

Linguistics

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ATRAN-FRESCO, LAURA. *Les Cadiens au présent: revendications d'une francophonie en Amérique du Nord*. PU de Laval, 2016. ISBN 978-2-7637-2820-9. Pp. x + 263.

Incorporating historical and contemporary data, academic and artistic works, and a series of surveys and interviews, Atran-Fresco explores the search for recognition and legitimization of Louisiana's minority French-speaking population within its modern context and in the broader Francophone world. Atran-Fresco outlines three interdependent processes as essential to maintenance of this cultural and linguistic identity: integration into the Francophone world, institutionalization, and awareness-raising among young people. Beginning with a concise but detailed introduction to the development of the Franco-Louisianan (or Cajun) identity that traces the population from the earliest days of *Acadie* in Canada to contemporary Louisiana, the author offers an analysis of the complexity of modern-day Cajun identity, in which tensions are inherent between the desire for preservation of cultural specificity and the tendency for assimilation and inclusion in the majority culture with the benefits it provides. Atran-Fresco makes the case that, after a decline in its use due to various historical and social factors, Louisiana French nevertheless remains the symbolic component of the cultural identity of the Cajun population, and she identifies integration into the Francophone world as a key element in the legitimization of the Louisiana French language and culture from both an internal and an external perspective. Highlights of this chapter include a summary of the challenges and debates that arose in the effort to transcribe the oral vernacular in a way that makes its written form accessible to a Francophone readership while preserving its unique features, and a discussion of the literary movement of the late 1970s and onward that considers how authors sought to establish the validity of their voices and experiences with echoes of the vernacular language while having to look beyond the local market for publication and Francophone readership. Institutionalization, within education and the public domain, is the second process that Atran-Fresco identifies as inherent to efforts for sustainability and promotion of the local language and culture. Addressing educational settings, she considers the cultural component of French immersion in primary and secondary schools as well as the incorporation of Louisiana French language and literature in university French programs. The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) and other organizations implicated in culture and tourism are identified as instrumental to institutionalization in the public sphere. Increasing awareness among young people is presented as the final process in the ongoing maintenance of the minority language and culture. Atran-Fresco explores perceptions and attitudes of young adults in South Louisiana through a survey conducted with 305 university

students and interviews with six advanced students who participated in a summer immersion program in Nova Scotia. Insights gleaned from this data expose motivating factors and challenges in engagement in efforts for the maintenance of the vernacular culture and its associated language. Considering this broad range of topics with a balanced view of internal and external factors implicated in the legitimization of the Louisiana French language and culture, Atran-Fresco paints a nuanced picture of the contemporary reality of this minority Francophone population.

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