

The American Family



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出版者:Univ of Michigan Pr

出版时间:2004-12

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780745315522

'Yasushi Watanabe has achieved a sympathetic yet trenchant analysis of the American boast of having achieved a happy fusion of individualism with democracy.' Michael Herzfeld, Professor of Anthropology, Harvard University 'A Harvard-educated Japanese anthropologist takes a fresh look at two communities that are undergoing similar fragmentation: the lower-middle-class Irish of South Boston, and the descendents of the upper-class Boston Brahmins. He deftly contrasts the transformation of their respective collective identities and helps us understand how the two groups now interpret their history and traditions. Thus, we understand better the restructuring that American class cultures have undergone in recent decades. This illuminating book will be particularly useful in courses on inequality, community, and culture in the United States.' Michele Lamont, Professor of Sociology, Harvard University 'A fascinating look inside the lives of Boston's elite and working class families. Only a stranger's eyes could discern the cultural contours of resignation and hope that social change has visited on the descendants of the Boston's Brahmins and Irish immigrants...A magnificent contribution to our understanding of social change and class culture, seen from the inside of his subjects' lives.' Katherine Newman, Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, Princeton University 'Watanabe has managed to cast new light on this important topic by his superb ethnography of ...the contemporary descendants of

Brahmin lineages and the sorts of local culture and influence that they have engendered...Watanabe has provided insights and material that will be indispensable to American studies in the broadest terms.' George E. Marcus, Professor of Anthropology, Rice University

White, middle-class Americans are one of the most understudied groups in the anthropology of the United States - perhaps because of their hegemonic presence in society. This book offers the first ethnography of 'white middle-class America' from a non-native perspective. Yasushi Watanabe, a Japanese anthropologist, examines two social groups in the Boston area to reveal an intimate portrait of the 'American' family. These two groups are at opposite ends of the social spectrum in terms of religious, ethnic and class backgrounds, and in terms of cultural tastes and lifestyles. The first group is upper-middle class, Anglo Saxon, Protestant, mostly Unitarian or Episcopalian - often identified as archetypal middle-class America. This is a wealthy group that includes descendants of the 'Boston Brahmins', one of America's oldest aristocratic families, closely related to Democratic hopeful John Kerry. The second group is working-class or lower middle-class, Irish Catholic, often referred to as 'Boston Irish'. Informed by a wide range of social theory, *The American Family* is a fascinating study of family dynamics in modern America that explores how Americans construct their social realities and cultural histories, and how modern society shapes their lived experience.

作者介绍:

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