



The Power of Good Deeds: Privileged Women and the Social Reproduction of the Upper Class

Diana Kendall

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The Power of Good Deeds allows us to see behind the media image of upper-class women and to observe how these women use their social power not only to benefit other, less-fortunate people, but also to benefit themselves and their families. Kendall's ethnographic research yields the personal narratives of elite women as they describe their views on philanthropy, the need for exclusivity in their by-invitation-only volunteer organizations (such as the Junior League and The Links), their childhood experiences and college years in prestigious schools and sororities, and the debutante presentations and other upper-class rituals in which they participate. By participating in meetings and social functions with elite women in several Texas cities, and conducting systematic interviews, the author gained unprecedented access to elite women across racial and ethnic categories. The Power of Good Deeds provides new insights and greater depth to our knowledge about the upper classes and how the charitable activities of privileged women contribute to the process of legitimization, maintaining an ideology of class-based and race-based segregation in the United States.

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