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Book Review. There Goes the Neighborhood: Racial, Ethnic, and Class Tensions in Four Chicago Neighborhoods and Their Meaning for America by William Julius Wilson and Richard P. Taub

Jeannine Bell

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the errant question), suggest that there are communication difficulties with the spirit world, or simply abandon the topic.

Practitioners are not alone in their artfulness. Clients contribute not only to unproblematic sequences (with their confirmations), but also engage in tactics that aid in resolving troublesome sequences. For one thing, they seldom, if ever, challenge their psychics when a sequence goes awry. Additionally, they are very circumspect when essentially denying a practitioner’s errant proposal, providing corrections that are unmarked rather than overt, delaying their responses in a way that permits psychics to reformulate or pursue a different line of questioning, or withholding disconfirmations altogether.

This book is of relevance to conversation analysts, discursive psychologists, ethnographers, and also a wider audience. Social psychologists interested in persuasion and influence or identity can learn from the social organizational perspective of Wooffitt, as can social scientists concerned with occult experiences of many kinds (spiritualism, etc.), the people and groups who have them, or the theories that attempt to explain them.

I found Wooffitt’s discussion of the critiques concerning psychic discourse as based on the notion of “cold reading” particularly interesting. The idea is that if psychics prepare the setting properly, and if they flatter the sitter, appear confident, and listen carefully, they can make snap articulations and seduce the sitter into belief in the practitioner’s ability. On the other side of the table, sitters, like everyone, are predisposed to seek coherence even when presented with anomalous information, and this sense-making tendency also lends to the credence of a given séance. The cold reading theory suggests a kind of automatic cognitive processing on the part of participants, and is more than a little like the idea that Malcolm Gladwell has popularized in Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking (2005). Wooffitt points out, however, that the cold reading account ignores the ways in which practitioner and sitter deal with one another in interaction, and, through their contingent use of linguistic practices, collaboratively assemble the appearance of psychic communion with the dead.
The authors suggest that respondents manifested myriad responses to their neighborhoods' ethnic shifts. Beltway was able to remain majority white because residents created social networks and community-based institutions which allowed them to resist the influx of minorities. Though this is treated as a positive use of voice, one wonders whether minorities who attempted to move in would consider it as benign. Unfortunately, in this book we do not hear from them. The use of "voice" is described as less successful in Dover and Archer Park as the existing white-dominated community organizations' struggles to incorporate Latino newcomers were complicated by white resistance to Latino involvement, and language and cultural barriers. The African-American neighborhood was portrayed as the most stable of the four, with little exit, less racial tension, and a high degree of loyalty felt by residents.

Another one of the authors' aims was to evaluate race relations in the urban landscape. They provide insight into the dynamics of neighborhood demographic change and ethnic antagonism resulting from the racial mix created by significant Latino immigration. In one neighborhood, whites completely vacated the neighborhood after Latinos moved in. In two other neighborhoods, whites remained, with some tolerating and others befriending the newcomers. Overall, however, white resentment regarding the changing character of the neighborhood and language posed significant barriers to the full integration of whites and Latinos.

With respect to African Americans, an even more dispiriting picture emerges as neither whites nor Latinos were described as showing even a modicum of acceptance toward the paucity of blacks who lived in integrated settings. For instance in Beltway, where the authors reported that the blacks represented less than 1% of the population, several whites quoted attributed the decline of the neighborhood, and even the city, to "the blacks." Latinos manifested similar antipathy toward African Americans. In Dover, the authors reported that one black family had moved in, but despite police protection "Mexicans ran them out" (p. 209).

Urban dwellers' negative views of African Americans were captured vividly in the book's description of coalition building between white and Latino parents. Though they had little in common before, the two groups were able put aside their differences when faced with the threat of sending their children, who were attending overcrowded schools, to underutilized ones "in a mostly black area" (p. 78). Such behavior was not especially surprising, given attitudinal similarities between Latinos and whites. Like the whites, the Latinos interviewed expressed anti-black sentiments. They were anxious to distinguish themselves from African Americans, whom they viewed synonymously with violence, poverty, and crime.

The richness with which Wilson and Taub were able to capture intergroup relations may stem from their methodology. Rather than using survey research, as is traditional in studies of this type, the authors sent teams of graduate student researchers into each neighborhood to conduct interviews and act as participant observers. While this approach was able to capture anecdotes that a survey might have missed (like references to "niggers" and "spics" ruining the city [p. 24]), lack of breadth was a downside. For instance, though the book indicates that each neighborhood contained some African Americans, the book did not describe any contact with blacks in any neighborhood, save the majority black neighborhood.

This organized and well-written book provides an interesting and complex picture of the dynamics of urban racial interaction and neighborhood change. Wilson and Taub have offered an especially prescient, if slightly incomplete story of the prospects for housing integration, given the changes posed by increases in Latino immigration. This is an important book, not just because of the implications it has for housing policy, but as a cautionary tale regarding ethnic antagonism in the neighborhoods which make up the cities left behind.