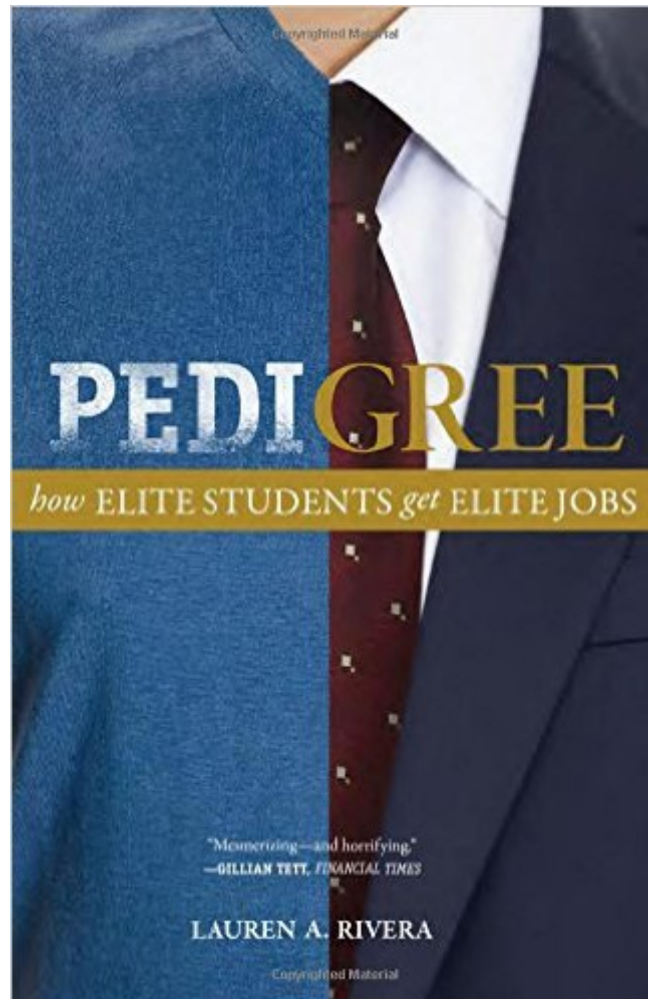


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# Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs



## Synopsis

Americans are taught to believe that upward mobility is possible for anyone who is willing to work hard, regardless of their social status, yet it is often those from affluent backgrounds who land the best jobs. Pedigree takes readers behind the closed doors of top-tier investment banks, consulting firms, and law firms to reveal the truth about who really gets hired for the nation's highest-paying entry-level jobs, who doesn't, and why. Drawing on scores of in-depth interviews as well as firsthand observation of hiring practices at some of America's most prestigious firms, Lauren Rivera shows how, at every step of the hiring process, the ways that employers define and evaluate merit are strongly skewed to favor job applicants from economically privileged backgrounds. She reveals how decision makers draw from ideas about talent--what it is, what best signals it, and who does (and does not) have it--that are deeply rooted in social class. Displaying the "right stuff" that elite employers are looking for entails considerable amounts of economic, social, and cultural resources on the part of the applicants and their parents. Challenging our most cherished beliefs about college as a great equalizer and the job market as a level playing field, Pedigree exposes the class biases built into American notions about the best and the brightest, and shows how social status plays a significant role in determining who reaches the top of the economic ladder.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A thought-provoking, well-researched analysis of the entry-level hiring process at the most elite employers in finance, law and business consulting -- one might even call them "the gatekeepers of

the 1%." My husband and I are both part of the world described here (he in consulting and me in law), as we both managed to gate-crash our way in from non-elite family backgrounds. Having done our share of hiring committee work, we can vouch for a lot of the picture painted here.\* However, the book's value derives not from the care taken in accurately describing the hiring process, but from the new light the author throws on the subject, even for those already familiar with this world. Rivera has done society a service by illuminating the unspoken norms against which all applicants to these top employers are judged. These norms, like the need to show participation in a team sport (or similar significant time commitment in a familiar group activity), or the ability to seize and hold the floor in a conversation about serious subjects, are unremarkable features of upper class life. However, they are not the natural outcomes of being raised in a poor family, and outside of attending a boarding school on a scholarship, there is nowhere you can go to learn them. So, although none of these norms overtly discriminate against applicants who are not rich, white Anglo-Saxons (though there are incidents of blatantly illegal discriminatory acts in the book too), their net effect is to largely screen out people whose lives do not resemble those of the wealthy. The book is worth reading in order to see this process in action, or for would-be applicants, even to structure your college years and take other non-obvious steps in preparation.

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