No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal
Race and Class in Elite College Admission and Campus Life

Thomas J. Espenshade & Alexandria Walton Radford

Against the backdrop of today’s increasingly diverse society, are America’s elite colleges admitting and successfully educating a diverse student body? No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal pulls back the curtain on the selective college experience and takes a rigorous and comprehensive look at how race and social class impact each stage—from application and admission, to enrollment and student life on campus. Arguing that elite higher education contributes to both social mobility and inequity, the authors investigate such areas as admission disadvantages for minorities, social interactions and academic achievement gaps tied to race and class, and unequal burdens in paying for tuition.

The book’s analysis is based on data provided by the National Survey of College Experience, collected from more than nine thousand students who applied to one of ten selective colleges between the early 1980s and late 1990s. The authors explore the composition of applicant pools, factoring in background and “selective admission enhancement strategies”—including AP classes, test-prep courses, and extracurriculars—to assess how these strengthen applications. On campus, the authors examine roommate choices, friendship circles, and degrees of social interaction, and discover that while students from different racial and class circumstances are not separate in college, they do not mix as one might expect. The book supports greater interaction among student groups and calls on educational institutions to improve schooling experiences for students of lower socioeconomic status.

An accessible and honest examination of the college process, No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal offers valuable insights into the intricate workings of America’s elite higher education system.

Thomas J. Espenshade is professor of sociology at Princeton University. Alexandria Walton Radford completed her PhD in sociology at Princeton University and is a research associate in postsecondary education with MPR Associates, Inc., in Washington, DC.

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