

Imagination



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The public image of genetics research has undergone a remarkable transformation since the 1950s, from a suspect brand of research tainted by eugenics to a thriving, well-funded, and "popular" field of biomedicine. Still, despite enormous scientific advances in DNA technology and its ability to sustain large areas of the science industry, social, legal, and popular opinion about genetics remains highly ambivalent. In *Imagination*, historian of science Jose Van Dijck examines the role of images and imagination in popular representations of the new genetics since the late 1950s. Taking us through a vast range of media--from general interest magazines to science fiction to public relations materials--he demonstrates how popular representations of genetics do not simply reflect the advancement of genetic technology. Instead, cultural accounts of genetics are taking on an important role in the very structure of scientific thinking, with many groups--environmentalists, feminists, entrepreneurs--influencing this process. From news stories of DNA strings escaping from our laboratories to the ongoing debates over bioethics, from James Watson and "The Double Helix" to the Human Genome Project, Van Dijck Portrays the "imaginary" tools of genetics as players in a theater of representation--a multilayered contest in which special interest groups and professional organizations mobilize images in a heated debate over the meaning of genetics. Compelling and insightful, *Imagination* unravels this phenomenon,

revealing how ideology shapes the cultural forms through which we make sense of scientific progress.

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