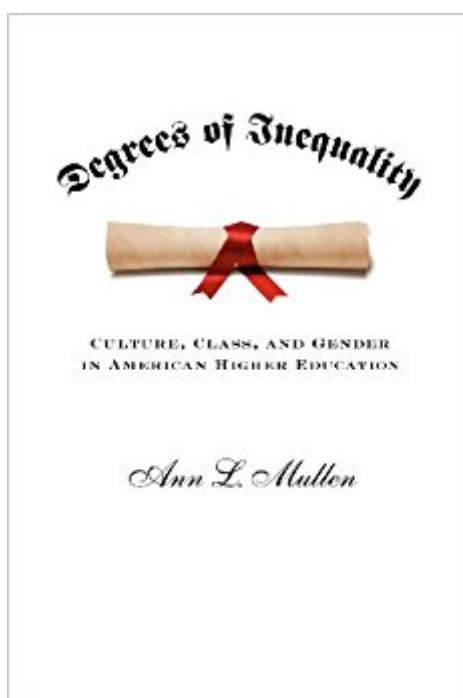


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# Degrees Of Inequality: Culture, Class, And Gender In American Higher Education



## Synopsis

Degrees of Inequality reveals the powerful patterns of social inequality in American higher education by analyzing how the social background of students shapes nearly every facet of the college experience. Even as the most prestigious institutions claim to open their doors to students from diverse backgrounds, class disparities remain. Just two miles apart stand two institutions that represent the stark class contrast in American higher education. Yale, an elite Ivy League university, boasts accomplished alumni, including national and world leaders in business and politics. Southern Connecticut State University graduates mostly commuter students seeking credential degrees in fields with good job prospects. Ann L. Mullen interviewed students from both universities and found that their college choices and experiences were strongly linked to social background and gender. Yale students, most having generations of family members with college degrees, are encouraged to approach their college years as an opportunity for intellectual and personal enrichment. Southern students, however, perceive a college degree as a path to a better career, and many work full- or part-time jobs to help fund their education. Moving interviews with 100 students at the two institutions highlight how American higher education reinforces the same inequities it has been aiming to transcend.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In this finely crafted qualitative study of the factors that lead to social stratification between institutions of higher education, Mullen demonstrates that the meaning of a college degree varies for different kinds of students at different kinds of institutions... An important and challenging work."

(Choice)"This well-written and well-conceptualized book improves knowledge of how advantages in social background cumulate over time to produce continued stratification in college-related experiences and outcomes... The theoretical and research-based insights generated by this book provide a useful foundation for education researchers as well as for public and institutional policy makers who seek productive approaches to reducing differences in higher education outcomes based on social background." (Laura W. Perna Educational Researcher)"Paints a vivid and disturbing picture of the growing class divide in American higher education." (Richard Kahlenberg Innovations blog, Chronicle of Higher Education)"Mullen addresses a lacuna in the evidence base: students' perspectives on their place in the hierarchy, and how they choose a university." (Ruth Woodfield Times Higher Education)"By comparing the experiences of students at institutions only a few miles but worlds apart, Ann Mullen underscores how American higher education perpetuates inequalities in the social order." (Angela P. Dodson Diverse Issues in Higher Education)"This finely textured study of students at two nearby universities, Yale and Southern Connecticut State, complements the existing heavily quantitative studies of college-going. Mullen's in-depth interviews capture splendidly the profound differences between students at these two universities in terms of social background and college experiences, revealing a striking degree of stratification." (William G. Bowen, President Emeritus, Princeton University and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation)"Degrees of Inequality is a fabulous book in the best traditions of the sociology of education. Theoretically sophisticated, it illuminates the social processes that generate inequality in American higher education. Ann Mullen's engaging writing style will draw readers to its arguments." (Jane Gaskell, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto)"This book shows us two worlds of higher education, differing in the students they attract, how those students decide whether and where to matriculate, what they believe their futures hold, the subjects in which they major, and their very understanding of the meaning of knowledge. A gifted listener and writer, Ann Mullen articulates these different experiences and visions, demonstrates how personal biography and institutional location interact, and tells a story important for anyone who cares about the meaning of higher education today and the forces that may change tomorrow." (Paul DiMaggio, A. Barton Hepburn Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, Princeton University)"Well-researched and carefully presented... Mullen discovered that socioeconomic class continues to influence the structures of opportunity within postsecondary education as well as students' choices once they are enrolled. Her book highlights the interaction between habitus and institutional mission that results in stratified outcomes within a system of higher education formally structured to be open to all." (Karen Bradley American Journal of Sociology)"This book has a lot of data and information that

makes it a must read for anyone who was interested in this topic." (Cybertron Reviews)

Educator's Award, Delta Kappa Gamma Society International Outstanding Publication in Postsecondary Education, American Educational Research Association, Division J Degrees of Inequality reveals the powerful patterns of social inequality in American higher education by analyzing how the social background of students shapes nearly every facet of the college experience. Interviews with 100 students at Yale University and Southern Connecticut State University dramatically illustrate how American higher education reinforces the very inequities it has been aiming to transcend."In this finely crafted qualitative study of the factors that lead to social stratification between institutions of higher education, Mullen demonstrates that the meaning of a college degree varies for different kinds of students at different kinds of institutions.... An important and challenging work." — Choice "The theoretical and research-based insights generated by this book provide a useful foundation for education researchers as well as for public and institutional policy makers who seek productive approaches to reducing differences in higher education outcomes based on social background." — Educational Researcher "Paints a vivid and disturbing picture of the growing class divide in American higher education." — Innovations blog, Chronicle of Higher Education "By comparing the experiences of students at institutions only a few miles but worlds apart, Ann Mullen underscores how American higher education perpetuates inequalities in the social order." — Diverse Issues in Higher Education "Mullen addresses a lacuna in the evidence base: students' perspectives on their place in the hierarchy, and how they choose a university." — Times Higher Education

I bought this book for a Sociology course I'm taking this semester. I live in Connecticut and know Yale and Southern CT very well as I have friends at both institutions. Mullen does a great job of interviewing students from both universities and getting them to talk about their experiences of high school, applying to college, and the future career aspirations they have. She presents an intriguing argument that illustrates the differences between students that attend elite schools like Yale versus mostly working class students that attend Southern, by how these students view college, the financial resources needed to attend school, and why they majored in specific areas. Southern students as a whole held more practical perspectives in picking what field they wanted to major in--they were preparing for a job in a pre-professional major and viewed General Education courses that were intended to create well-rounded individuals as a waste of time, compared to Yale students, who genuinely liked the liberal arts classes in General Education requirements. It was

fascinating to read the differences between these two sets of students and see how inequality can stem from just differences in education. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in learning about just how our society is shaped as a result of increasing inequality. Cons: Mullen really tries to emphasize the importance and implications of her research, however she can be repetitive in her attempts to get the reader to take her seriously. She repeats previous ideas in every subsequent new idea she presents, and it just adds onto her argument until the conclusion-where readers get to see her argument in a full circle. I commend her for dedicating so much effort in organizing the interviews and having courage to actually write a book about the vast differences between private and public university students, and the underlying connotations of such differences.

Good book BUT wish the publisher would allow text-to-speech

Excellent...

Ann Mullen interviewed 50 fulltime American juniors and seniors from Yale and 50 similar students at Southern Connecticut State University, a state school about 2 miles away, to explore what was different about the students. (The Yale students were smarter and less focused on a particular career, by and large.) She seemed to think that the students were different because they went to these different schools, but her evidence indicated that these were different people to start with. Smart students who want to study liberal arts go to Yale, and less smart (on the average) students who want such rewards as a nursing license or a teaching certificate go to Southern. Her own evidence, comparing average SAT scores and attitudes about learning between the two student populations, showed this. The young men and women chose schools which suited their abilities and tastes. That's not a bad thing in my mind, but she seemed to be bothered by it.

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