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Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America

Diana Kendall

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Why do most people think of themselves as middle class? Why do we view people in other social classes the way that we do? Why do many of us spend more than we can afford buying luxury items that we do not need? Framing Class provides answers to these questions. Through extensive content analysis of sources that include the archives of major newspapers and fifty years of television programming, Kendall illustrates how the media use framing to provide a short-hand code for the presumed values and lifestyles of the upper, middle, working, and poverty classes, thereby influencing our opinions of these classes. By doing so, she provides readers with the opportunity to assess for themselves what effect these frames may have on media audiences. Framing Class is the first book to use the sociological imagination in analyzing how popular culture frames social class in the United States and the effect that framing has on our opinions on this vital topic. Framing emphasizes some ideological perspectives over others and directs people's attention to some ideas while ignoring others. This book shows how the media frame class to favorably portray the lifestyles of the upper classes while negatively stereotyping the working class and poor, perhaps contributing to the ever-widening chasm between the haves and the have-nots in the United States.

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