demand, but we rarely have empirical evidence to assess that demand. The main limitation of this study is that like any ethnography, the authors are constrained to analyzing a particular place, space, time and set of people. Their powerful arguments are crafted based on a group of women living on a single floor of a residence hall of one midwestern university. Would their conclusions hold had they had the opportunity to study the wishes and desires of the prospective applicants for that university, instead of only those who attended? Do they hold for students who do not live in residence halls, and do they hold for men? Does the setting matter, the type of institution studied, or its location in the country? Legions of graduate students have their work cut out for them.

It would also be useful to deepen the thinking about the implications for higher education finance and accountability. The discussion of these concerns in the book is rather brief, and the policy recommendations relatively quixotic. But the observations it makes arrive at a critical moment, as we face another reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. When legislators consider whether and how to make changes to critical policies such as those governing the distribution of federal financial aid (and all of its loan programs), they should question what today's higher education really looks and feels like. Here, sociologists like Armstrong and Hamilton can play a critical role, helping them to see where the processes of inequality reside. When I testified this year to the U.S. Senate's Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) asked me if life on campuses had really changed since he was a first-generation undergraduate years ago. In my response, I referred to *Paying for the Party*, describing the pulling apart of campus life along social class lines. The senator shook his head, surprised, asking, "What is happening here?" The insights this sociological work provides give us clues about where to look. They help to direct policy makers toward a focus on how students are advised, how majors are developed and selected, how teaching is constructed and enacted, and where provision of extracurricular opportunities undermines the academic mission of institutions. I recommend that anyone concerned with finding ways to ensure that higher education is the transformative space we have long hoped for read this text in full.

Top Student, Top School? How Social Class Shapes Where Valedictorians Go to College. By Alexandria Walton Radford. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. Pp. xii+281. $85.00 (cloth); $27.50 (paper).

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Children of affluent families are substantially more likely to enroll in prestigious and selective colleges, an inequality that has been growing in recent decades in the United States. Researchers have been disentangling this ef-

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fect of class origins on postsecondary outcomes, gauging the extent to which it is explained by differences in academic ability and performance or differences in student preferences and choices.

Alexandria Walton Radford's book *Top Student, Top School* is firmly in the latter approach. Radford analyzes data on a group of academically successful students: high school valedictorians. While we might expect educational institutions to "render social class moot" (p. 153) among such high-achieving students, Radford shows the reality is far different. She documents strong class effects on these students' postsecondary outcomes. Among her valedictorians, 74% from families of high socioeconomic status (SES) enrolled in the most selective colleges (as defined by U.S. News and World Report) compared to 47% and 43% of those from mid- and low-SES families, respectively. Radford's book probes this finding and outlines how class shapes the postsecondary options valedictorians and their families pursue.

Radford collected survey and interview data in 2007 for a group of valedictorians representing the classes of 2003–6 from public high schools in five states (California, Florida, Indiana, New Jersey, and North Carolina). Since these students were at least a year out of high school, she uses their retrospective accounts to trace their "college destination process" from middle school onward. She finds that class shapes the early stages of this process for these academically stellar students. Low-SES valedictorians were less likely to have college aspirations in middle school and their parents were less likely to think it important for them to enroll in college (much less a prestigious college). Radford's interview data suggests this is reflective of a class culture among the high-SES families, who assigned great weight to attending a selective college and took it for granted.

Applying the insights of previous studies, Radford also convincingly argues that informational constraints, and less so financial ones, play an important role. Low-SES parents of valedictorians were less likely to be involved in their children's explorations of their college and financial aid options. More disturbing, low- and mid-SES valedictorians were more likely to refuse to consider selective colleges because of their sticker prices (even though the actual costs would be substantially lower for these students).

This pattern produces a substantial SES gradient in applying to the most selective colleges (even controlling for academic performance). Radford shows class inequalities in college destinations are solidified at the application stage. Among applicants, however, SES inequalities in admission and matriculation (conditioned on admission) are muted. One of Radford's major conclusions is that the underrepresentation of low-SES valedictorians in the most selective colleges is due to self-selection and not college admissions decisions.

Radford makes good use of her data. Her interviews nicely complement her quantitative analysis of her survey data. Radford's qualitative data analysis bring to life the constraints of class on these students' postsecondary choices. For instance, it is known that low-income students are more

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likely to choose colleges closer to home for financial reasons. Radford's interviews elaborate on this finding by revealing that the low-SES valedictorians were more likely to feel that they would have to travel home more frequently because of the turmoil their families faced. Another example of an important insight her interview data yield is that public high schools are doing very little to counteract informational inequalities produced by social class. Radford's valedictorians report getting information on postsecondary options targeted to average students and less relevant to them.

On the other hand, Radford's analysis occasionally comes up against the limits of her methods. Since she is getting retrospective accounts from students (and not parents), she cannot get reliable data on the financial situations of the students when they were in high school. Thus, she uses the valedictorians' subjective class identities to place them in the "low-SES," "mid-SES," and "high-SES" categories (as opposed to the traditional method of using reports of parental income, education, and occupation), although she convincingly argues this is not a serious problem. More important, because she does not have data on the respondents' family finances or on the financial aid packages they would be eligible for if they applied, Radford rightfully does not attempt to make definitive claims that the parents of her low- and mid-SES valedictorians were ignorant of the true feasibility of their child attending a most selective college.

On the whole, though, the book makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge on class inequalities in college destinations. While scholars have recognized that class affects educational transitions even when holding academic performance constant, to my knowledge no one has specifically examined how class affects academically elite students' postsecondary transitions. Radford's book starkly shows these effects exist and are large, informs us of how they happen, and points to ways policy makers can counteract them to increase the representation of high-achieving, low-SES students in selective colleges. Selective colleges in the United States have the mission of developing the talents of the most academically successful students, but Radford's book demonstrates they are failing to fulfill it, making her findings all the more powerful and necessary.

Becoming Right: How Campuses Shape Young Conservatives. By Amy J. Binder and Kate Wood. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013. Pp. xx+399. $29.95.

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Classy. The word never actually appears in Amy Binder and Kate Wood's book about conservatism on college campuses, *Becoming Right*. Yet I kept thinking about the word as I read the book. Binder and Wood began inter-

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