

The Racial Order



THE RACIAL ORDER
Mustafa Emirbayer and
Matthew Desmond

By Mustafa Emirbayer, Matthew Desmond

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Proceeding from the bold and provocative claim that there never has been a comprehensive and systematic theory of race, Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond set out to reformulate how we think about this most difficult of topics in American life. In *The Racial Order*, they draw on Bourdieu, Durkheim, and Dewey to present a new theoretical framework for race scholarship. Animated by a deep and reflexive intelligence, the book engages the large and important issues of social theory today and, along the way, offers piercing insights into how race actually works in America. Emirbayer and Desmond set out to examine how the racial order is structured, how it is reproduced and sometimes transformed, and how it penetrates into the innermost reaches of our racialized selves. They also consider how—and toward what end—the racial order might be reconstructed. In the end, this project is not merely about race; it is a theoretical reconsideration of the fundamental problems of order, agency, power, and social justice. *The Racial Order* is a challenging work of social theory, institutional and cultural analysis, and normative inquiry.

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Editorial Review

Review

“*The Racial Order* is a landmark in the theoretical analysis of race relations. Integrating and building on ideas from some of the most important thinkers on intergroup relations, Emirbayer and Desmond provide a comprehensive framework that takes race scholarship to a higher level of illumination and will inform and provide direction for empirical scholarship. Look no further for a publication that addresses the complexities of racial life with explanatory power.”

(William Julius Wilson, Harvard University)

“In this ambitious theoretical program, Emirbayer and Desmond intertwine structure and culture, Bourdieu and Pragmatism, Durkheim and psychoanalysis. Their empirical scholarship is wide-ranging. *The Racial Order* inspires moral clarity about the pernicious racism that continues to divide the American civil sphere.”

(Jeffrey C. Alexander, Yale University)

“Race in its multiplicity and ineluctability has pervaded the modern world while paradoxically—or perhaps unsurprisingly?—evading comprehensive theorization. If the truth lies in the whole, as Hegel thought, that multi-dimensional racial whole has either been perverted in past racist biologism, flattened in class-reductivist Marxism or subjectivist psychologism, denied altogether in contemporary liberal color-blindness, or abandoned as a theoretical goal in pursuit of localized empiricism. Now, in this impressive interdisciplinary synthesis, Emirbayer and Desmond offer a bold and ambitious new framework for thinking of race that does justice to structure as well as agency, relationality and social psychology, recalcitrant white habitus and the transformational reconstructive ideal of racial democracy. Agree or disagree, every serious scholar of race will need to read this book.”

(Charles W. Mills, Northwestern University)

“*The Racial Order* is a daring, ambitious, and important book. With its demanding but much needed conceptual equipment, it is also challenging and rewarding. By broadening significantly the range of authors whose work informs contemporary views on racial dynamics, Emirbayer and Desmond take a gamble: they add important layers of complexity to what often feels like a well-trodden sociological terrain. While *The Racial Order* will certainly generate debates, it should entice us to plough new paths for inquiry in what is perhaps the most highly politicized field of knowledge production in the social sciences. May social scientists committed to the pursuit of racial democracy and social justice raise to the occasion! It is well worth the effort.”

(Michèle Lamont, director, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University)

“This work begins with a compelling statement: ‘There never has been a comprehensive and systematic theory of race.’ The authors attempt to provide just that, drawing on and intricately interweaving nearly all prior race scholarship, with a special emphasis on the work of Dewey, Durkheim, and Bourdieu. Their approach stands out from prior frameworks by demanding greater attention to culture, making space for social psychology and collective emotions, emphasizing racial agency at every analytic level, and rejecting a binary between structure and culture.”

(Choice)

About the Author

Mustafa Emirbayer is professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. **Matthew Desmond** is assistant professor of sociology and social studies at Harvard University. Together, they are the authors of *Race in America*, a companion to this volume.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Marilyn Apperson:

People live in this new day time of lifestyle always aim to and must have the time or they will get great deal of stress from both everyday life and work. So , when we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity are you experiencing when the spare time coming to anyone of course your answer will certainly unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading ebooks. It can be your alternative throughout spending your spare time, the book you have read is usually The Racial Order.

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