



Women without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity

By Julie Bettie



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In this ethnographic examination of Mexican-American and white girls coming of age in California's Central Valley, Julie Bettie turns class theory on its head, asking what cultural gestures are involved in the performance of class, and how class subjectivity is constructed in relationship to color, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. A new introduction contextualizes the book for the contemporary moment and situates it within current directions in cultural theory.

Investigating the cultural politics of how inequalities are both reproduced and challenged, Bettie examines the discursive formations that provide a context for the complex identity performances of contemporary girls. The book's title refers at once to young working-class women who have little cultural capital to enable class mobility; to the fact that analyses of class too often remain insufficiently transformed by feminist, ethnic, and queer studies; and to the failure of some feminist theory itself to theorize women as class subjects.

Women without Class makes a case for analytical and political attention to class, but not at the expense of attention to other social formations.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Pathbreaking and original. Bettie's comparative analysis of race, class, and gender performance of the different female peer issues is unparalleled in current scholarship."—Angela Valenzuela, author of *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*

From the Inside Flap

"Pathbreaking and original. Bettie's comparative analysis of race, class, and gender performance is unparalleled in current scholarship."—Angela Valenzuela, author of *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*

"What a wonderful book! It deserves to be placed next to Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour*—or in front of it. Bettie seamlessly weaves bold theoretical arguments together with a nuanced portrayal of senior high school girls, Anglo and Mexican, working-class and middle-class—or in their words, the preps, hicks, smokers/rockers/trash and the Mexican preps, cholas/cholos, hard-cores, and las chicas. Her book is equally a challenge to feminists who can see only gender, and theorists of class and race who cannot see gender at all. It is one of the finest empirical and conceptual discussions of how gender, race, and class intersect. It is also a page-turner, lucidly and often movingly written."—Elizabeth Long, author of *From Sociology to Cultural Studies: New Perspectives*

"Julie Bettie has written an extraordinary book. Engagingly written, empathetic, and filled with insight, *Women Without Class* makes a clear and convincing case that essentialized concepts of race and gender are not only inaccurate, but even worse, part of the ideological structure that renders class invisible. Bettie's book sets a new standard of excellence for studies of schooling and social identities."—George Lipsitz, author of *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*

"In this fresh and realistic book, Julie Bettie tells us uncomfortable, but important truths about the lives of young women in an American high school. Within the kaleidoscope of gender and ethnic identities are injuries, exclusions, and the powerful (though often hidden) effects of class. This is a book to be read by everyone who wants to understand contemporary youth."—R.W. Connell, author of *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*

"*Women Without Class* is an important contribution to scholarship on young women and the intersections of race and class with gender. The book is fantastically rich in observation and analysis. The author resists with vigor a victimology perspective, but at the same time shows how the marginalization of class from contemporary work in the field results in a failure to understand how assumptions about post-feminism, female success, and social mobility produce new and virulent exclusions."—Angela McRobbie, Professor of Communications at Goldsmiths College London and author of *Feminism and Youth Culture*

"Bettie is doing something no one has done before: she explores the many ways that BOTH Mexican American and White adolescent girls interpret and enact racially gendered class identities. This book is essential reading for any serious scholar of gender, class, and race-ethnicity."—Denise Segura, Professor of Sociology, University of California-Santa Barbara

"Rather than following traditional and stereotypical notions common in mainstream U.S. sociology and

criminology, which portray youth as delinquent and criminals, Bettie gives the reader the vivid representations of a group of working-class youth who are searching for 'creative responses to the injuries of inequality.'"—Esther Madriz, author of *Nothing Bad Happens to Good Girls: Fear of Crime in Women's Lives*

From the Back Cover

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