

directly and quite rhythmically about ethnicity and creative musical expressions, community institutions, and cultural influences of Puerto Rican, Dominican, Trinidadian, and Haitian immigrant communities. The editors cannot be faulted for their selection of materials, and point to a myriad of topics for further research on African diasporic communities and the music they create.

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William G. Bowen and Derek Bok. *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions.* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998). 472 pp., \$24.95 cloth.

The metaphor conveyed in the title, *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*, captures the undercurrents, uncharted obstructions, and twists and turns as they unfold through the experiences and research of two captains who have navigated the mysteries of their journey through Affirmative Action in higher education.

Bowen and Bok's study of the long-term consequences of considering race in college and university admissions is drawn from a college and beyond database built by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundations consisting of more than 45,000 students. It is the most comprehensive statistically significant study of Affirmative Action to date.

The research focus is an analysis of data from 28 select colleges and universities. The cohort sets consisted of data collected the Fall of 1951, Fall 1976 and Fall of 1989. The database from the 1976 and 1989 cohorts recorded demographic information on race, sex, SAT scores, rank in high school class, college majors, grades, and extra-curricular activities. Later surveys were conducted to ascertain advanced degrees earned, employment sector occupation, income, marital status, number of children, civic activities, and attitudes about their college experiences. In addition, surveys of the

1989 matriculants included data on interaction with other races during and after college, political views, and geographic residency. The sample response rates were exceeding 80% for the 1976 matriculants and 84% for the 1989 matriculants.

The college and beyond cohorts included liberal arts and research institutions from across the United States. The institutions were divided into three groups based on selectivity of admissions according to the mean combined SAT scores of the freshman cohorts, SEL1: SAT 1250 or higher, SEL2: 1125-1249 and SEL3: SAT below 1150.

The book focuses on highly selective schools primarily because race-sensitive admissions are only an issue at institutions that must choose applicants from large numbers of well-qualified applicants. Twenty to thirty percent of higher education institutions in the nation receive more applications than there are seats, therefore the authors contend that “race” is used as an admission criteria most often at these institutions. Although the major concentration of this work is on African Americans, *The Shape of the River* does include some data about Hispanics and Native and Asian Americans because these groups are also affected by race-sensitive admissions. As a result, the authors are able to provide some significant discussion of the quality of interactions among students across racial, ethnic, and social class lines as well as political persuasions and region of residence.

The authors found that “minority” students performed well academically at institutions where the combined average SAT scores were 1250 or higher and graduated at a higher rate than Whites and Blacks at other Division 1 universities. SAT scores were found not to be accurate predictors of success for black students in attaining advanced degrees. Family background, i.e. education/socio-economic level, was found to be a better predictor of success than SAT scores.

Bowen and Bok further found that socio-economic origins and the selectivity of schools that a student attends are more strongly associated with future earnings than SAT scores. In addition, SAT scores had no power to predict future civic leadership or satisfaction with college experience or life in general.

The research design fails to explain why black stu-

dents with the same SAT scores, educational background, and other qualifications as white students under-perform as a group as measured by the college grades received. However, the authors theorize that poor high school education, poor study techniques, and continuing stereotyping of Blacks in college may explain the difference. It is important to note that the academic records don't reflect and the research design has no way of measuring professor bias toward African American students.

The Shape of the River is the most comprehensive and thorough research accomplished to date on the subject of the long-term consequences of considering race in college admissions. The research design is creative and scientific. Although there remain some lingering questions on why African Americans with similar backgrounds under-perform when compared to white Americans, this is a book that should be read by all scholars of Affirmative Action. It could be profitably used as additional reading for classes in the area of Civil Rights.

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Lean'tin L. Bracks. *Writings on Black Women of the Diaspora: History, Language, and Identity. Crosscurrents in African American History, Vol I.* (New York: Garland, 1998). xii, 139 pp., \$39.00 cloth.

In her "Preface" to this study, Lean'tin Bracks describes her purpose as being "to describe a model which may provide for today's black woman a means to take control of her destiny by retrieving her Afrocentric legacy from the obscured past" (xi). This model, which she applies through discussions of *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (1831), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1988), Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), and Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* (1984), is tripartite: "historical awareness, attention to linguistic pattern, and sensitivity to stereotypes in the dominant culture" (xi).