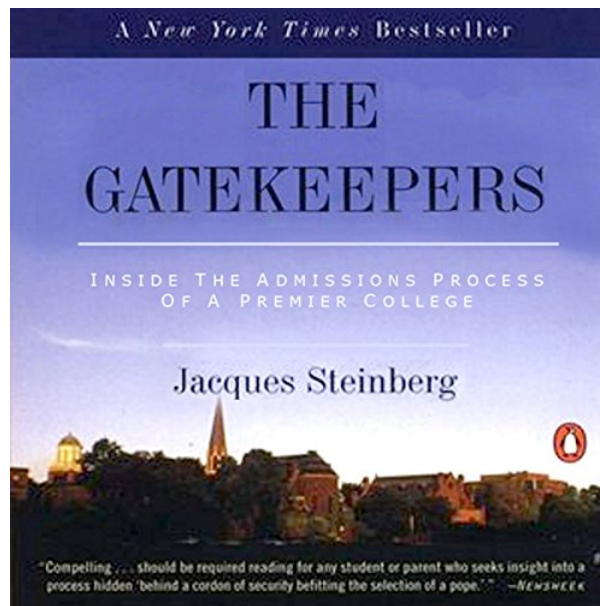
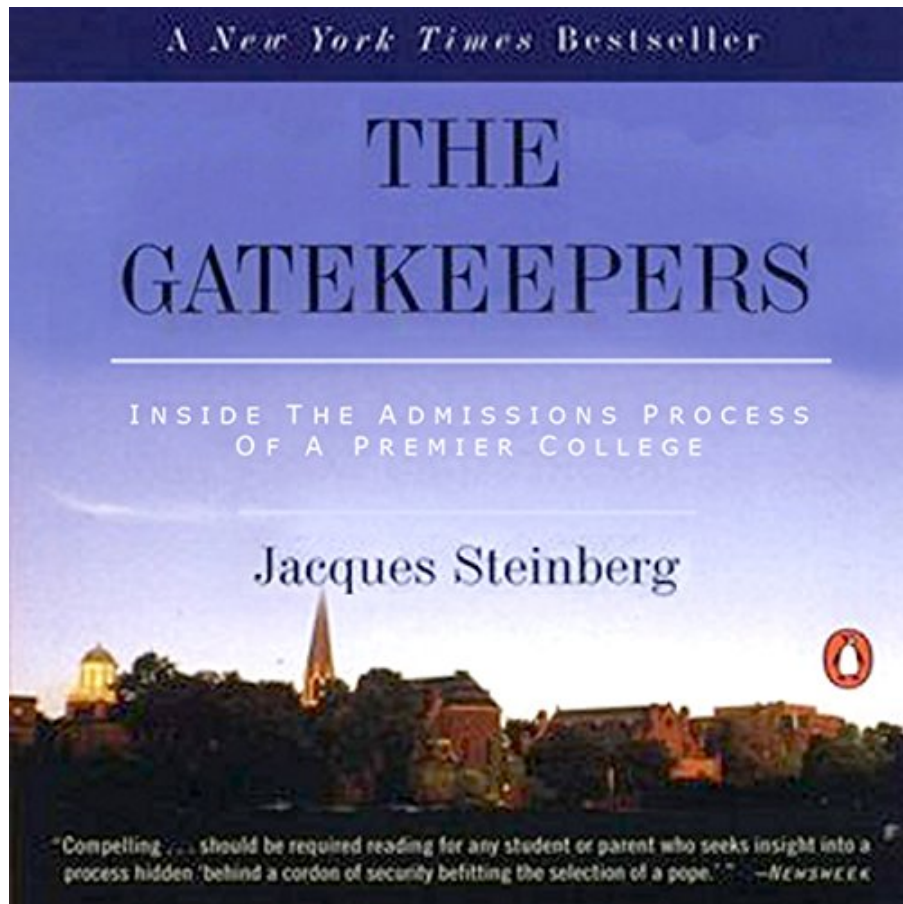


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# **THE GATEKEEPERS: INSIDE THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS OF A PREMIER COLLEGE BY JACQUES STEINBERG PDF**

In the fall of 1999, New York Times education reporter Jacques Steinberg was given an unprecedented opportunity to observe the admissions process at prestigious Wesleyan University. Over the course of nearly a year, Steinberg accompanied admissions officer Ralph Figueroa on a tour to assess and recruit the most promising students in the country.

The Gatekeepers follows a diverse group of prospective students as they compete for places in the nation's most elite colleges. The first book to reveal the college admission process in such behind-the-scenes detail, The Gatekeepers will be required reading for every parent of a high school-age child and for every student facing the arduous and anxious task of applying to college.

- Sales Rank: #26624 in Audible
- Published on: 2012-05-14
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Running time: 789 minutes

Most helpful customer reviews

94 of 101 people found the following review helpful.

REVEALING

By BeachReader

I agree with the reviewer who is an admissions officer that this book could have been about any private college. The methodology and procedures are the same everywhere, I am sure.

The book only reinforced what I already believed...that parents of those kids who are not star material are the ones who end up paying the bills for those who are at elite private colleges. I am one of those parents who paid! AS Steinberg says: "To help offset their financial losses due to increased costs for financial aid, colleges initiated an intense search for other 'customers' who could pay full price, whether from the U.S. or abroad."

I think the author did a marvelous job of making this a really interesting book, and immediately recommended it to my sister and brother, who both have boys in high school now. I did warn them, however, that what they read might be somewhat discouraging.

First, these admissions officers are very subjective (and how could they be anything else?)with a huge case load to handle in a very short period of time.

Second, I was appalled that one of the most important issues for college admission staffs seems to be how their rejection/yield rate is perceived by U.S. News and World Report.

And third, the way admissions standards are tweaked for academic stars or to achieve diversity can seem very unfair to those who have sons who fall into neither of these categories (a star or a minority).

I think there are many lessons about the college application process to be learned from reading this book. Perhaps the most important lesson is not to set your heart on one school.

I suggest this book as "must" reading for parents, students, and high school guidance counselors.

62 of 69 people found the following review helpful.

What is better? The overachieving 6 or underachieving 8?

By P. Meltzer

First, let me say that I thought that this was an excellent book and would recommend it to anyone who is at all interested in the college admissions process. Second, I was surprised at how many of the reviewers seemed shocked--shocked!--that applicants got bonus points for coming from minority backgrounds. Was this some kind of revelation? However one thing that surprised me a little bit is how--even moving beyond race entirely--the more advantages you have had in life, the more disadvantageous it will be for your admissions process. For example, I was unaware that having successful parents would be, in essence, held against you on the theory that more would be expected of you. While other reviewers have (jokingly?) said that they would advise their white kids not to check the "Caucasian" box, I might advise my (still very young) kids to say that their parents have been unemployed their whole life.

I suppose that the main issue which this whole process really boils down to is the following: As a college applicant, is it more important to succeed in life relative to the world around you (i.e. relative to your classmates, to others of your race, to others of your geographical area, to your own parents' life and accomplishments, etc.) or is it more important to succeed absolutely and not on a relative scale. This book clearly informs us that the answer is the former and not the latter. Whether that should be the answer is another question.

For example, say that a student's entire life could be distilled into 2 numbers each on a sliding scale from 1-10. The first number is simply your academic performance (grades, SAT's, course load, etc.) The second number is your background (race, economic circumstances, gender, etc.) In the case of Wesleyan, it seems clear to me that they would rather have a student whose first number was, say, a 6 if his or her second was a 2 (take Mig for example in Steinberg's book) than a student whose first number was an 8 if the second number was a 9 or 10 (take Tiffany Wang for example). Whether that is the right approach is certainly a legitimate issue for discussion and I'm not saying that it's not.

I suppose that one of the things that would be interesting to know (even though one never really can know of course) is whether those numbers will change in the future. For example, if one were to know that Mig would always be a 6 and Tiffany would always be an 8, would that change the analysis as to which is the right approach? I suspect that part of the reason that a school like Wesleyan would favor the overachieving 6 over the underachieving 8 is due to the hope or expectation that those trends will continue in the future and that one day the 6 will actually be ahead of the 8. And maybe that's the way it works. Who knows.

32 of 36 people found the following review helpful.

A Scary Thriller and a Wonderful Read

By Dan Lickly

A must read if anyone close to you is thinking about applying to one of America's elite colleges. (Full disclosure demands that I admit that next fall my son will enter college, and his first choice at that.) A few facts to keep in mind before panic takes over.

- 1) Of the 3000 colleges in USA, one can find at least 100 good colleges, many nearby and easy to get into, where one can get a fine education.
- 2) There are only about 50 or so elite colleges that play these admission games. I call them the Orwellian colleges based on George Orwell's book, not 1984, but Animal Farm. You remember the famous quote, "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others." Animal Farm should be required reading of all admission officers. Did Orwell see this coming?
- 3) This book illustrates in a gripping story all the ups and downs of the admission process at one of the Orwellian schools. The racial and ethnic preferences can be disturbing if you were expecting merit to matter. Jonathan Kozol questions on the back cover, "Whether it is actually a 'meritocracy' at all." That is a euphemism for "It sure ain't."

4) Are all the elite colleges like that? I am afraid so. Only a few elite have avoided this fate. CalTech is still strictly merit. The CalTech admission officer said recently, "Race, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc. do not count at all." And Cornell gives a fairer shake than the other Ivies. My alma mater, MIT, is about the worst of all. MIT's admission policies are abysmal. If you can believe the president (Don't ever believe admission people!), over 75% of those accepted at MIT are based on preferences. I had thought it was only about 60%. No wonder that MIT has dumbed down so much that a significant percentage of freshman are taking remedial math and physics.

5) One last caveat: "Assume nothing!" Admission is one big ...shoot. Just because a friend who is a weak student gets into Harvard doesn't mean that you will even though you are a much better candidate. This is a common error. Acceptance is like a lottery. In fact, a giant lottery makes more sense and would save millions in admission staff.

6) "And who plays God in America?", a question posed by Samuel Freedman in a blurb. Admission staff is a motley collection. It includes young temps who do it for a few years until they get tired of reading thousands of applications and older ones who have variegated backgrounds. One was rumored to be in the federal witness protection program, probably not what one was expecting to find in a judge of one's abilities.

7) Are there great colleges or universities that are readily accessible? Two come to mind.

a) University of Chicago. It is probably better than any of the Ivies and much easier to get into. A word of warning: it is rigorous. This frightens away all but the serious student. No free ride there!

b) Reed College in Portland, OR. It is also rigorous and serious. It requires a comprehensive exam and a thesis from all. No wonder so many go on to graduate school from Reed.

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