

Week 2: The Project Description

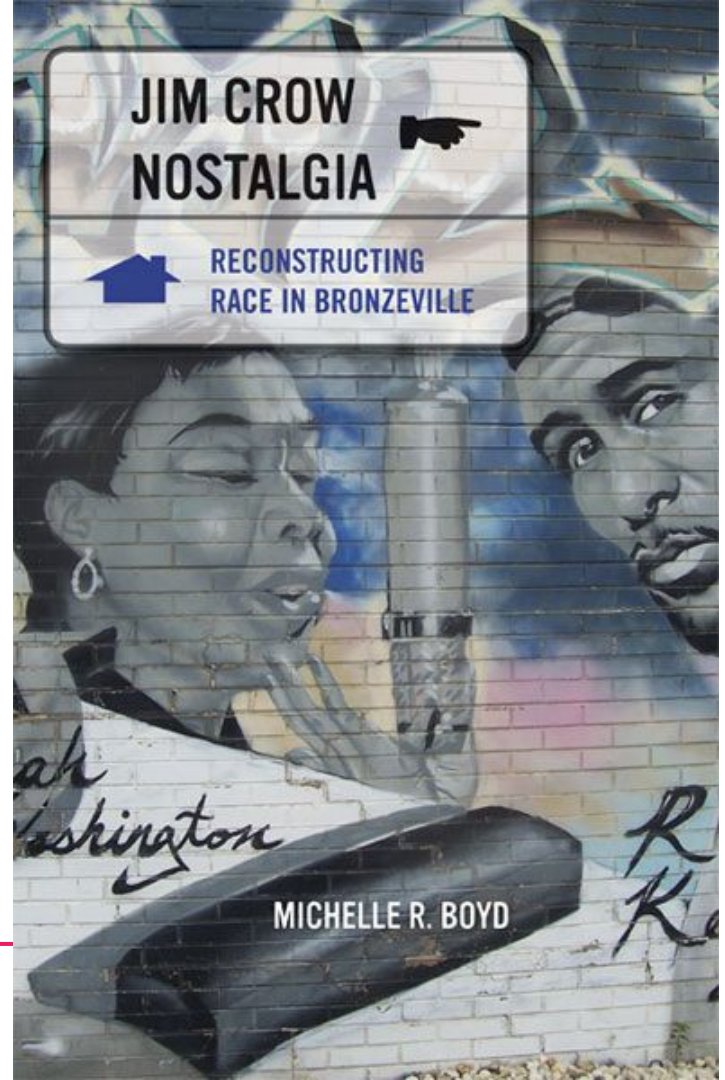
The work of the project description:

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- Provides a detailed overview of your manuscript
- Explains why your project is important
- Explains why your book should exist as a book (as opposed to a series of articles)
- Tells a story
- Explains how your project addresses a problem or question, how it fills a gap in an existing conversation or debate
- Makes explicit the audience for the manuscript

Sample Project Description

In Sakai: Resources→Sample
Book Proposals→Bronzeville
Book Project



The Project Description—Paragraph 1

Defining Significance **examines** the political significance of race by analyzing how the meaning of blackness influences the political agenda of urban black communities. [**What the book is about**]

How African-Americans understand and express their racial identity is as **politically significant** as the intensity with which they cling to it. Indeed, **the assumption** that African-Americans share a common identity has **long been** the basis for both political strategizing and political science theorizing. [**Why this is important**]

This book analyzes the content of that identity, how it is constructed, and most importantly, **what its consequences are** for the ways that African-Americans apprehend and articulate their political interests and demands. [**What the book discusses**]

Drawing on **two years of ethnographic research** in Douglas and Grand Boulevard, a black neighborhood on Chicago's south side, **this work illustrates how** community elites construct notions of racial authenticity and draw upon them to redefine conflict in ways that prioritize their interests. [**Evidence**]

The Project Description—Paragraph 2

While questions about the political significance of race are long standing among social scientists, **they have become particularly important in the post-segregation era**, both in and out of the academy. [**Project significance**]

Black politics scholars are questioning whether race remains politically dominant in the post-civil rights period, or has declined in significance relative to other social identities such as class and gender. [**One side of the debate**]

Likewise, **scholars of white public opinion** are engaged in a parallel debate about the extent to which racism explains the preferences of whites on matters regarding racial policy. [**Another side of the debate**]

Both of these questions assume that the most important aspect of racial identity is the strength with which it is felt—rather than how it is defined or understood. [**Fault line in current conversation**]

Thus traditional research relies upon reified concepts of race, and **fails to consider** the political implications of both the meaning of racial categories or the process of their construction. [**Fault line in current conversation**]

Project Description–Paragraph 3

Defining Significance offers a new approach to the question of the contemporary significance of race by examining how notions of blackness are defined, contested and used by African-Americans in political debate. [This is the INTERVENTION]

Using a social constructionist framework, it extends public and intellectual debates in the fields of political science and race politics by demonstrating how definitions and narratives of black authenticity are used to manage intra-racial conflict and redefine the black public agenda. [Methodology]

In doing so, this work challenges and broadens existing conceptions of racial identity used by political scientists and offers an alternative framework for understanding its relevance to and impact on politics. [Restates the intervention]

Specifically, *Defining Significance* takes seriously the contention that race is a social construction by analyzing the political origins and implications of ideas about racial authenticity in Douglas and Grand Boulevard. [Narrows the intervention]

Community developers in this black neighborhood propose to combine historic preservation with tourism to develop the area as a Heritage Tourism Destination (HTD). These heritage tourism sites celebrate the history and culture of blacks through the preservation and restoration of historic structures, districts and cultural practices. And their development represents blacks' efforts to define the boundaries and meaning of community in terms of both race and place. [Introduces the texts/specific subject]

Writing Prompts

1. What question will your book address or resolve?

**2. What is already known about your project?
What is the “accepted knowledge”?**

3. Why is your position on this matter important?

**4. Who is the intended audience for this book?
(Why will they find it valuable?)**

Next week:

Use the writing you produced during today's session to draft a project description. It can be super drafty!

We'll begin next week's session by partnering and peer reviewing each other's descriptions.