

important is the fact that their study is based on a detailed examination of the nature of race relations between two of the nation's largest minority groups. For these reasons, *Black-Brown Relations and Stereotypes* is a must read for any student of race relations today.

Acting Black: College, Identity, and the Performance of Race, by **Sarah Susannah Willie**. New York: Routledge, 2003. 210 pp. \$85.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-4159-4409-0. \$22.95 paper. ISBN: 0-4159-4410-4.

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To me, the effort to speak about issues of "space and location" evoked pain. . . . Often when the radical voice speaks about domination we are speaking to those who dominate. (hooks 1990: 145-46)

In the above quotation, bell hooks unpacks the psychological challenge of trying to translate articulately both the personal pain and the need to be heard that confound discussions of race led by blacks. That challenge is often exacerbated within scholarly discourses about race, since there is more of an urgency to apprehend theoretic constructs and extant scholarly literature to facilitate explanations of everyday race-based experiences. This is but one concern addressed by sociology and black studies professor Sarah Susannah Willie in *Acting Black: College, Identity, and the Performance of Race*.

Willie reveals that her book emanated from a one-time invitation to preach at an Episcopalian church she and her family had attended for years in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In that sermon, she spoke fervently of black racial identity within college settings. She decided to pursue this topic for her dissertation, which she completed in the Department of Sociology at Northwestern University.

Acting Black is "based on [interviews with] 55 college-educated African Americans in the Chicago area during 1990 and 1991" (p. 1). Usually studies of this nature include students who are currently enrolled; however

one of the heuristic nuances of Willie's study is that all of the interviewees were alumni of either Northwestern University or Howard University who graduated between 1967 and 1989.

In general, this book is a solid think piece that asks and answers several major investigative questions: (1) Is the respondents' racial sense of themselves influenced by whether they attended a historically black college or university (HBCU) or a historically white college or university (HWCU)?; (2) What is the historical impetus for race relations in the educational system, specifically in collegiate settings?; (3) What does it mean for educated black college alumni to be black in the twentieth century?; (4) Retrospectively speaking, are either HWCUs or HBCUs conducive to the needs of black students?; (5) Is formal (legally and constitutionally upheld) equality supported by informal (general, socially expected) equality?; (6) What does it mean to perform race?

Each of these questions is answered in the ten chapters throughout the book. There are many revealing insights about black college life at HBCUs and HWCUs that could have only been understood from an emic perspective. As a graduate of Howard University and of the University of Cincinnati, I discovered that many of the interviewee's experiences resonated with my own.

Acting Black is a very well-written book that is easily accessible to academic and nonacademic audiences. Although it has several significant limitations, its strengths far outweigh its limitations.

Clearly, its strengths are its conceptual rigor and its methodological consistency. The literature review is expansive and steeped in the most appropriate themes for a book of this nature: civil rights, racial identity in education, and some dramaturgical or performance-related research. Willie unabashedly promotes the work of Howard Winant who professes that race is performative. This is necessary for executing a study whose thesis suggests "for millions of men and women of African descent, going to college is *acting black* (p. 8) [italics in original]. One example of the apropos range of intellectual inquiry is the discussion of mentoring in Chapter 5, which I found especially poignant since it is a recurring concern of blacks at HWCUs and HBCUs. In this discussion, Willie engages in

a brief discussion of the parental roles assumed by black faculty, and she adds to that conversation the students' emotional responses to that paternalism, which were all too often ones of frustration, anger, and affection. This is even more significant given Willie's earlier exploration of the Methodist and Congregationalist foundations of Northwestern University and Howard University, respectively. The conceptual strengths of this book do not stop there. They are further witnessed in vignettes about the confluence between institutional status, professional dividends, and social class issues.

The second strength of *Acting Black* is its methodological consistency. I was impressed that Willie revealed her own identification with this study via her current position as a tenured college professor who had attended a HBCU and HWCU, and as a graduate of Northwestern. She gives voice to her interviewees through frequent excerpts that are supported by the literature and conceptual framework. As a result, it is easy to see that interviewees asserted opinions about "acting out" race or blackness, which uncovered the nature of race as negotiable and performative.

As with any study, the research is not perfect. The biggest concern I have is with the method employed. One thing that was immediately disturbing to me was the fact that the method chapter was missing. Later, I found it buried in the appendix. That placement clearly reduced its importance to the book, yet it is foundationally tied to the crux of this qualitative investigation. Another nagging concern of the book is that the interviews are 12 years old. Doesn't the author suspect things have changed since 1990 or 1991? Doesn't the author realize that the post-1991 literature she employs to explore the performance of race in college settings may be unable to explain what was happening in 1991? A third concern is the fact that the sample came from Howard and Northwestern University alumni living in the Chicago area. How do we know that Chicago residents do not have a skewed view of Northwestern (in particular since it is so close to Chicago) or Howard University? The final methodological issue is the interview length. Two-thirds of the interviews were in person and the rest of the interviews were conducted via telephone.

Though I am aware of that, this seems drastically to imbalance the study, since the interviews lasted between 25 minutes and 3 hours. That range is much too wide.

Acting Black is a bold and challenging text that would be suitable as a primary text for an upper-level undergraduate or any graduate course on race, education, and identity. Regardless of its omissions or limitations, this book is an important text that should be read by anyone interested in the confluence between race and identity in college settings. This book may very well introduce to the discipline a different way to talk about acting black or the performance of race.

Reference

hooks, bell. 1990. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press.

Blue Collar Bayou: Louisiana Cajuns in the New Economy of Ethnicity, by **Jacques M. Henry** and **Carl L. Bankston III**. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002. 245 pp. \$81.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-275-97817-6.

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We have known for 25 years, since Gans' work on symbolic ethnicity, that ethnicity for many white ethnics is largely a matter of choice: something to be brought out for holidays and special occasions, but not of overwhelming import in everyday life. The crucibles of modernization and suburbanization have raised race and submerged ethnicity, and so whiteness rather than white ethnicity has become the important social fact. But what exactly has caused suburbanization to have this effect? Might different modes of incorporation into the suburbs lead to different outcomes? And is modernization homogenizing, or can it encourage ethnic revival? The case of the Louisiana Cajuns allows us to begin to answer such questions. Yet it is a case full of paradoxes.

For much of their history, Cajuns were rivaled by outsiders and stereotyped for their alleged rural backwardness. This outsider hostility led to tight-knit communities and a suspicion of outsiders and their ways. Cajuns