would be a welcome addition to the graduate classroom in classes on poverty and inequality.

The Ethnic Project: Transforming Racial Fiction into Ethnic Factions. By Vilna Bashi Treitler. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013. Pp. xii+225.

Ashley "Woody" Doane
University of Hartford

We all too infrequently see books that take on the big issues in the study of race and ethnicity. This is not the case with *The Ethnic Project: Transforming Racial Fiction into Ethnic Factions*. Here, author Vilna Bashi Treitler attempts nothing less than a new reading of the racial-ethnic history of the United States. She addresses the relationship between race and ethnicity, one that has never been satisfactorily addressed in American sociology, and links it to a theory of racialization, ethnic assertion, and group incorporation/mobility in the context of a system of stratification in which race interacts with class to produce a durable system of inequality and exploitation. And the focus of the work is the long-discussed question about why some groups have been more successful than others in the U.S. racial hierarchy. Moreover, all this is done with an emphasis upon the social/political construction of race and ethnicity.

At the core of Bashi Treitler's theory is the "ethnic project" (p. 4)—group social mobilization "to foster a perception of themselves as 'different' from the bottom and 'similar' to the top" of the racial hierarchy. Groups undertake "ethnic 'marketing' campaigns" (p. 11) to raise the status of the group by using an invented or reinvented identity to increase their acceptability to the dominant group while at the same time distancing the group—by whatever means necessary—from those beneath them. But what is important about this process for Bashi Treitler is that, while an individual group's stock may improve, the overall racial order remains unchallenged. And in practice, successful or even partially successful ethnic projects are undertaken, as Bashi Treitler quotes Toni Morrison (p. 14), "on the backs of blacks."

While there is more to the ethnic project framework than can be described in this review, the centerpiece of the book is the application of the framework to the experiences of groups. Bashi Treitler begins with what she terms (p. 51) the "first ethnic projects," the successive colonization of Ireland, the conquest of Native Americans, and the enslavement of Africans. What slowly emerged from this, of course, was the U.S. racial order—the creation of "blackness" and "whiteness"—and the centuries of torment and conflict that would follow. And as Bashi Treitler also (properly, in my view) observes, one function of this first ethnic project was to knit together the English-American, white elite and working classes to the benefit of both groups but to the greater benefit of the elite.

This racial hierarchy then provided the context for the introduction and incorporation of other groups. In a narrative that is set in strong contradistinction to the "melting pot," Bashi Treitler successively analyzes "successful" ethnic projects (Irish, Italians, Jews, and Chinese) in chapter 4, "struggling" ethnic projects (Native Americans, Mexicans, and Afro-Caribbeans) in chapter 5, and a "failed" ethnic project (African-Americans) in chapter 6. While the analyses are necessarily concise and the reader may not agree with every interpretation, the overall argument is both cogent and persuasive. And once again we see that, while the location of individual groups may rise and fall, the overall logic of the U.S. racial order continues.

In my view, one of the strengths of this book is Bashi Treitler's consistent and often brilliant weaving of the social construction of race and ethnicity throughout her analysis. From the beginning, she demonstrates that these social categories are created through law, census categories, practice, and consensus, and that boundaries and narratives are constantly being recreated. African-Americans, "whites," Native Americans, and "Latinos" all possess substantial mixtures of ancestry, but the system of racial categories remained even when the "racial science" of the 19th and early 20th centuries collapsed. I particularly like the section "Naming African Americans" (pp. 144–49), in which Bashi Treitler analyzes the ongoing African-American search for a racial-ethnic label. In fact, I plan to use it with my students in the coming semester.

While my evaluation of *The Ethnic Project* is overwhelmingly positive, I do have some criticisms. First, I think that Bashi Treitler overreaches in her assessment of the low entry position of the Irish and Italians—in part by relying on narrow cases of contact in New York City and Louisiana. While both groups were racialized, oppressed, and excluded, it is an overstatement to say, as Treitler does (p. 9), that they "started at the bottom" of the racial hierarchy. Neither group was really at risk of being conflated with blacks—who were truly at the bottom. At the same time, I do not think that this at all undermines her overall argument. Second, I think that the analysis needs more consistent treatment of the "ethnic project" of the dominant group. While the book gets off to a promising beginning on this point, the incorporation of groups such as the Irish, Italians, and Jews were not merely a matter of acceptance but also a question of benefit for the dominant group—an "ethnic project." Without expanding its boundaries from the original Anglo-American core, the dominant group would long ago have become the minority—instead of in 2050. Finally, I would like to see the author engage with other visions of the racial-ethnic future of the United States, most notably Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's "Latin Americanization thesis" (*Racism without Racists* [Rowman and Littlefield, 2003]) and George Yancey's "black/nonblack divide" (*Who Is White? Latinos, Asians, and the New Black/Nonblack Divide* [Lynne Rienner, 2003]). How does Bashi Treitler's "ethnic project" framework measure up against these alternative visions?

These criticisms notwithstanding, I think that *The Ethnic Project* is an outstanding work that makes an important contribution to our understand-

ing of the past and present racial history of the United States. The book is very well written (Bashi Treitler's prose is a delight to read) and meticulously researched. In fact, my reading of the book was repeatedly slowed by careful examination of the endnotes and compilation of a list of resources for future reading. *The Ethnic Project* should definitely be part of the conversation as we press forward with the task of understanding race in the United States.

Flawed System/Flawed Self: Job Searching and Unemployment Experiences. By Ofer Sharone. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. Pp. x+228. $27.50 (paper).

Jill Ann Harrison
University of Oregon

In *Flawed System/Flawed Self*, Ofer Sharone presents an in-depth exploration of the challenging work that unemployed people engage in as they set about to find a new job. Using ethnographic data collected at job-search organizations in both the United States and Israel, he shows how the day-to-day experiences and outcomes of unemployment vary among the three groups of workers he studied: white-collar workers in the United States, white-collar workers in Israel, and blue-collar workers in the United States. American white-collar workers blamed themselves for their failed job searches and suffered from debilitating self-doubt and declines in self-esteem. Israeli white-collar job seekers blamed the employment system, and while they felt frustrated, their self-worth was kept intact. American blue-collar job seekers' experiences resembled the Israeli white-collar experience, which undercuts the potential explanatory power held by the ethos of American individualism—the dominant cultural belief that outcomes are product of one's own actions. What, exactly, explains these variations? This question is the central inquiry around which Sharone constructs his compelling analysis.

To make sense of the variations in unemployment experiences, Sharone uses Michael Burawoy's theory of social games (*Manufacturing Consent* [University of Chicago Press, 1979]). The goal of using the games metaphor is to link the way that social actors go about accomplishing goals—here, finding a job—to the institutional contexts that shape them. These strategies become the "games" that are played.

He first provides an analysis of American white-collar workers and what he terms "the American chemistry game." Chemistry refers to feelings of connection or "fit" with a potential employer. In this game, skills are necessary for being granted an interview, but "the person behind the skills" is more important to landing the job. Fit is typically assessed by a company's hiring manager through resumes, cover letters, and in-person interviews. His participants describe the all-consuming work of tweaking and perfecting cover letters and resumes, tailoring each to individual job postings.