



No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal: Race and Class in Elite College Admission and Campus Life. Thomas J. Espenshade and Alexandria Walton Radford. Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. 2009. 576 pp. Price: US\$ 35/£24.95.

Popular perceptions and discourse about higher education in the US and its excellence often overlook the attention that educationists, policy makers, and donors pay to issues of race, class and gender equity. This book, very much in the tradition of other excellent studies such as that by Bowen and Bok and the comparative study of race and caste-based reservations in the US and in India by Thomas Weisskopf, raises pertinent and sensitive issues about accessibility, performance and graduation of different categories of students in select elite colleges in the US. The study draws on data assembled by the Andrew Mellon Foundation for eight elite institutions and is supplemented by data for admissions for 245,000 applications and completed by a survey study of 9100 responses from students.

The book captures and represents the multiple tensions that most colleges including the exclusive and elite colleges face. Even as admissions into such colleges become stiffer (and the study cites the example of Yale University where in 1932, 72% applications gained entry but in 2008 only 8.3% received admission) and the cost of education continues to rise, the need for institutions to provide entry to and sustain a diversity of students from different races, classes and the two genders has become compelling. The authors unpack vast amount of quan-

titative data on various aspects of the students, from their socio-economic background, race, parental background, preparations for exams, performance at college to graduation and employment, to present to us the complexities of college life. Their data reaffirms what other studies have highlighted—despite the efforts of college administrators and faculty to recruit and retain students from non-white backgrounds the actual record is very mixed. Whites continue to form the majority of those who gain successful entry into the elite colleges, with Asians following close and the Hispanics and Blacks lagging behind. The authors' recognition that 'merit' is not necessarily a given ability of academic abilities but is 'fluid and tends to reflect the values and interests of those who have the power to impose their particular cultural ideals' (p. 79) underscores their observation that over the years different definitions of merit have held sway and have privileged entry to different types of students. Drawing on details from the survey data, they highlight what is a complexity in that Black students who gain entry into elite colleges face the possibility of not graduating at higher levels than they would have at other non-elite universities or colleges. Recognizing that inequality, both economic and socio-racial, has been increasing since the 1970s and is buttressed by the fact that the working class is increasingly deskilled while a small number of people have growing affluence, the authors review the debates over affirmative action including that of the University of California and University of Michigan cases in which the need for institutions to support race-sensitive admission policies have received endorsements. The authors here support the dominant or institutional rationale that multicultural and multi-racial diversity is an important part of a broader learning which then justifies race preference and do not draw on other justifications such as that of justice and/or equity for an increasingly inequitable system and nation. They also refute another commonly accepted idea that inter-racial composition of colleges would facilitate greater sociality among the different race groups. They cite evidence from the survey to indicate that inter-racial socialization remains limited and Blacks typically tend to be placed in sub-groups. Pointing to evidence from the data they reiterate the need for White and Asian students to

get to know their Black and Hispanic cohorts more and to contribute to the experience of making learning a fully social and integral experience. In what can be seen as a key contribution of the study, the authors raise pertinent questions to elite educational institutions: '... are they participating, perhaps unwittingly, in the recycling of opportunity from one generation to the next? Or are they creating opportunities for socio-economically disadvantaged students to enjoy the same intellectual and economic rewards that their more privileged peers receive...?' (p. 327).

Recognizing these multiple complexities and the new compulsions and onus on educational institutions, the authors review several suggestions for alternative entry level procedures (e.g. focus on economic disadvantage over race and ethnicity) and endorse the need for continued race-sensitive entry policies so as to ensure the need to retain race-oriented affirmative policies which can then address the most fundamental source of inequality itself. The authors reiterate a perspective that is gaining momentum, that of paying attention to and addressing economic and social disadvantages at pre-college levels so that college entry-level parameters provide for an equalized academic playing field. In what is otherwise often neglected, the authors cite other studies which indicate that race and class-based advantage accounts for the fact that by age three children show sharp variations in cognitive and non-academic skills and the same (including vocabulary, reading and math skills) become snowballing gains over the years. Hence, '... differences in adult outcomes would be reduced if a way could be found to narrow racial performance gaps among children and adolescents' (p. 399).

The authors conclude the study with strong calls for addressing the many levels and forms of race and ethnicity-based disadvantages which translate not only into different academic opportunities but are also the bases for reproducing inequalities. They cite several studies to endorse this and also draw on Gunnar Myrdal's study of race-based inequality in the US and his chastisement of the race-based divide as sign of a 'moral lag' (p. 408) and call for addressing this.

Despite what can be seen as a more race just view, the authors focus on the value and contribution of educational opportunity as leading to less violence,

decreased antisocial activity, a more skilled workforce, decrease in drug use and teenage pregnancy, etc., all views which smack of a withdrawal into a conservative agenda that continues to uphold the image and desire of the established US society and nation. Perhaps, this is the only major flaw in the book which is otherwise an in-depth and comprehensive overview of the problems of making higher education the foundation for a more equitable United States of America.

I feel compelled to conclude this review by raising comparative questions for educational institutions, especially for the ones considered as 'elite' in India. Are such matters, of generating access and opportunity for disadvantaged students, concerns that our faculty and administrators have? Or have caste-based reservations become only the burden imposed by the compulsions of the Constitution and the legal apparatus? What stands out as a glaring defect in our educational institutions is not only the overarching negativity and dismissal in which such issues are handled but also the conspiracy of silence that meets any such debate. An example is the fact that most of our elite higher education institutions fail to generate and sustain data, and details about how students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have entered as 'reserved candidates' fare over the years. In fact, not only are data not maintained but attempts by scholars to conduct studies have been blocked. Even as we consider many of these elite US institutions to be models and for which many seek access to for their own children, should not Indian educationists also pause to think about issues such as equity, access, institutional obligations and the need to scaffold the abilities of students from disadvantaged backgrounds?

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Reviews on Indian Medicinal Plants.

Neeraj Tandon and Madhu Sharma (eds). Indian Council of Medical Research, V. Ramalingaswami Bhawan, Ansari Nagar, Post Box 4911, New Delhi 110 029. 2009. Vol. 9 (Da-Dy). xxiii+829 pp. Price: Rs 1000/US\$ 70.00.

This is the latest volume in the series of *Reviews on Indian Medicinal Plants*. With genera of medicinal plants arranged alphabetically, the earlier eight volumes were published in 2004 (vols 1, 2, 3: A; vol. 4: B), 2007 (vol. 5: C), 2008 (vols 6, 7: C) and 2009 (vol. 8: C). This suggests there is a long way to go before we see the last volume. Though such long time gaps are undesirable, they are often inevitable in a work of this kind, more particularly when a public sector institution is involved.

This volume contains profiles (ambitiously described as monographs) of 431 species of 91 genera, supported by 5333 references. It is structured to contain a foreword, preface, acknowledgments, monographs of 91 genera, appendices (list of plants reported for only ethnobotanical/traditional uses, list of plants not included in the volume due to change in botanical nomenclature, and list of some important books, treatises and encyclopedias referred), indices (index of botanical names, index of bioactive phytoconstituents, and index of regional and other names) and plant genera in earlier volumes 1–8.

The information on the genera is organized under general information, pharmacognostic studies, chemical studies, pharmacological and biological studies, clinical studies, toxicological studies, references and additional references.

In countries like India, even with the resources of a body like the ICMR, it is always possible that some information

was missed or left out inadvertently or due to inappropriate decisions. Hence, these volumes should only be seen as the beginning of profiling medicinal plants, on which the user would build his/her chosen generic/specific profiles, adding material that becomes available from time to time. To be fair to the compilers, these volumes should be judged on what they contain.

When every plant species is a potential medicinal plant, the choice of taxa for profiling is daunting. In this volume, there is vast information on some genera, as for example, *Desmodium* (52 pages, 12 pages of literature), *Derris* (54 pages, 23 pages of literature), *Dolichos* (62 pages, 45 pages of literature) and *Datura* (68 pages, 32 pages of literature), which appears to be comprehensive and these may be called 'Monographs'. On the other hand, there is hardly anything worthwhile on some genera such as *Dactylandra*, *Dioon*, *Disporum*, *Dopatrium*, *Dubyaea* and *Dunbaria*, which makes one wonder why these taxa were included at all when 33 other species (pp. 788, 789) were excluded, though the seven genera to which these species belong are included. At least for such species the descriptive term 'Monographs' is inappropriate.

So long as a species is commonly available in India and has appreciable medicinal uses, the question whether it is native, naturalized (for example *Ageratum conyzoides*, vol. 1) or cultivated exotic (*Daucus*, vol. 9) should not be an issue. However, if a species is a largely unknown cultivated ornamental (*Dioon edule*, p. 454 or *Datura suaveolens*, p. 91) with hardly any therapeutic information included, it only adds to the number of profiles of genera/species.

When a cultivated species has several cultivars, all of them do not have the same therapeutic potential. For example, only some cultivars of rice contain a lectin which makes them useful in controlling diarrhoea. There should be some concern to this issue, for such taxa as carrot (*Daucus carota* subspecies *sativa*, p. 153) or horse gram (*Macrotyloma uniflorum*, under *Dolichos uniflora*, p. 598), a point to be taken care of in the future volumes.

It is refreshing to find the ferns *Dicranopteris*, *Drynaria* and *Dryopteris* in this volume. The ICMR should now pay some attention to the medicinal uses of the non-vascular plant groups – the