

BOOK REVIEW/ COMPTE RENDU

Patterson, Orlando, ed., with Ethan Fosse. *The Cultural Matrix: Understanding Black Youth*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2015. 675 pp., \$45.00 hardcover (9780674728752)

This edited collection of essays is a comprehensive contribution to the study of Black youth culture in the United States. It investigates the interaction of structural factors and cultural knowledge in the lives of Black youth. This interdisciplinary collection is organized into 5 distinctive sections. The first section presents the theoretical foundations and the relevant literature overarching the book, the second section explores American Black youth cultural trends, the third section focuses on inner-city neighbourhoods, the fourth section examines the cultural structuring of gender conflicts, and the final section discusses culture, society and morality. Patterson and Fosse, the editors of the book, present a brief overview of all the essays in the introduction.

The first section seeks to present a complex sociocultural configuration encompassing the social, cultural, legal, economical, moral, psychological, and political factors affecting Black youth. Patterson authors the two chapters of the first section where he provides a conceptual framework and a literature review to situate the general orientation of the book. The first chapter includes a conceptual discussion about cultural knowledge, cultural practices and their contextual implications. For instance, culture is defined as involving two interconnected sets of processes: constituted cultural knowledge (commonly shared in a network) and the pragmatic usage of such knowledge (25). These concepts are then applied to the American context where Black youth lack opportunities to acquire constituted and pragmatic knowledge because they often attend inadequate schools, live in segregated neighbourhoods, and learn about the dominant mainstream middle-class via popular media. In the following chapter, we can find an extensive account of several cultural and structural processes that circumscribe the development of Black youth culture. For example, a synthesis of the relationships between cultural trends and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the American mainstream culture, the Black middle-class, the Black proletariat, the street, hip-hop culture, youth and crime violence in a toxic environment, and youth unemployment are discussed. To substantiate this literature

review, Patterson draws from past to recent literature, from qualitative to quantitative research, from critical to mainstream sociology, and from the social sciences to the natural sciences.

The second section of the book includes two chapters, which discuss African American youth's values, norms and aesthetic contributions. In the third chapter, using quantitative data, Fosse demonstrates how the structural disconnection of American youth is first and foremost a cultural phenomena, not an economic or demographic phenomena. In the following chapter, Wayne Marshall provides a detailed historical account of hip-hop to highlight how hip-hop practitioners continue to innovate aesthetically despite technological, economical and sociocultural changes.

The third section of the book is about the interaction of cultural and social processes in urban neighbourhoods. Robert J. Sampson examines in chapter 5 the relationship between altruism, spatial configuration, time, culture and social structures. Using data from two experimental studies and a survey, the author found that there is a community structure to cultural practices. Peter Rosenblatt, Kathryn Edin and Queenie Zhu analyze in chapter 6 the strategies that teenagers use to create an alternative identity and avoid getting "caught up" in violence and crime. Drawing from a 2010 qualitative study conducted in Baltimore, the authors found that those who create a strong alternative identity are more likely to succeed in avoiding "the streets". In chapter 7, Van C. Tran compares second generation West Indians to native Blacks living in New York to examine the interaction between culture and structure in inner-city neighbourhoods. Using quantitative and qualitative data, the author demonstrates that while both groups experience racial segregation, West Indians live in neighbourhoods with lower levels of concentrated poverty and use different cultural strategies. Using three waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), Rajeev Dehejia, Thomas DeLeire, Erzo F.P. Luttmer and Josh Mitchell analyse quantitatively the long-term negative effects of living in a poor neighbourhood and how involvement with religious and social organizations can offset these negative effects. The authors found significant long-term effects of childhood disadvantages in adulthood as well as the substantial buffering effect of religion on several negative outcomes.

The fourth section discusses cultural processes and gender. In chapter 9, drawing from ethnographic data, Joseph C. Krupnick and Christopher Winship argue that gang members use "symbolic substitutions" to decrease the likelihood of physical violence while simultaneously maintaining honor, respect and street "creds". In chapter 10, Sudhir Venkatesh sheds light on informal conflict resolution by respected members of the community, outside the state apparatus. Using a qualitative case study,

Venkatesh illustrates how the involvement of a mediator was effective to diffuse a violent situation and prevent escalation. In chapter 11, Jody Miller argues that a gendered analysis is necessary in urban sociology. Miller presents a reflection of how African American men's display of masculinity and exclusion from mainstream society are entangled with the mistreatment of young Black women.

The fifth section of the book is about culture and morality. In Chapter 12 Simone Ispa-Landa examines, with ethnographic data, how African American students from inner-city neighbourhoods acquired advocacy skills and self-assertion strategies when they were bussed to middle-class suburban schools. In chapter 13, Patterson and Jacqueline Rivers present the findings of a study about the impact of ABC: a national cultural and attitudinal five-week training program that aimed to help long-term unemployed youth reintegrate the labour market. Using observation and interviews, the authors investigate how the participants explain their difficulties to find or maintain employment and their cultural and attitudinal changes following the ABC Program. In chapter 14, Andrew Clark-west, Alexandra A. Killewald and Robert G. Wood discuss the findings of an experimental evaluation of the Building Strong Families (BSF) program, which involved education about relationships with trained facilitators to couples that had recently become parents or were expecting a child. Their analysis illustrates how structural and cultural factors can contribute to unexpected outcomes when participants are highly disadvantaged. In chapter 15, James E. Rosenbaum, Jennifer Stephan, Janet Rosenbaum, Amy E. Foran and Pam Schuetz present how community colleges can improve the graduation rates of non-traditional students. Following the analysis of interviews, observation and surveys with students, the researchers described the procedures that promote success for non-traditional students and how universities can implement them to promote perseverance and higher completion rates, including with African American students. In Chapter 16, Tommie Shelby presents a reflection about cultural and moral reform in poor inner-city neighbourhoods. The author discusses how cultural reform should be approached among urban poor Black if we take into account liberal-egalitarian values and the self-respect of urban poor residents. Finally, Patterson and Fosse summarize what has been learned throughout the book in the conclusion. Socioeconomic conditions, Black youth subjectivity and agency, social policy, and racial inequality are the recurring themes found in the essays of this book.

This book is a unique contribution because of its interdisciplinary nature and an effort to provide a breadth of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of Black youth culture in the United States. This

collection of essays provides empirical evidence with quantitative, qualitative, mix-methods, longitudinal and cross sectional studies from the humanities and the social sciences. Most definitely, I would recommend this book for undergraduate and graduate courses in sociology of culture, sociology of race and ethnicity, social inequality, crime and the criminal justice system, sociology of youth, and urban sociology.

McMaster University

Johanne Jean-Pierre

Johanne Jean-Pierre is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at McMaster University. Her dissertation is a qualitative inquiry of Franco-Ontarian and Quebec English-speaking postsecondary students' identity processes, symbolic boundaries and social status. Her research interests include education, inequality, race, ethnicity, language, and culture.