



The Best of the Best: Becoming Elite at an American Boarding School

By Rubén A. Gatzambide-Fernández



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For two years, Rubén Gatzambide-Fernández shared the life of what he calls the “Weston School,” an elite New England boarding school. He sat in on classes, ate meals in the dining halls, cheered at sporting events, hung out in dorms while students baked cookies or celebrated birthdays. And through it all, observing the experiences of a diverse group of students, conducting interviews and focus groups, he developed a nuanced portrait of how these students make sense of their extraordinary good fortune in attending the school.

Vividly describing the pastoral landscape and graceful buildings, the rich variety of classes and activities, and the official and unofficial rules that define the school, *The Best of the Best* reveals a small world of deeply ambitious, intensely pressured students. Some are on scholarship, others have never met a public school student, but all feel they have earned their place as a “Westonian” by being smart and working hard. Weston is a family, they declare, with a niche for everyone, but the hierarchy of coolness?the way in which class, race, sexism, and good looks can determine one’s place?is well known.

For Gatzambide-Fernández, Weston is daunting yet strikingly bucolic, inspiring but frustratingly incurious, and sometimes?especially for young women?a gilded cage for a gilded age. “Would you send your daughter here?” one girl asks him, and seeing his hesitation asks, “Because you love her?”

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- Sales Rank: #842347 in Books
- Published on: 2009-09-30
- Released on: 2009-08-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.10" h x 6.50" w x 9.20" l, 1.30 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 312 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

This is an engaging and insightful book, which sets the stage for a new wave of scholarship on elite identification. --Josipa Roksa, *Contemporary Sociology*

Offers hearty food for thought to anyone interested in social inequality and its reproduction via educational institutions. --Amanda Cox, *Teachers College Record*

The Best of the Best is a must for students of class and the role of great boarding schools in fostering America's elite. --Peter Kuriloff -- *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*

[The Best of the Best] offers a fresh take on elite boarding schools and is well worth reading for those interested in either education or elites. --Ezra Rosser, *American University Washington College of Law*

[Readers] will be gripped by Gaztambide-Fernández's rich descriptions and thoughtful insights. -- Sherry Deckman, *Harvard Educational Review*.

In a book that's both generous and skeptical, Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández penetrates the inner world of a top prep school, and shows how the students first construct, and then rationalize, their elite identities. Filled with irony and insight, *The Best of the Best* reveals both the opportunities and the casualties of privilege. (Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, author of *The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn from Each Other*)

From the Author

Empty

About the Author

Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández is Assistant Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He is also co-editor, with Adam Howard, of the collection *Educating Elites*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gloria Smith:

The book untitled The Best of the Best: Becoming Elite at an American Boarding School contain a lot of information on the idea. The writer explains your ex idea with easy way. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do not worry, you can easy to read it. The book was published by famous author. The author will bring you in the new age of literary works. You can easily read this book because you can continue reading your smart phone, or device, so you can read the book with anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can available their official web-site and also order it. Have a nice study.

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