

Thursday, 7 May 2015, 17:00-18:30

Michèle Lamont
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“The quest for respect and equality: responses to stigmatization and discrimination in the US, Brazil and Israel”



Michèle Lamont is Professor of Sociology and African and African-American Studies at Harvard University and Robert I. Goldman Professor of European Studies

The ‘Responses to Stigmatization Project’ draws on 430 in-depth interviews with middle and working class African-Americans, Afro-Brazilians, and three discriminated groups in Israel (Ethiopian Jews, Mizrahim, and Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel) to consider how different collective narratives, forms of groupness, and socio-political histories have shaped responses to stigmatization and discrimination within the US, Brazil, and Israel.

In this ambitious international project, Lamont and her collaborators analyze through case studies and cross-national comparison hitherto unnoticed dimensions of social and cultural boundary drawing and modes of claiming cultural membership. Their research shed new light on the familiar comparison of Brazil’s color hierarchy and national narrative of ‘racial democracy’ and the US case of Black-White racial essentialism. The addition of the Israeli case – which explores ethno-national status as the basis of exclusion and Zionism as the central collective narrative – highlights new dimensions of the boundary configurations found in the US and Brazil.

In focusing on the everyday responses of stigmatized individuals to assaults on worth and discrimination, this ambitious study provides insights into the politics of recognition and the production of social resilience.

