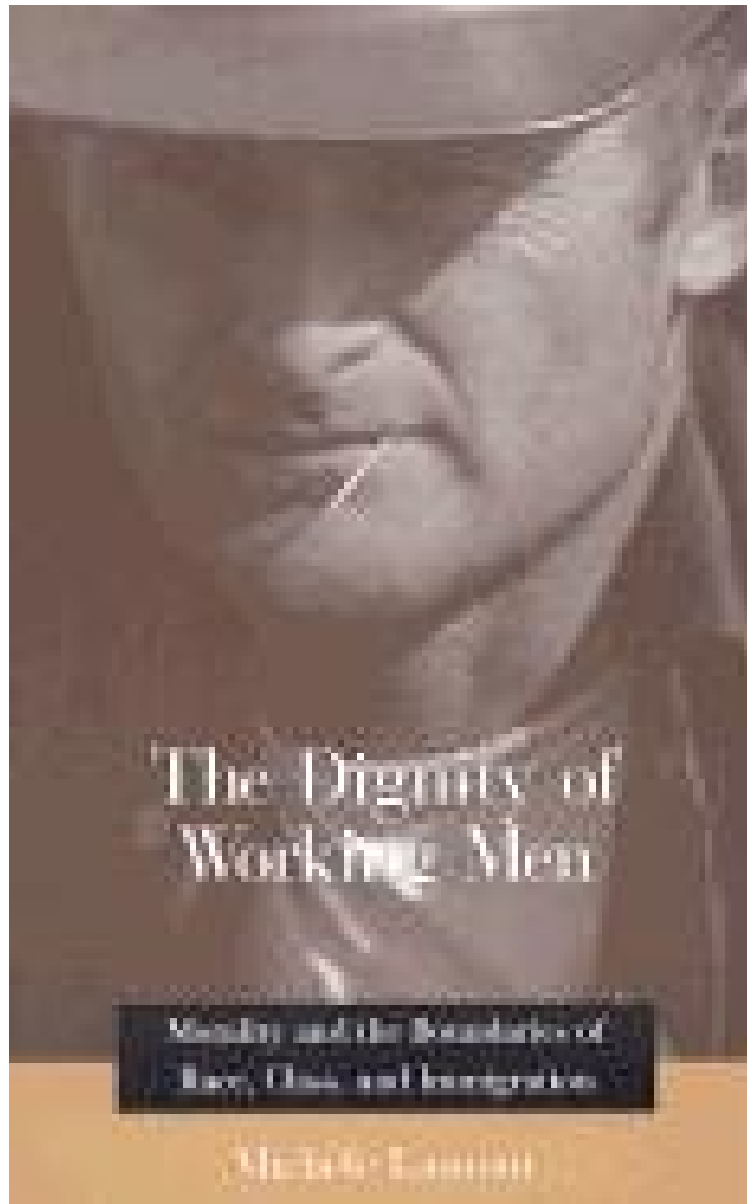


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The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration

Michèle Lamont

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Michèle Lamont : The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I loved the stories and historical context that put everything into ...By Karen WoodWell written, comprehensive, important study of working men in America and France. I loved the stories and historical context that put everything into perspective. Relevant, necessary, accessible. I highly recommend it.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well DoneBy TankThis book is not great, but it is an interesting study of the classes involved. The author is thorough in interviewing and draws interesting parallels between French and American working-class men. The problem is that the interviewees are just not very interesting. It feels put on at times and the men really do not have any new or revolutionary insight. Overall, this book could have been better if a wider and more diverse pool of men were interviewed and the author did more to bring the attitudes and character of these men to life in the book.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy OC FamilyGood book

Michèle Lamont takes us into the world inhabited by working-class men--the world as they understand it. Interviewing black and white working-class men who, because they are not college graduates, have limited access to high-paying jobs and other social benefits, she constructs a revealing portrait of how they see themselves and the rest of society. Morality is at the center of these workers' worlds. They find their identity and self-worth in their ability to discipline themselves and conduct responsible but caring lives. These moral standards function as an alternative to economic definitions of success, offering them a way to maintain dignity in an out-of-reach American dreamland. But these standards also enable them to draw class boundaries toward the poor and, to a lesser extent, the upper half. Workers also draw rigid racial boundaries, with white workers placing emphasis on the "disciplined self" and blacks on the "caring self." Whites thereby often construe blacks as morally inferior because they are lazy, while blacks depict whites as domineering, uncaring, and overly disciplined. This book also opens up a wider perspective by examining American workers in comparison with French workers, who take the poor as "part of us" and are far less critical of blacks than they are of upper-middle-class people and immigrants. By singling out different "moral offenders" in the two societies, workers reveal contrasting definitions of "cultural membership" that help us understand and challenge the forms of inequality found in both societies.

From Library Journal Lamont (sociology, Princeton) provides a fascinating look at the way working-class American and French men make sense of their world. Interviews with white and black American workingmen highlight their common commitment to doing their jobs well and remaining moral in a troubled world. However, the author finds that whites and African Americans differ markedly in their attitudes about the challenges facing low-skill workers in the high-tech economy. African Americans draw on a tradition of solidarity in the face of economic discrimination that is no longer available to their white counterparts. In comparison, French workers divide the world not along racial lines but between those workers who are culturally French and those who are Islamic immigrants to France. French workers, long exposed to socialism, also show more sympathy for the poor than do American workingmen. Lamont argues persuasively that the policy-making elite is increasingly isolated from such workers but that it is crucial that we listen to their voices and understand their concerns. Recommended for academic libraries. DDuncan Stewart, State Historical Society of Iowa Lib., Iowa City Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. The Dignity of Working Men is an outstanding example of comparative ethnography. Through a series of careful and thoughtful interviews, Michèle Lamont reveals the moral standards ordinary workers use in evaluating their fellow citizens. In this engaging book, Lamont also provides an interesting comparison between workers in the United States and France on the criteria used to draw class and racial boundaries. (William Julius Wilson, Harvard University and author of When Work Disappears) Lamont's book is a classic in the making. It breaks new ground as a major in-depth study of comparative racism. It will also broaden the horizons of social class studies. The Dignity of Working Men opens up a wider perspective, so that by looking at French racial conflict, American racial conflict looks less fixed, less inevitable. There are alternative patterns, revealing that societies do have room to maneuver. (Randall Collins, University of Pennsylvania and author of The Sociology of Philosophies (Harvard)) Lamont's richly-textured comparison does more than hold up for view the moral perspectives of working-class men across the racial divide in the United States and France. It poses fresh and rich challenges to research, demonstrates the difference systematic qualitative analysis can make, and points the way to a politics of sensibility and possibility. (Ira I. Katznelson, Columbia University) The Dignity of Working Men is a wonderful book. What is most striking is the richness of the interviews. Lamont's questions seem really to have touched working men where they live, to have encouraged them to talk about their sense of self, their pride in themselves as workers, their sense of moral order, their aspirations and (occasional) political passions, their families, their beliefs in equality and inequality, their racial attitudes, and much more. By asking black workers what they think of whites as well as what whites think of blacks, and by comparing racial and ethnic cleavages in France and the United States, The Dignity of Working Men adds a vital new dimension to studies of class and race. (Ann Swidler, University of California, Berkeley) Many interpreters of current society have posited that class is no longer a useful concept as a basis for identity. This book, based on hundreds of interviews with American and French workers, rejects that analysis...It is fascinating reading, an important contribution to a reexamination of class. (J. Wishnia Choice 2001-04-01) Was there actually a set of values that could be considered distinctly "working class"

in character, that represented a distinctly working-class worldview? One of the most sophisticated recent attempts to answer this question appeared in the recent study *The Dignity of Working Men...* [Lamont] recognized that asking workers to choose their most important values from a prepared list would essentially force their replies into a predetermined mold that had little to do with their real-world thoughts and feelings. Lamont used instead open-ended and non-directive questions. She interviewed 150 blue-collar workers, black and white, in the United States and in France, and compared them with middle-class people in both countries. Her questions asked workers to describe people who were similar to them and people who were different, people they liked and disliked, and those to whom they felt superior or inferior. Follow-up questions probed why they felt as they did, spontaneously eliciting a complex pattern of moral judgements and values. Both work and family did indeed emerge among the blue-collar workers' core values. But the real significance lay in how those were perceived. (Andrew Levinson *The Nation*) It is hard to imagine a comparative research design as well conceived as the one that frames Michèle Lamont's book.... The book is a model of cross cultural comparative analysis and deserves high praise. (Rick Fantasia, *Contemporary Sociology*) *The Dignity of Working Men* is an important entry into examinations of the intersection of class, race, and immigration. (Lamont) gives us new leverage on both some viable antiracist threads of thinking among the white working class and on the complexity and humanism animating how African Americans engage the great divides of race and class. We shall all be discussing this meticulously researched, cogently argued, and provocative book for some years to come. (Lawrence Bobo, *Contemporary Sociology*) Michele Lamont's study of working-class men in the USA and France is...the most interesting contribution to this field for quite some time, and should serve as a benchmark for future scholarly debate...This is a really innovative and challenging book and it needs to be read as widely as possible...*The Dignity of Working Men* has all the potential to become a classic. (John Solomos *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2002-09-01) *The Dignity of Working Men* is an outstanding example of comparative ethnography. Through a series of careful and thoughtful interviews, Michèle Lamont reveals the moral standards ordinary workers use in evaluating their fellow citizens. In this engaging book, Lamont also provides an interesting comparison between workers in the United States and France on the criteria used to draw class and racial boundaries. --William Julius Wilson, Harvard University and author of *When Work Disappears*