

"Paying For The Party: How College Maintains Inequality"

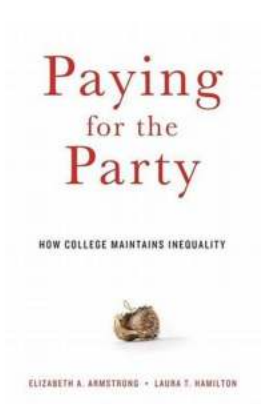
College has long been considered a pathway to social mobility and equal opportunity. But what if attending college actually perpetuates existing inequalities? In her groundbreaking book, "Paying For The Party: How College Maintains Inequality," sociologist Elizabeth A. Armstrong examines how higher education in America reinforces class divisions and perpetuates inequality rather than leveling the playing field. This article delves into the key arguments and findings of Armstrong's work, shedding light on the hidden consequences of the college experience.

The Myth of Meritocracy

One of the central arguments of "Paying For The Party" is that a fundamental flaw in higher education is its portrayal as a meritocracy. While college is often presented as a fair system where everyone has an equal chance, Armstrong reveals that this facade falls apart upon closer examination. The admission process itself favors students from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, leading to a biased selection of students who are already advantaged. This initial inequality sets the stage for a system that perpetuates and amplifies social divisions rather than equalizing opportunities.

Moreover, Armstrong's research exposes the harsh reality that colleges tend to cater to affluent students, who have access to resources that their less fortunate peers can only dream of. The more exclusive a college, the more it tends to reinforce privilege and maintain social status. Extravagant parties, exclusive social clubs, and a culture of wealth and indulgence become defining features of the elite college experience. These factors further widen the gap between the

haves and have-nots, making it increasingly difficult for disadvantaged students to navigate the college landscape successfully.



Paying for the Party: How College Maintains

Inequality by Elizabeth A. Armstrong (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 2267 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 344 pages



The Role of Residential Life

Residential life on college campuses can be a crucial factor in perpetuating inequality. Armstrong's study focuses on a particular dormitory known as "Party Dorm" to illustrate how social dynamics within college housing can amplify existing disparities. By closely examining the experiences and behaviors of students residing in this party-centric dorm, Armstrong reveals how the residential environment can contribute to the marginalization of low-income and minority students.

The Party Dorm, characterized by its vibrant social scene and high level of extravagance, becomes a microcosm of the social elite within the college. The formation of cliques and social hierarchies based on wealth and status becomes remarkably evident within this particular living arrangement. Students from low-income backgrounds often find it challenging to assimilate into this environment and are consequently ostracized from the social networks that could potentially

benefit their academic pursuits and post-graduation opportunities. The social divisions created within the Party Dorm consequently reinforce the social disparities that the college experience was supposed to alleviate.

The Post-Graduation Divide

Another critical aspect discussed in "Paying For The Party" is the post-graduation divide that perpetuates inequality long after college. Armstrong explores how the college experience, particularly within elite institutions, creates a distinct advantage for affluent students in the job market. The social and networking connections made during college, as well as the prestige associated with graduating from certain institutions, serve as powerful tools for obtaining lucrative job opportunities.

Disadvantaged students, on the other hand, often face additional obstacles when attempting to secure employment post-graduation. Even with the same degree, individuals from low-income backgrounds are less likely to have access to the same networks and connections as their wealthier counterparts. This creates a vicious cycle in which social mobility remains elusive for those who enter college hoping to break free from their socioeconomic status.

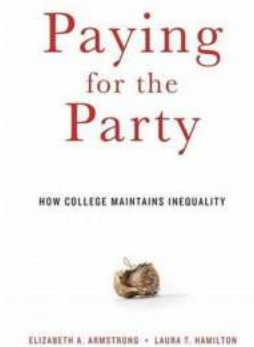
Solution and Moving Forward

Armstrong's research ultimately urges colleges and universities to take a closer look at their role in perpetuating social inequality. It calls for a re-evaluation of admission processes, financial aid strategies, and a shifting focus towards creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students. Urgent action is needed to address the systemic barriers that hinder the upward mobility of the less privileged within higher education.

The book also emphasizes the importance of policy changes that extend beyond the college campus. The broader society needs to recognize and address the structural inequalities that affect educational, economic, and social opportunities. An integrated effort to provide equitable resources and support systems is crucial in dismantling the barriers that currently hinder social mobility and perpetuate inequality in the higher education landscape.

"Paying For The Party: How College Maintains Inequality" challenges the widely held notion that college is a level playing field that promotes social mobility. Armstrong's research sheds light on the hidden mechanisms that perpetuate existing inequalities within higher education. By highlighting the flawed admission processes, the role of residential life, and the post-graduation divide, the book raises awareness about the need for urgent systemic changes. It is a call to action for colleges, policymakers, and society as a whole to strive for a more equitable and inclusive higher education system that genuinely benefits all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

As we navigate the complexities of higher education, it is crucial to recognize the hidden inequalities and take a collective stance against the perpetuation of social divisions. Only by understanding and addressing these issues head-on can we hope to bridge the gap and create a fairer, more inclusive society for future generations.



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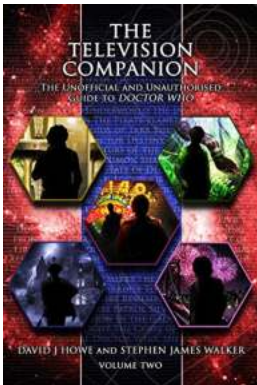
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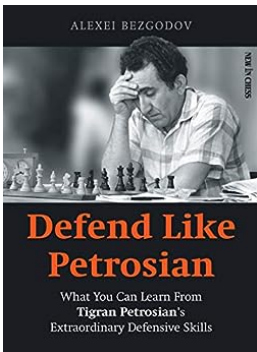


In an era of skyrocketing tuition and concern over whether college is “worth it,” Paying for the Party is an indispensable contribution to the dialogue assessing the state of American higher education. A powerful exposé of unmet obligations and misplaced priorities, it explains in detail why so many leave college with so little to show for it.



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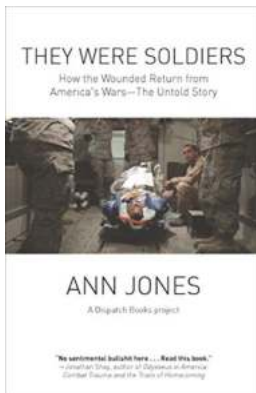
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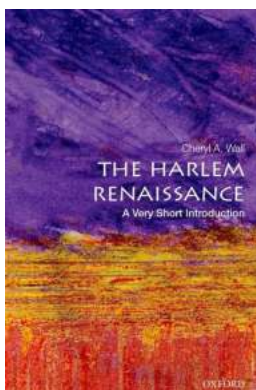
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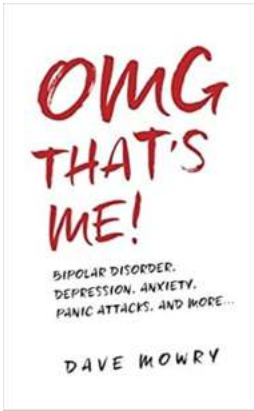
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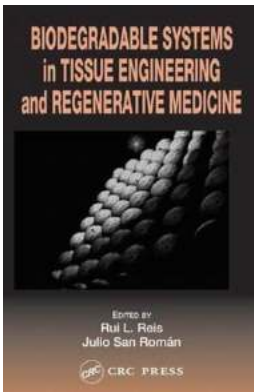
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