



Formations of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable (Published in association with Theory, Culture & Society)

By Beverley Skeggs

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Explanations of how identities are constructed are fundamental to contemporary debates in feminism and in cultural and social theory. **Formations of Class & Gender** demonstrates why class should be featured more prominently in theoretical accounts of gender, identity and power. Beverley Skeggs identifies the neglect of class, and shows how class and gender must be fused together to produce an accurate representation of power relations in modern society.

The book questions how theoretical frameworks are generated for understanding how women live and produce themselves through social and cultural relations. It uses detailed ethnographic research to explain how 'real' women inhabit and occupy the social and cultural posit

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Editorial Review

Review

This book is brilliant. *Formations of Class and Gender* is a sophisticated and passionately written account of the classed and gendered identities of a small group of working-class white women who live in the north-west of England. It is ethnography at its best, having been built on long-term, thoughtful engagements in the field. When Beverly Skeggs met these women they were all students on a variety of 'caring' courses at a further education college. More than eleven years later, the production of this text testifies to the quality of theoretical analysis which can be produced if only those who fund research or press for lists of publications were willing to acknowledge that leading edge work normally requires real time. The text is concerned with the production of cultural and social relations and is located within an analytical framework which draws on the work of Bourdieu... Overall the text is a robust piece of writing which I have already recommended as required reading to my research students. (Gender and Education)

Skegg's Bourdieu-influenced account of British cultures of class provides a useful empirical corrective to the more grandiose theorizing within recent cultural studies, underscoring not just the economic but the cultural and attitudinal gulf between working-class individuals and the left/feminist intellectuals who claim to be their allies. For this reason alone, it should be required reading. (International Journal of Cultural Studies)

In a discipline that boasts a high division of labour, this book goes a long way in dismantling the futile divide between class theory and feminism. It is an articulate and impassioned ethnography, fuelled by an anger of inequality but also an anger at those who are reluctant to challenge it. At a time when sociologists seem less concerned with the tangible and more interested in the abstract, Skeggs shows how these can be used productively together; theory becomes a means to an end rather than an end in itself... This book really deserves to be read and taken seriously. It is a good example of responsible research which seeks to bring out the pains and humour of working-class life and the ways in which people negotiate their environments... But the greatest achievement of this book is that it gives a voice to a group of women in the hope that they can '...no longer be ignored, made invisible, deconstructed to irrelevance, dismissed as part of a redundant concept, or pathologized as just another "social problem"' (168). In our present political climate, what work could be more important than that? (Paul Johnson)

About the Author

Beverley Skeggs is the editor of **The Production of Feminist Cultural Theory** (1995); co-author of **Issues in Sociology: The Media** (with J Mundy); co-author of **Workwise** (1990) (with G Palmer and M Webb); and also author of numerous journal articles.

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