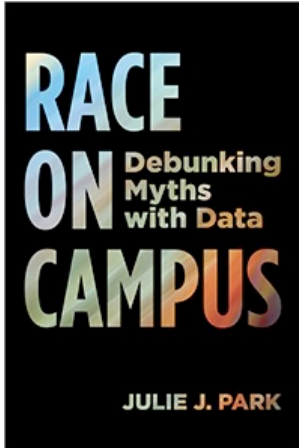


# Reflective Teaching

REFLECTIVE TEACHING



## Race on Campus: Debunking Myths with Data

Park, Julie J.

Harvard Education Publishing Group, 2018

Book Review

Tags: antiracism | critical thinking | racism | student learning

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In this highly accessible book, Julie J. Park lays out current debates surrounding affirmative action regarding race on campus. The subtitle of the book, *Debunking Myths with Data*, conveys the direct approach Park takes: chapters focus on a particular topic associated with discussions about race on campus, such as “the problem of mismatch,” and makes the argument with data for why such language is problematic and inaccurate.

For instance, in the chapter on “The Problem with the ‘Problem of Mismatch,’” Park lays out current debate surrounding whether race-conscious campus admissions should end. She highlights the work of authors such as Richard Sander, who in his book *Mismatch* (Basic, 2012) suggests that race-based affirmative action leads to students going to schools where they are mismatched, and who would have benefited from going to other (and less prestigious) schools. Park draws on data to show how the information Sander presents only looks at a particular set of examples, and ignores the larger and more positive impact that race-based affirmative action has had for persons of color. Parks lifts up statistics that show underrepresented minorities doing better at some schools than others, arguing that rather than blaming the individual or group of students for their lack of academic success, entire institutions need to reevaluate their role in contributing to or preventing the success of their underrepresented minority students. Parks points to support systems in place at particular top-tier institutions that help students excel. Park also reveals data showing that Asian American and white students struggle similarly in college, and focusing too narrowly on underrepresented minority students like African American students ignores the fact that college can be challenging for all students, and yet no one is suggesting that white students go to a lower-tier school for reasons of mismatch.

Other myths Park debunks include the complaint that black students are self-segregating by sitting together in the cafeteria or in student organizations. Park points to the ongoing racial segregation of historically White Greek Life, the sororities and fraternities that remain highly segregated across college campuses, showing that these groups have deep historic roots in intentionally racist exclusionary policies.

Ultimately, Park makes several suggestions for how to think about race on campus. First, being race-conscious is still important, not only to support racial diversity on campus but also to support economic diversity. Park lifts up data that shows Asian American students benefited more from policies that looked at race *and* class, rather than just class alone. Park also advocates for supporting underrepresented minorities students in interracial contexts as well as promoting intra-racial organizations. Finally, while diversity and inclusion are both terms that hold value for the work that needs to be done, neither are states or destinations where institutions can say they have “arrived.” Park underscores the need to continually work towards these goals, particularly in light of the resurgence of alt-right white supremacists. Antiracism is the work we need to be doing, and diversity and inclusion efforts are part of that larger and ongoing struggle.

[https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/book\\_reviews/race-on-campus-debunking-myths-with-data/](https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/book_reviews/race-on-campus-debunking-myths-with-data/)