

“Primates of Park Avenue”™ or Tribes of Tinseltown? The L.A. Private School Scene

Description



Reese Witherspoon carrying an Hermes Birkin bag. Her kids attend L.A. private school and Reese and her BFF are Tinseltown Tribe members

A new book, [Primates of Park Avenue](#), has people talking. Excerpts of the book chronicle the affluent, over-the-top lives of Upper Eastside Moms in NYC. Of course, these moms also send their kids to

private schools.

Wednesday Martin, author of *Primates of Park Avenue*, moved to the Upper Eastside and the *New York Post* writes about the lifestyle of moms she met:

Martin's oldest was a toddler at the time, and the pressure to enroll her child in the best nursery school was acute. On the Upper East Side, the right nursery school opens the track to the Ivy League. The average tuition for a toddler in 2004 ranged from \$25,000 to \$35,000 a year.

Martin's little boy, she soon learned, was way behind. As she writes, before nursery school, your toddler was supposed to take classes at Diller-Quaile School of Music, which accepts 3-month-olds. Before Diller-Quaile, you were supposed to do a certain baby group. Everything, it seemed, fed into everything else. ([New York Post](#))

To those of you with kids at certain well-known L.A. private schools, this type of parenting will sound very familiar. In L.A., the money isn't necessarily from Wall Street, but instead it is earned from the entertainment industry or flows from family trust funds.

The extreme over-parenting isn't anything new. I've seen almost everything in this article, except the occupational therapist for kids who don't need it. From the food coach for picky eaters, to the [feeder preschool](#), to diet delivery plans for overweight kids, drivers idling in Escalades, private sports lessons, personal shoppers for 9 year-olds, Birkin bags, parenting experts on speed dial and drugs, both legal and illegal. The Tribes of Tinseltown are a presence in the L.A. private school scene

As an Upper East Side arriviste, scheduling play dates for her boy became Martin's own Everest. I was a play-date pariah, she says. As a new female coming into a group, she was a threat. The other mommies, she says, ignored her emails and texts looking for play dates. ([New York Post](#))

I've never tried to schedule playdates with these private school mavens. But, if I had, I'd be doomed. I don't look or act the part. I'm not one of them only partly because I'll never own a Hermes Birkin handbag. But, what if I wanted to be part of this tribe of women? Would it even be possible for someone like me to join one of these groups at an L.A. private school? From what I've personally seen and heard from friends, the answer is a resounding *no*. It's a good thing I don't want in. I've observed some of these moms whose kids play on Westside club sports teams. Their world is a rarefied, lavish, closed circle, flush with money and problems—lots of them. I've seen moms so zonked out on pills they fall asleep during their kid's recreation league game. They bring wine to the park during practice this same practice. Their husbands yell at them in front of everyone. They send emails pleading for somebody to pick up their kid when their many nannies can't do it. Of course, somebody (not a tribe member) is always ready to help. A girls weekend is a private jet trip to one of their vacations homes in Cabo San Lucas. When one of them posts her house for sale on Facebook, the listing price is a staggering \$20 million. The rules governing their lives are foreign to most of us. Their kids attend the same few private schools on L.A.'s Westside. They make their presence known in big and small ways.

The wealthy send their kids to private schools, on the Upper East Side and in L.A. Sure, L.A. has its own version of them. To deny this is like pretending you don't notice those big, fat lip injections.

Whether these moms dominate the school culture is the real question you need to ask if you donâ€™t want to send your kids to a school where they are not so secretly running the place. It is entirely possible for them to be rather invisible at a school, a clique amongst themselves. Or, they can practically run the place, chairing the schoolâ€™s board of directors, heading up volunteer committees, hosting the head of school at their vacation home and generally making outsiders feel unwelcome. It all depends on which school weâ€™re talking about. For the record, they donâ€™t dominate Viewpoint, my kidsâ€™ school. For that, I guess I should be thankful.

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