our Parts: Mixed-Heritage Asian Americans*, edited by Teresa Williams-Leon and Cynthia L. Nakashima. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.

This article deals with how Asian-descent gay, lesbian, and bisexual multiracial individuals deal with what the author refers to as their "converging passing zones" of race and sexuality. It also illustrates how these individuals "perform their social identities and develop strategies of negotiation and navigation within and across social boundaries, transforming their 'passing zones' into 'no passing zones' which are defined as critical spaces of resistance and empowerment." The author's ultimate aim is to argue for the need for alliances among marginalized peoples in the quest for inclusive politics and shared emancipation.

Wu, Judy Tzu-Chun. "Mom Chung of the Fair-Haired Bastards: A Thematic Biography of Doctor Margaret Chung, 1889-1959." Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1998.

This essay provides interesting details of the life of Margaret Chung (1889-1959), whose life unfolds during the transition from the Victorian era to the modern twentieth century in San Francisco's Chinatown. Mom Chung, a doctor, never married and had affairs with White women and engaged in gender bending, but never solidly identified herself as a lesbian. The article examines the historical significance of her life, and explores how this fascinating woman negotiated sex, race, and gender during the early part of the twentieth century.