

Palestinians obviously were not responsible for the Holocaust. Clearly, perceptions of victimization limit the likelihood of feelings of collective guilt.

The importance of feelings of injustice and of ingroup victimization, however, may raise questions not addressed in these studies—such as regarding attributions of collective guilt in the legal sense as a political strategy. Frankly, when I was asked to review the book, it never occurred to me that the *collective guilt* in the title referred to a phenomenon of group psychology, because the term is much more often used in attempts to justify disfavoring members of one group now on the grounds that their group committed crimes in the past. Yet groups with long histories of interaction are likely to have had periods in which each has perpetrated atrocities against the other, and feelings of injustice are apt to be mutual. To be more concrete, insisting that Hutus accept collective guilt for the genocide of Tutsis in the 1990s ignores the genocide of Hutus by Tutsis a generation earlier. Something similar may be said about the Balkans. If Serbs were the major perpetrators in the 1990s, they were the greatest victims in the far worse events of the 1940s, so that demands for Serb collective guilt for the 1990s amount to demands that the children and grandchildren of genocide victims apologize to the children and grandchildren of perpetrators. Or so, at least, they will think. In such cases, German remorse for the Holocaust is an inapposite comparison, because it is too clear cut: It is not possible to find times in which Jews had victimized Germans.

That this study does not consider the politics of legal guilt attributions weakens its normative force. Nevertheless, as a set of studies of conditions under which people assign themselves guilt as “perpetrators” for crimes committed not by themselves but by their group, the volume has much to recommend it.

**Creole Economics: Caribbean Cunning under the French Flag.** Katherine E. Browne. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004. 291 pp.

**AISHA KHAN**

New York University

In *Creole Economics*, Katherine Browne convincingly demonstrates the necessary relevance of cultural values, and their practice on the ground, in analyses of economic activity. Focusing on the informal economy, Browne argues that “most people, including scholars, do not associate economic behavior with cultural patterns” (p. 15) and, thus, miss the meaning and measure of the informal sector in contemporary society. A key consequence is that development projects and planning efforts are less (or not) effective. One lesson of *Creole Economics* is that rather than the failure of inferior cultures in explaining why economic development does not always work as metropolitan models suggest it should (a still-vibrant saw among many policy makers), it is neglect of the “irreducible complexities of local meaning

and practice” (p. xiii) that hinders proper understanding and thus remedy.

Browne’s entree into these issues is through what she calls “creole economics,” culturally influenced forms of local economic strategies in Martinique that sidestep the legal claims of the French state (pp. 4, 48). A *department* of France, Martinique remains politically and economically dependent. For Martiniquais of color, an additional consequence of this dependence is a racial hierarchy that devalues them and excludes them from being fully “French.” Browne is interested in the ways that creole economics, and its associated cultural values and psychological motivations, both “strain the relationship with France and relieve those strains” (p. 10), as people choose certain paths of economic noncompliance.

The cornerstone of creole economics is the *debrouillard*; in France, it is someone who is smart, self-reliant, and resourceful (p. 101), but in Martinique, it is someone “economically cunning and resourceful in unorthodox ways” (p. 11). Deriving from the slave plantation, Browne argues, *debrouillardism* calls on cleverness as an effective means of survival in the face of superior power. Yet there is a moral imperative, as well, because *debrouillardism* is *pas grave* (not serious). One might vend clothes from a suitcase or be an engineer moonlighting on the weekends, but criminal behavior causing victimization is outside this concept. Emphasis is on demonstrating cunning, which requires public, visible performance to accrue cultural capital. As such, *debrouillardism* fulfills the Martiniquais cultural-psychological need for autonomy, status, and respect, in addition to meeting economic needs.

Given its slave antecedents and its contemporary configuration, Browne interprets creole economics, following Homi Bhabha, as a subversive “third space” (p. 100) lying between two distinct spheres, French hegemony and Martiniquais “sense of dispossession” (pp. 84, 100), in which escaping the rules and asserting cultural difference occur. Not all Martiniquais, however, valorize *debrouillardism*. Browne divides interviewees into defenders, relativists, and objectors. The latter tend to be Christians, high-income locals (Afro-Creoles and *bekes*, or whites), or French metropolitans living in Martinique. These schisms remind us that informal economies are not confined among the poor; they link the entire society in buyer–seller dyads. Yet dyads illuminate the apparent reinforcement of patron–client hierarchies, in which the affluent seem to offer comparatively little to others yet receive many informal economy services from them.

Men predominate in creole economics. Browne explains this in terms of the Caribbean trope of reputation and respectability: Afro-Creole men’s essential tension is with white bosses, so *debrouillardism* is an effective strategy to assert autonomy and cunning and gain reputation. Afro-Creole women’s essential tension is with men, so it is more compelling for them to become independent financially, not through the risky business of cunning but by penetrating the formal economy. The relatively few women who do work “off the books” interpret it as aimed toward family and

household, which signals respectability. Although Browne shows that class is marked by gender distinctions, she might have pressed gender more vigorously for the significance of class differences. Doing so would illuminate those female debrouillards who do not have “regular jobs” (p. 186) and “relate to the satisfaction so many men describe” (p. 204).

Browne’s focus on “Afro-Creole” Martiniquais leaves out bekes and unnamed “other small minorities” (p. 15)—the former because they declined to be interviewed and the latter because her argument hinges on historical perspectives from slavery. Yet given its analysis, this book helps us to ask other important questions about creolization. For example, because other Martiniquais are also culturally “creole” in some respect, might there be additional contexts or modes of creolization figuring into creole economics? Beke men, too, in their own way, may also strive for the reputation values of creole economics. Cunning in a plantation environment makes good sense, yet if cunning is culturally recognized in Martinique, then it may also encompass bekes and others in a variety of manifestations. And if not, the question of where the boundaries (cultural, ideological) lie is a valuable one, as well.

Persuasive and engagingly written, *Creole Economics* should be required reading in anthropology, economics, and Caribbean Studies courses.

**Breaking the Code of Good Intentions: Everyday Forms of Whiteness.** Melanie E. L. Bush. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004. 328 pp.

#### NOEL IGNATIEV

Massachusetts College of Art

This book explores how whiteness continues to exert hegemony over U.S. life and how that hegemony could be undermined. It focuses on Brooklyn College, which is a large public institution with an ethnically and racially diverse student body. Melanie Bush’s outlook is shaped by her years of experience in social justice and antiwar movements and her study of world systems theory. The research on which the book is based was carried out between 1998 and 2000, and consists of written surveys of opinion of undergraduate and graduate students across the college, discussions with small focus groups of students and faculty and staff members, and her observations as a participant in campus activities.

Chapter 1 lays out the theoretical conceptions underlying the study. Her premise is that racial attitudes influence social structures and are in turn influenced by them; much of her attention is devoted to examining the areas in which the attitudes and structures do and do not coincide. Bush locates her study within the critical scholarship on whiteness, aligning herself with those who hold that whiteness was constructed as a tool of domination; consequently, she is dubious about efforts to forge a positive white identity.

Chapter 2 explores students’ understandings of the meaning of whiteness. How do Jews, Italians, Latinos, and others for whom ethnicity may have meaning position themselves in relation to whiteness? How do they see the advantages of being white? We hear the students’ voices responding to her questions, for example: “I never grew up around white people, only Turkish, Russian, U.S.-born Jews, Pakistanis, Blacks, Spanish, Christians, ‘crazy’ lesbians, Middle Eastern people” (p. 63). Some think “Brooklyn” is a category alongside Black or Hispanic.

Chapter 3 examines U.S. identity in relation to race. This is a topic of special contemporary relevance. A great deal has happened since Malcolm X, speaking for millions, declared himself not an “American” but one of the victims of “Americanism.” To what degree do black and white Brooklynites, native born and foreign born, consider themselves citizens and share views toward Arabs, Muslims, and illegal immigrants, as well as attitudes toward U.S. democracy and opportunity? As it turns out, more than was the case and less than the defenders of the status quo might hope.

Chapter 4 explores the rules of engagement: What sort of conduct is considered acceptable among whites when dealing with members of “other races”? This is the area many students regard as the most crucial, because it deals with their personal conduct in a direct way. With whom do they socialize, and whom do they marry? According to the survey, only 22.8 percent of U.S.-born whites now say they disapprove of “interracial” marriage (more than other groups, but still low compared to a generation ago [p. 63]). Perhaps as significant, nearly all seem to view the line as natural, even when they are willing to cross it.

Who is to blame for poverty and the racial gap is the topic of Chapter 5, and here the self-contradictions among her subjects are flagrant. Sixty percent of U.S.-born white respondents agree that people of color are discriminated against when applying for jobs, housing, and when approached by the police, yet most feel that poverty is still largely the fault of the poor. It is evident that many people are in denial (pp. 76–187).

Chapter 6 is called “Cracks in the Wall of Whiteness.” After recapitulating the various mechanisms that reinforce the status quo, it points to bases for potential challenge. Among these are the persistence of democratic ideals, the realization by some whites that they, too, may suffer the effects of programs ostensibly aimed at cutting services to people of color, and growing financial instability and hardship in the country as a whole. Bush stresses education as a means of weakening the grip of whiteness; foremost among her recommendations for the academy is curricular reform.

Bush brings to her work a keen ear for her subjects and clear writing. If there is a shortcoming in the work, it lies in the author’s overreliance on what people say as distinct from what they do. But then, what else could we expect from a study carried out in a period characterized by the absence of mass movements that could offer starting