

The Cultural Territories of Race



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Even as America becomes more multiracial, the black-white divide remains central to understanding many patterns and tensions in contemporary society. Since the 1960s, however, social scientists concerned with this topic have been reluctant to discuss the cultural dimensions of racial inequality - not wanting to "blame the victim" for having "wrong values." This text redirects this research tendency, employing today's more sophisticated methods of cultural analysis toward a new understanding of how cultural structures articulate the black/white problem. These essays examine the cultural territories of race through topics such as blacks' strategies for dealing with racism, public categories for definition of race, and definitions of rules for cultural memberships. Empirically grounded, these studies analyze divisions among blacks according to their relationships with whites or with alternative black culture; differences among whites regarding their attitudes toward blacks; and differences both among blacks and between blacks and whites, in their cultural understandings of various aspects of social life ranging from material success to marital life and to ideas about feminism. The essays teach us about the largely underexamined cultural universes of black executives, upwardly mobile college students, fast-food industry workers, so-called deadbeat dads, and proponents of Afrocentric curricula.

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