



Wannabes, Goths, and Christians: The Boundaries of Sex, Style, and Status

Amy C. Wilkins

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On college campuses and in high school halls, being white means being boring. Since whiteness is the mainstream, white kids lack a cultural identity that's exotic or worth flaunting. To remedy this, countless white youths across the country are now joining more outré subcultures like the Black- and Puerto Rican-dominated hip-hop scene, the glamorously morose goth community, or an evangelical Christian organization whose members reject campus partying.

Amy C. Wilkins's intimate ethnography of these three subcultures reveals a complex tug-of-war between the demands of race, class, and gender in which transgressing in one realm often means conforming to expectations in another. Subcultures help young people, especially women, navigate these connecting territories by offering them different sexual strategies: wannabes cross racial lines, goths break taboos by becoming involved with multiple partners, and Christians forego romance to develop their bond with God. Avoiding sanctimonious hysteria over youth gone astray, Wilkins meets these kids on their own terms, and the result is a perceptive and provocative portrait of the structure of young lives.

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