



A Macat analysis of Jay MacLeod's Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood

Anna Seiferle-Valencia

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American sociologist and priest Jay MacLeod's 1987 work *Ain't No Makin' It* is groundbreaking for the novel way it combines field research with theory. The book follows the lives of two groups of young men from a low-income housing project in the greater Boston area. In it, MacLeod shows how poor people who aspire to live the American Dream face many more obstacles than their middle-class counterparts. In a challenge to conventional ideas about race, MacLeod looks at the mostly white Hallway Hangers, who are delinquents and high-school dropouts, and the mostly black Brothers, who don't use drugs and stay in school. Yet in a damning indictment of the American class system, even the Brothers are mostly unable to secure good jobs by the time they reach middle age. We see this as MacLeod returns to write updates on the men twice over a 25-year period for a second and third edition of the book. *Ain't No Makin' It* remains a core sociology text today.

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