



# Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School (The William G. Bowen Memorial Series in Higher Education)

By Shamus Rahman Khan

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As one of the most prestigious high schools in the nation, St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, has long been the exclusive domain of America's wealthiest sons. But times have changed. Today, a new elite of boys and girls is being molded at St. Paul's, one that reflects the hope of openness but also the persistence of inequality.

In *Privilege*, Shamus Khan returns to his alma mater to provide an inside look at an institution that has been the private realm of the elite for the past 150 years. He shows that St. Paul's students continue to learn what they always have--how to embody privilege. Yet, while students once leveraged the trappings of upper-class entitlement, family connections, and high culture, current St. Paul's students learn to succeed in a more diverse environment. To be the future leaders of a more democratic world, they must be at ease with everything from highbrow art to everyday life--from *Beowulf* to *Jaws*--and view hierarchies as ladders to scale. Through deft portrayals of the relationships among students, faculty, and staff, Khan shows how members of the new elite face the opening of society while still preserving the advantages that allow them to rule.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

Khan's work reminds me, above all, of Arlie Hochschild's pathbreaking studies... both are bold and original thinkers. Khan's book is full of surprises, and when you read it, you will understand why snobbery is out and why "democratic inequality" has become the creed of the chosen. - *Contemporary Sociology*

[E]thnographic research into the very heart of privilege... [Khan] steps down from his pedestal and lets himself get closer to these future masters of the universe. -- Robin D. Schatz, *Bloomberg News*

[T]his book is beautifully written and filled with important insights into processes of socialization among the elite. I recommend this book for all scholars interested in the reproduction of inequality in U.S. society. -- Wendy Leo Moore, *American Journal of Sociology*

[T]he elites in Britain and in America have changed. They now appear more open. More worldly. More meritocratic. For a description of how that process works, look at [Privilege]. -- Aditya Chakrabortty, *Guardian*

Khan's many perspectives--as a minority student in a rich WASP school, as a teacher interacting with his students, and as a researcher observing his subjects--gave him unique access to understanding the American elite... Khan's objectivity turns to pessimism as he describes the result of greater diversity, which he finds 'does not mean mobility and it certainly does not mean equality.' -- Barbara Fisher, *Boston Globe*

Privilege sets out to understand 'the new elite' and its place in the larger story of American education. -- Josh Rothman, *Boston Globe*, *Brainiac*

Shamus Rahman Khan has his part in loosening the knot of privilege, by analyzing America's dreams and telling us why some of them remain thwarted... Privilege is an exceptional cultural study of inequality that concentrates on elites. It is a brave piece of work, guaranteed to raise the hackles of more than a few private school trustees, administrators, faculty and parents. -- Michael D. Langan, *Buffalo News*

[Privilege] fills in the crucial missing piece. It's a well grounded description of the people who are the 'input' into the elite higher education system. It's a view of elite life from the 'training camp,' right before they are unleashed into American society. Highly recommended to anyone interested in stratification and education. - Fabio Rojas, *OrgTheory.net*

If you want a peek inside an elite New England prep school, here it is... But while nosiness about St. Paul's is a perfectly good reason to read the book, Khan's purpose is higher. This is a book about the promise of America and how well the nation is fulfilling it. It is a book that suggests how money still trumps ideals and how a myth fostered at St. Paul's and other such schools serves a new elite class. Most usefully, the book explores why racial and ethnic diversity--a challenge that St. Paul's is meeting admirably--is not synonymous with mobility and equality... Full of valuable insights. -- Mike Pride, *Concord Monitor*

While the empirical meat of Privilege is from the United States, Canadian scholars of inequality and education will find this book useful. The ethnographic material is worth reading for its empirical contribution alone; but more importantly it also illustrates how the relative steepness of the U.S. postsecondary system

contributes to enduring social inequalities. -- Janice Aurini, Canadian Journal of Sociology

Returning to his alma mater as faculty member and ethnographer, Khan offers an incisive study of the formation of a new, meritocratic elite... Of utility and wide appeal to a range of academics, Khan's study is consistently engaging and of potentially enduring value. -- "Choice

Essential reading for understanding today's elite. Not since Christopher Lasch's Revolt of the Elites has the meritocracy been so effectively skewered. -- Austin Bramwell, American Conservative

There are few ethnographic accounts of life in exclusive American boarding schools and Khan's book is far and away the most sophisticated among them. But the contribution of *Privilege* goes beyond this narrow field. Those interested in the sociology of culture, stratification, everyday life, education, race, and gender will find much to appreciate. . . . Khan is a versatile and earnest ethnographer with a sharp eye for gesture and a keen ear for dialogue. -- Victoria Bonnell, Contemporary Sociology

From the Back Cover

"*Privilege* is superb. Khan skillfully narrates from the perspective of both teacher and researcher, and the personal portraits are very well-rounded. This important book is a masterly look at a disturbing current in the formation of elite American society."--**Richard Sennett, author of *The Corrosion of Character***

"This is a terrific book. Khan's strong authorial voice and wonderful personality shine through and it is a pleasure to follow his life and travails at St. Paul's."--**Michèle Lamont, Harvard University**

About the Author

Shamus Rahman Khan is assistant professor of sociology at Columbia University. He is an alumnus and former faculty member of St. Paul's School

## Users Review

From reader reviews:

**Mark Armstrong:**

The reserve with title *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School* (The William G. Bowen Memorial Series in Higher Education) contains a lot of information that you can understand it. You can get a lot of benefit after read this book. This particular book exist new expertise the information that exist in this book represented the condition of the world now. That is important to you to know how the improvement of the world. This kind of book will bring you inside new era of the global growth. You can read the e-book with your smart phone, so you can read the idea anywhere you want.

**Mary Summers:**

Why? Because this *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School* (The William G. Bowen Memorial Series in Higher Education) is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap that but latter it will jolt you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such awesome way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you because of not

hesitating having this nowadays or you going to regret it. This amazing book will give you a lot of gains than the other book have got such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to delay having that book? If I had been you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

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**Ora Orozco:**

In this era globalization it is important to someone to obtain information. The information will make professionals understand the condition of the world. The fitness of the world makes the information easier to share. You can find a lot of sources to get information example: internet, newspaper, book, and soon. You can observe that now, a lot of publisher which print many kinds of book. The particular book that recommended for you is Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School (The William G. Bowen Memorial Series in Higher Education) this guide consist a lot of the information of the condition of this world now. This specific book was represented how does the world has grown up. The words styles that writer use to explain it is easy to understand. The actual writer made some research when he makes this book. That is why this book ideal all of you.

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