

The Myth of American Meritocracy

How corrupt are Ivy League admissions?

by RON UNZ

Just before the Labor Day weekend, a front page *New York Times* story broke the news of the largest cheating scandal in Harvard University history, in which nearly half the students taking a Government course on the role of Congress had plagiarized or otherwise illegally collaborated on their final exam.¹ Each year, Harvard admits just 1600 freshmen while almost 125 Harvard students now face possible suspension over this single incident. A Harvard dean described the situation as “unprecedented.”

But should we really be so surprised at this behavior among the students at America’s most prestigious academic institution? In the last generation or two, the funnel of opportunity in American society has drastically narrowed, with a greater and greater proportion of our financial, media, business, and political elites being drawn from a relatively small number of our leading universities, together with their professional schools. The rise of a Henry Ford, from farm boy mechanic to world business tycoon, seems virtually impossible today, as even America’s most successful college dropouts such as Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg often turn out to be extremely well-connected former Harvard students. Indeed, the early success of Facebook was largely due to the powerful imprimatur it enjoyed from its exclusive availability first only at Harvard and later restricted to just the Ivy League.

During this period, we have witnessed a huge national decline in well-paid middle class jobs in the manufacturing sector and other sources of employment for those lacking college degrees, with median American wages having been stagnant or declining for the last forty years. Meanwhile, there has been an astonishing concentration of wealth at the top, with

America’s richest 1 percent now possessing nearly as much net wealth as the bottom 95 percent.² This situation, sometimes described as a “winner take all society,” leaves families desperate to maximize the chances that their children will reach the winners’ circle, rather than risk failure and poverty or even merely a spot in the rapidly deteriorating middle class. And the best single means of becoming such an economic winner is to gain admission to a top university, which provides an easy ticket to the wealth of Wall Street or similar venues, whose leading firms increasingly restrict their hiring to graduates of the Ivy League or a tiny handful of other top colleges.³ On the other side, finance remains the favored employment choice for Harvard, Yale or Princeton students after the diplomas are handed out.⁴

The Battle for Elite College Admissions

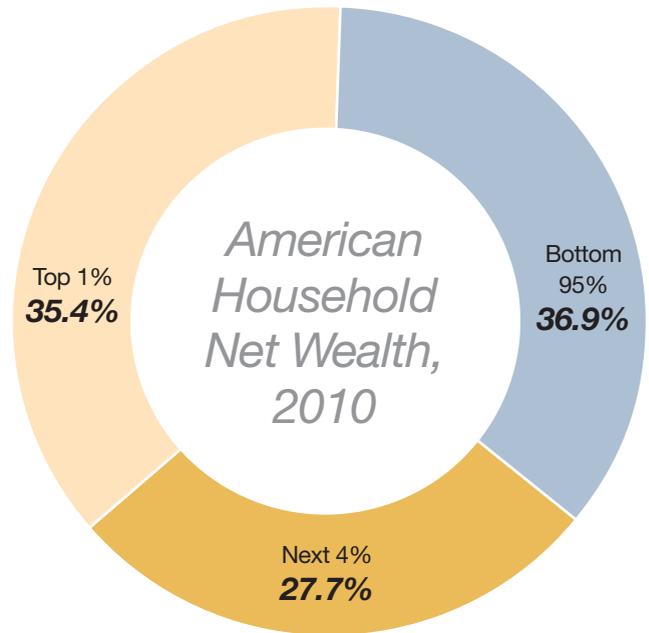
As a direct consequence, the war over college admissions has become astonishingly fierce, with many middle- or upper-middle class families investing quantities of time and money that would have seemed unimaginable a generation or more ago, leading to an all-against-all arms race that immiserates the student and exhausts the parents. The absurd parental efforts of an Amy Chua, as recounted in her 2010 bestseller *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, were simply a much more extreme version of widespread behavior among her peer-group, which is why her story resonated so deeply among our educated elites. Over the last thirty years, America’s test-prep companies have

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grown from almost nothing into a \$5 billion annual industry, allowing the affluent to provide an admissions edge to their less able children. Similarly, the enormous annual tuition of \$35,000 charged by elite private schools such as Dalton or Exeter is less for a superior high school education than for the hope of a greatly increased chance to enter the Ivy League.⁵ Many New York City parents even go to enormous efforts to enroll their children in the best possible pre-Kindergarten program, seeking early placement on the educational conveyor belt which eventually leads to Harvard.⁶ Others cut corners in a more direct fashion, as revealed in the huge SAT cheating rings recently uncovered in affluent New York suburbs, in which students were paid thousands of dollars to take SAT exams for their wealthier but dimmer classmates.⁷

But given such massive social and economic value now concentrated in a Harvard or Yale degree, the tiny handful of elite admissions gatekeepers enjoy enormous, almost unprecedented power to shape the leadership of our society by allocating their supply of thick envelopes. Even billionaires, media barons, and U.S. Senators may weigh their words and actions more carefully as their children approach college age. And if such power is used to select our future elites in a corrupt manner, perhaps the inevitable result is the selection of corrupt elites, with terrible consequences for America. Thus, the huge Harvard cheating scandal, and perhaps also the endless series of financial, business, and political scandals which have rocked our country over the last decade or more, even while our national economy has stagnated.

Just a few years ago Pulitzer Prize-winning former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Golden published *The Price of Admission*, a devastating account of the corrupt admissions practices at so many of our leading universities, in which every sort of non-academic or financial factor plays a role in privileging the privileged and thereby squeezing out those high-ability, hard-working students who lack any special hook. In one particularly egregious case, a wealthy New Jersey real estate developer, later sent to Federal prison on political corruption charges, paid Harvard \$2.5 million to help ensure admission of his completely under-qualified son.⁸ When we consider that Harvard's existing endowment was then at \$15 billion and earning almost \$7 million each day in investment earnings, we see that a culture of financial corruption has developed an absurd illogic of its own, in which senior Harvard administrators sell their university's honor for just a few hours worth of its regular annual income, the equivalent of a Harvard instructor raising a grade for a hundred dollars in cash.



An admissions system based on non-academic factors often amounting to institutionalized venality would seem strange or even unthinkable among the top universities of most other advanced nations in Europe or Asia, though such practices are widespread in much of the corrupt Third World. The notion of a wealthy family buying their son his entrance into the *Grandes Ecoles* of France or the top Japanese universities would be an absurdity, and the academic rectitude of Europe's Nordic or Germanic nations is even more severe, with those far more egalitarian societies anyway tending to deemphasize university rankings.

Or consider the case of China. There, legions of angry microbloggers endlessly denounce the official corruption and abuse which permeate so much of the economic system. But we almost never hear accusations of favoritism in university admissions, and this impression of strict meritocracy determined by the results of the national *Gaokao* college entrance examination has been confirmed to me by individuals familiar with that country. Since all the world's written exams may ultimately derive from China's old imperial examination system, which was kept remarkably clean for 1300 years, such practices are hardly surprising.⁹ Attending a prestigious college is regarded by ordinary Chinese as their children's greatest hope of rapid upward mobility and is therefore often a focus of enormous family effort; China's ruling elites may rightly fear that a policy of admitting their own dim and lazy heirs to leading schools ahead of the higher-scoring children of the masses might ignite a widespread popular uprising. This perhaps explains why so many sons and daughters of top Chinese leaders attend college in the West:

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enrolling them at a third-rate Chinese university would be a tremendous humiliation, while our own corrupt admissions practices get them an easy spot at Harvard or Stanford, sitting side by side with the children of Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and George W. Bush.

Although the evidence of college admissions corruption presented in Golden's book is quite telling, the focus is almost entirely on current practices, and largely anecdotal rather than statistical. For a broader historical perspective, we should consider *The Chosen* by Berkeley sociologist Jerome Karabel, an exhaustive and award-winning 2005 narrative history of the last

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century of admissions policy at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton (I will henceforth sometimes abbreviate these "top three" most elite schools as "HYP").

Karabel's massive documentation—over 700 pages and 3000 endnotes—establishes the remarkable fact that America's uniquely complex and subjective system of academic admissions actually arose as a means of covert ethnic tribal warfare. During the 1920s, the established Northeastern Anglo-Saxon elites who then dominated the Ivy League wished to sharply curtail the rapidly growing numbers of Jewish students, but their initial attempts to impose simple numerical quotas provoked enormous controversy and faculty opposition.¹⁰ Therefore, the approach subsequently taken by Harvard President A. Lawrence Lowell and his peers was to transform the admissions process from a simple objective test of academic merit into a complex and holistic consideration of all aspects of each individual applicant; the resulting opacity permitted the admission or rejection of any given applicant, allowing the ethnicity of the student body to be shaped as desired. As a consequence, university leaders could honestly deny the existence of any racial or religious quotas, while still managing to reduce Jewish enrollment to a much lower level, and thereafter hold it almost constant during the decades which followed.¹¹ For example, the Jewish portion of Harvard's entering class dropped from nearly 30 percent in 1925 to 15 percent the following year and remained roughly static until the period of the Second World War.¹²

As Karabel repeatedly demonstrates, the major changes in admissions policy which later followed were usually determined by factors of raw political power

and the balance of contending forces rather than any idealistic considerations. For example, in the aftermath of World War II, Jewish organizations and their allies mobilized their political and media resources to pressure the universities into increasing their ethnic enrollment by modifying the weight assigned to various academic and non-academic factors, raising the importance of the former over the latter. Then a decade or two later, this exact process was repeated in the opposite direction, as the early 1960s saw black activists and their liberal political allies pressure universities to bring their racial minority enrollments into closer alignment with America's national population by partially shifting away from their recently enshrined focus on purely academic considerations. Indeed, Karabel notes that the most sudden and extreme increase in minority enrollment took place at Yale in the years 1968–69, and was largely due to fears of race riots in heavily black New Haven, which surrounded the campus.¹³

Philosophical consistency appears notably absent in many of the prominent figures involved in these admissions battles, with both liberals and conservatives sometimes favoring academic merit and sometimes non-academic factors, whichever would produce the particular ethnic student mix they desired for personal or ideological reasons. Different political blocs waged long battles for control of particular universities, and sudden large shifts in admissions rates occurred as these groups gained or lost influence within the university apparatus: Yale replaced its admissions staff in 1965 and the following year Jewish numbers nearly doubled.¹⁴

At times, external judicial or political forces would be summoned to override university admissions policy, often succeeding in this aim. Karabel's own ideological leanings are hardly invisible, as he hails efforts by state legislatures to force Ivy League schools to lift their *de facto* Jewish quotas, but seems to regard later legislative attacks on "affirmative action" as unreasonable assaults on academic freedom.¹⁵ The massively footnoted text of *The Chosen* might lead one to paraphrase Clausewitz and conclude that our elite college admissions policy often consists of ethnic warfare waged by other means, or even that it could be summarized as a simple Lenin-esque question of "Who, Whom?"

Although nearly all of Karabel's study is focused on the earlier history of admissions policy at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, with the developments of the last three decades being covered in just a few dozen pages, he finds complete continuity down to the present day, with the notorious opacity of the admissions pro-

cess still allowing most private universities to admit whomever they want for whatever reasons they want, even if the reasons and the admissions decisions may eventually change over the years. Despite these plain facts, Harvard and the other top Ivy League schools today publicly deny any hint of discrimination along racial or ethnic lines, except insofar as they acknowledge providing an admissions boost to under-represented racial minorities, such as blacks or Hispanics. But given the enormous control these institutions exert on our larger society, we should test these claims against the evidence of the actual enrollment statistics.

Asian-Americans as the “New Jews”

The overwhelming focus of Karabel’s book is on changes in Jewish undergraduate percentages at each university, and this is probably less due to his own ethnic heritage than because the data provides an extremely simple means of charting the ebb and flow of admissions policy: Jews were a high-performing group, whose numbers could only be restricted by major deviations from an objective meritocratic standard.

Obviously, anti-Jewish discrimination in admissions no longer exists at any of these institutions, but a roughly analogous situation may be found with a group whom Golden and others have sometimes labeled “The New Jews,” namely Asian-Americans. Since their strong academic performance is coupled with relatively little political power, they would be obvious candidates for discrimination in the harsh realpolitik of university admissions as documented by Karabel, and indeed he briefly raises the possibility of an anti-Asian admissions bias, before concluding that the elite universities are apparently correct in denying that it exists.¹⁶

There certainly does seem considerable anecdotal evidence that many Asians perceive their chances of elite admission as being drastically reduced by their racial origins.¹⁷ For example, our national newspapers have revealed that students of part-Asian background have regularly attempted to conceal the non-white side of their ancestry when applying to Harvard and other elite universities out of concern it would greatly reduce their chances of admission.¹⁸ Indeed, widespread perceptions of racial discrimination are almost certainly the primary factor behind the huge growth in the number of students refusing to reveal their racial background at top universities, with the percentage of Harvard students classified as “race unknown” having risen from almost nothing to a regular 5–15 percent of all undergraduates over the last twenty

years, with similar levels reached at other elite schools.

Such fears that checking the “Asian” box on an admissions application may lead to rejection are hardly unreasonable, given that studies have documented a large gap between the average test scores of whites and Asians successfully admitted to elite universities. Princeton sociologist Thomas J. Espenshade and his colleagues have demonstrated that among undergraduates at highly selective schools such as the Ivy League, white students have mean scores 310 points higher on the 1600 SAT scale than their black classmates, but Asian students average 140 points above whites.¹⁹ The former gap is an automatic consequence of officially acknowledged affirmative action policies, while the latter appears somewhat mysterious.

These broad statistical differences in the admission requirements for Asians are given a human face in Golden’s discussions of this subject, in which he recounts numerous examples of Asian-American students who overcame dire family poverty, immigrant adversity, and other enormous personal hardships to achieve stellar academic performance and extracurricular triumphs, only to be rejected by all their top university choices. His chapter is actually entitled “The New Jews,” and he notes the considerable irony that a university such as Vanderbilt will announce a public goal of greatly increasing its Jewish enrollment and nearly triple those numbers in just four years, while showing very little interest in admitting high-performing Asian students.²⁰

All these elite universities strongly deny the existence of any sort of racial discrimination against Asians in the admissions process, let alone an “Asian quota,” with senior administrators instead claiming that the potential of each student is individually evaluated via a holistic process far superior to any mechanical reliance on grades or test scores; but such public postures are identical to those taken by their academic predecessors in the 1920s and 1930s as documented by Karabel. Fortunately, we can investigate the plausibility of these claims by examining the decades of officially reported enrollment data available from the website of the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES).

The ethnic composition of Harvard undergraduates certainly follows a highly intriguing pattern. Harvard had always had a significant Asian-American enrollment, generally running around 5 percent when I had attended in the early 1980s. But during the following decade, the size of America’s Asian middle class grew rapidly, leading to a sharp rise in applications and admissions, with Asians exceeding 10 percent of

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undergraduates by the late 1980s and crossing the 20 percent threshold by 1993. However, from that year forward, the Asian numbers went into reverse, generally stagnating or declining during the two decades which followed, with the official 2011 figure being 17.2 percent.²¹

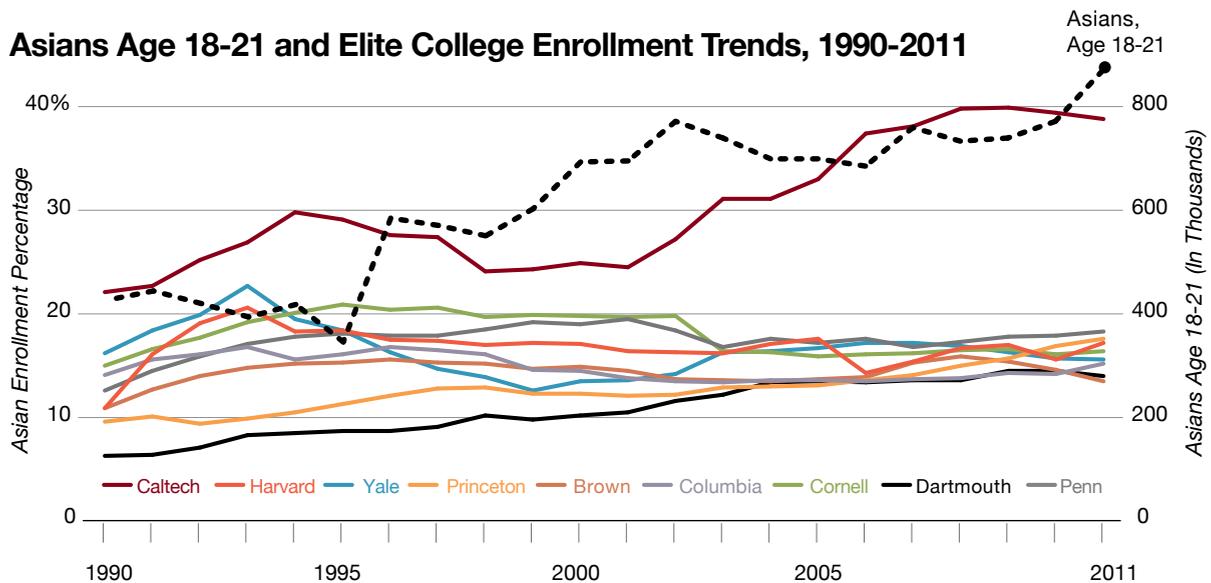
Even more surprising has been the sheer constancy of these percentages, with almost every year from 1995–2011 showing an Asian enrollment within a single point of the 16.5 percent average, despite huge fluctuations in the number of applications and the inevitable uncertainty surrounding which students will accept admission. By contrast, prior to 1993 Asian enrollment had often changed quite substantially from year to year. It is interesting to note that this exactly replicates the historical pattern observed by Karabel, in which Jewish enrollment rose very rapidly, leading to imposition of an informal quota system, after which the number of Jews fell substantially, and thereafter remained roughly constant for decades. On the face of it, ethnic enrollment levels which widely diverge from academic performance data or application rates and which remain remarkably static over time provide obvious circumstantial evidence for at least a *de facto* ethnic quota system.

In another strong historical parallel, all the other Ivy League universities seem to have gone through similar shifts in Asian enrollment at similar times and reached a similar plateau over the last couple of decades. As mentioned, the share of Asians at Harvard

peaked at over 20 percent in 1993, then immediately declined and thereafter remained roughly constant at a level 3–5 points lower. Asians at Yale reached a 16.8 percent maximum in that same year, and soon dropped by about 3 points to a roughly constant level. The Columbia peak also came in 1993 and the Cornell peak in 1995, in both cases followed by the same substantial drop, and the same is true for most of their East Coast peers. During the mid- to late-1980s, there had been some public controversy in the media regarding allegations of anti-Asian discrimination in the Ivy League, and the Federal Government eventually even opened an investigation into the matter.²² But once that investigation was closed in 1991, Asian enrollments across all those universities rapidly converged to the same level of approximately 16 percent, and remained roughly static thereafter (See chart below). In fact, the yearly fluctuations in Asian enrollments are often smaller than were the changes in Jewish numbers during the “quota era” of the past,²³ and are roughly the same relative size as the fluctuations in black enrollments, even though the latter are heavily influenced by the publicly declared “ethnic diversity goals” of those same institutions.

The largely constant Asian numbers at these elite colleges are particularly strange when we consider that the underlying population of Asians in America has been anything but static, instead growing at the fastest pace of any American racial group, having increased by almost 50 percent during the last decade, and more than doubling since 1993. Obviously, the relevant ratio would be to the 18–21 age cohort, but

Asians Age 18-21 and Elite College Enrollment Trends, 1990-2011



Trends of Asian enrollment at Caltech and the Ivy League universities, compared with growth of Asian college-age population; Asian age cohort population figures are based on Census CPS, and given the small sample size, are subject to considerable yearly statistical fluctuations. Source: Appendices B and C.

adjusting for this factor changes little: based on Census data, the college-age ratio of Asians to whites increased by 94 percent between 1994 and 2011, even while the ratio of Asians to whites at Harvard and Columbia fell over these same years.²⁴

Put another way, the percentage of college-age Asian-Americans attending Harvard peaked around 1993, and has since dropped by over 50 percent, a decline somewhat larger than the fall in Jewish enrollment which followed the imposition of secret quotas in 1925.²⁵ And we have noted the parallel trends in the other Ivy League schools, which also replicates the historical pattern.

Furthermore, during this exact same period a large portion of the Asian-American population moved from first-generation immigrant poverty into the ranks of the middle class, greatly raising their educational aspirations for their children. Although elite universities generally refuse to release their applicant totals for different racial groups, some data occasionally becomes available. Princeton's records show that between 1980 and 1989, Asian-American applications increased by over 400 percent compared to just 8 percent for other groups, with an even more rapid increase for Brown during 1980-1987, while Harvard's Asian applicants increased over 250 percent between 1976 and 1985.²⁶ It seems likely that the statistics for other Ivy League schools would have followed a similar pattern and these trends would have at least partially continued over the decades which followed, just as the Asian presence has skyrocketed at selective public feeder schools such as Stuyvesant and Bronx Science in New York City and also at the top East Coast prep schools. Yet none of these huge changes in the underlying pool of Asian applicants seemed to have had noticeable impact on the number admitted to Harvard or most of the Ivy League.

Estimating Asian Merit

One obvious possible explanation for these trends might be a decline in average Asian scholastic performance, which would certainly be possible if more and more Asian students from the lower levels of the ability pool were pursuing an elite education.²⁷ The mean SAT scores for Asian students show no such large decline, but since we would expect elite universities to draw their students from near the absolute top of the performance curve, average scores by race are potentially less significant than the Asian fraction of America's highest performing students.

To the extent that the hundred thousand or so un-

dergraduates at Ivy League schools and their approximate peers are selected by academic merit, they would mostly be drawn from the top one-half to one percent of their American age-cohort, and this is the appropriate pool to consider. It is perfectly possible that a particular ethnic population might have a relatively high mean SAT score, while still being somewhat less well represented in that top percent or so of measured ability; racial performance does not necessarily follow an exact "bell curve" distribution. For one thing, a Census category such as "Asian" is hardly homogeneous or monolithic, with South Asians and East Asians such as Chinese and Koreans generally having much higher performance compared to other groups such as Filipinos, Vietnamese, or Cambodians, just as the various types of "Hispanics" such as Cubans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans differ widely in their socio-economic and academic profiles. Furthermore, the percentage of a given group taking the SAT may change over time, and the larger the percentage taking that test, the more that total will include weaker students, thereby depressing the average score.

Fortunately, allegations of anti-Asian admissions bias have become a topic of widespread and heated debate on the Internet, and disgruntled Asian-American activists have diligently located various types of data to support their accusations, with the recent ethnic distribution of National Merit Scholarship (NMS) semifinalists being among the most persuasive. Students receiving this official designation represent approximately the top one-half of one percent of a state's high school students as determined by their scores on the PSAT, twin brother to the SAT. Each year, the NMS Corporation distributes the names and schools of these semifinalists for each state, and dozens of these listings have been tracked down and linked on the Internet by determined activists, who have then sometimes estimated the ethnic distribution of the semifinalists by examining their family names.²⁸ Obviously, such a name analysis provides merely an approximate result, but the figures are striking enough to warrant the exercise. (All these NMS semifinalist estimates are discussed in Appendix E.)²⁹

For example, California has a population comparable to that of the next two largest states combined, and its 2010 total of 2,003 NMS semifinalists included well over 1,100 East Asian or South Asian family names. California may be one of the most heavily Asian states, but even so Asians of high school age are still outnumbered by whites roughly 3-to-1, while there were far more high scoring Asians. Put another way, although Asians represented only about 11 percent of California high school students, they constituted al-

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most 60 percent of the top scoring ones. California's list of NMS semifinalists from 2012 also followed a very similar ethnic pattern. Obviously, such an analysis based on last names is hardly precise, but it is probably correct to within a few percent, which is sufficient for our crude analytical purposes.

In addition, the number of test-takers is sufficiently large that an examination of especially distinctive last names allows us to pinpoint and roughly quantify the academic performance of different Asian groups. For example, the name "Nguyen" is uniquely Vietnamese and carried by about 1 in 3.6 of all Americans of that ethnicity, while "Kim" is just as uniquely Korean, with one in 5.5 Korean-Americans bearing that name.³⁰ By comparing the prevalence of these particular names on the California NMS semifinalist lists with the total size of the corresponding California ethnicities, we can estimate that California Vietnamese are significantly more likely than whites to score very highly on such tests, while Koreans seem to do eight times better than whites and California's Chinese even better still. (All these results rely upon the simplifying assumption that these different Asian groups are roughly proportional in their numbers of high school seniors.)

Interestingly enough, these Asian performance ratios are remarkably similar to those worked out by Nathaniel Weyl in his 1989 book *The Geography of American Achievement*, in which he estimated that Korean and Chinese names were over-represented by 1000 percent or more on the complete 1987 lists of national NMS semifinalists, while Vietnamese names were only somewhat more likely to appear than the white average.³¹ This consistency is quite impressive when we consider that America's Asian population has tripled since the late 1980s, with major changes as well in socio-economic distribution and other characteristics.

The results for states other than California reflect this same huge abundance of high performing Asian students. In Texas, Asians are just 3.8 percent of the population but were over a quarter of the NMS semifinalists in 2010, while the 2.4 percent of Florida Asians provided between 10 percent and 16 percent of the top students in the six years from 2008 to 2013 for which I have been able to obtain the NMS lists. Even in New York, which contains one of our nation's most affluent and highly educated white populations and also remains by far the most heavily Jewish state, Asian over-representation was enormous: the Asian 7.3 percent of the population—many of them impoverished immigrant families—accounted for almost one-third of all top scoring New York students.

America's eight largest states contain nearly half our

total population as well as over 60 percent of all Asian-Americans, and each has at least one NMS semifinalist list available for the years 2010–2012. Asians account for just 6 percent of the population in these states, but contribute almost one-third of all the names on these rosters of high performing students. Even this result may be a substantial underestimate, since over half these Asians are found in gigantic California, where extremely stiff academic competition has driven the qualifying NMS semifinalist threshold score to nearly the highest in the country; if students were selected based on a single nationwide standard, Asian numbers would surely be much higher. This pattern extends to the aggregate of the twenty-five states whose lists are available, with Asians constituting 5 percent of the total population but almost 28 percent of semifinalists. Extrapolating these state results to the national total, we would expect 25–30 percent of America's highest scoring high school seniors to be of Asian origin.³² This figure is far above the current Asian enrollment at Harvard or the rest of the Ivy League.

Ironically enough, the methodology used to select these NMS semifinalists may considerably understate the actual number of very high-ability Asian students. According to testing experts, the three main subcomponents of intellectual ability are verbal, mathematical, and visuospatial, with the last of these representing the mental manipulation of objects. Yet the qualifying NMS scores are based on math, reading, and writing tests, with the last two both corresponding to verbal ability, and without any test of visuospatial skills. Even leaving aside the language difficulties which students from an immigrant background might face, East Asians tend to be weakest in the verbal category and strongest in the visuospatial, so NMS semifinalists are being selected by a process which excludes the strongest Asian component and doubles the weight of the weakest.³³

This evidence of a massively disproportionate Asian presence among top-performing students only increases if we examine the winners of national academic competitions, especially those in mathematics and science, where judging is the most objective. Each year, America picks its five strongest students to represent our country in the International Math Olympiad, and during the three decades since 1980, some 34 percent of these team members have been Asian-American, with the corresponding figure for the International Computing Olympiad being 27 percent. The Intel Science Talent Search, begun in 1942 under the auspices of the Westinghouse Corporation, is America's most prestigious high school science competition, and since

1980 some 32 percent of the 1320 finalists have been of Asian ancestry (see Appendix F).

Given that Asians accounted for just 1.5 percent of the population in 1980 and often lived in relatively impoverished immigrant families, the longer-term historical trends are even more striking. Asians were less than 10 percent of U.S. Math Olympiad winners during the 1980s, but rose to a striking 58 percent of the total during the last thirteen years 2000–2012. For the Computing Olympiad, Asian winners averaged about 20 percent of the total during most of the 1990s and 2000s, but grew to 50 percent during 2009–2010 and a remarkable 75 percent during 2011–2012.

The statistical trend for the Science Talent Search finalists, numbering many thousands of top science students, has been the clearest: Asians constituted 22 percent of the total in the 1980s, 29 percent in the 1990s, 36 percent in the 2000s, and 64 percent in the 2010s. In particular science subjects, the Physics Olympiad winners follow a similar trajectory, with Asians accounting for 23 percent of the winners during the 1980s, 25 percent during the 1990s, 46 percent during the 2000s, and a remarkable 81 percent since 2010. The 2003–2012 Biology Olympiad winners were 68 percent Asian and Asians took an astonishing 90 percent of the top spots in the recent Chemistry Olympiads. Some 61 percent of the Siemens AP Awards from 2002–2011 went to Asians, including thirteen of the fourteen top national prizes.

Yet even while all these specific Asian-American academic achievement trends were rising at such an impressive pace, the relative enrollment of Asians at Harvard was plummeting, dropping by over half during the last twenty years, with a range of similar declines also occurring at Yale, Cornell, and most other Ivy League universities. Columbia, in the heart of heavily Asian New York City, showed the steepest decline of all.

There may even be a logical connection between these two contradictory trends. On the one hand, America over the last two decades has produced a rapidly increasing population of college-age Asians, whose families are increasingly affluent, well-educated, and eager to secure an elite education for their children. But on the other hand, it appears that these leading academic institutions have placed a rather strict upper limit on actual Asian enrollments, forcing these Asian students to compete more and more fiercely for a very restricted number of openings. This has sparked a massive Asian-American arms-race in academic performance at high schools throughout the country, as seen above in the skyrocketing math and science competition results. When a far greater volume of applicants is squeezed into a pipeline of

fixed size, the pressure can grow enormously.

The implications of such massive pressure may be seen in a widely-discussed front page 2005 *Wall Street Journal* story entitled “The New White Flight.”³⁴ The article described the extreme academic intensity at several predominantly Asian high schools in Cupertino and other towns in Silicon Valley, and the resulting exodus of white students, who preferred to avoid such an exceptionally focused and competitive academic environment, which included such severe educational tension. But should the families of those Asian students be blamed if according to Espensade and his colleagues their children require far higher academic performance than their white classmates to have a similar chance of gaining admission to selective colleges?

Although the “Asian Tiger Mom” behavior described by author Amy Chua provoked widespread hostility and ridicule, consider the situation from her perspective. Being herself a Harvard graduate, she would like her daughters to follow in her own Ivy League footsteps, but is probably aware that the vast growth in Asian applicants with no corresponding increase in allocated Asian slots requires heroic efforts to shape the perfect application package. Since Chua’s husband is not Asian, she could obviously encourage her children to improve their admissions chances by concealing their ethnic identity during the application process; but this would surely represent an enormous personal humiliation for a proud and highly successful Illinois-born American of Chinese ancestry.

The claim that most elite American universities employ a *de facto* Asian quota system is certainly an inflammatory charge in our society. Indeed, our media and cultural elites view any accusations of “racial discrimination” as being among the most horrific of all possible charges, sometimes even regarded as more serious than mass murder.³⁵ So before concluding that these accusations are probably true and considering possible social remedies, we should carefully reconsider their plausibility, given that they are largely based upon a mixture of circumstantial statistical evidence and the individual anecdotal cases presented by Golden and a small handful of other critical journalists. One obvious approach is to examine enrollment figures at those universities which for one reason or another may follow a different policy.

According to incoming student test scores and recent percentages of National Merit Scholars, four American universities stand at the absolute summit of average student quality—Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Caltech, the California Institute of Technology; and of these Caltech probably ranks first among equals.³⁶ Those three top Ivies continue to employ the same ad-

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missions system which Karabel describes as “opaque,” “flexible,” and allowing enormous “discretion,”³⁷ a system originally established to restrict the admission of high-performing Jews. But Caltech selects its students by strict academic standards, with Golden praising it for being America’s shining example of a purely meritocratic university, almost untouched by the financial or political corruption so widespread in our other elite institutions. And since the beginning of the 1990s, Caltech’s Asian-American enrollment has risen almost exactly in line with the growth of America’s underlying Asian population, with Asians now constituting nearly 40 percent of each class (See chart on p. 18).

Obviously, the Caltech curriculum is narrowly focused on mathematics, science, and engineering, and since Asians tend to be especially strong in those subjects, the enrollment statistics might be somewhat distorted compared to a more academically balanced university. Therefore, we should also consider the enrollment figures for the highly-regarded University of California system, particularly its five most prestigious and selective campuses: Berkeley, UCLA, San Diego, Davis, and Irvine. The 1996 passage of Proposition 209 had outlawed the use of race or ethnicity in admissions decisions, and while administrative compliance has certainly not been absolute—Golden noted the evidence of some continued anti-Asian discrimination—the practices do seem to have moved in the general direction of race-blind meritocracy.³⁸ And the 2011 Asian-American enrollment at those five elite campuses ranged from 34 percent to 49 percent, with a weighted average of almost exactly 40 percent, identical to that of Caltech.³⁹

In considering these statistics, we must take into account that California is one of our most heavily Asian states, containing over one-quarter of the total national population, but also that a substantial fraction of UC students are drawn from other parts of the country. The recent percentage of Asian NMS semifinalists in California has ranged between 55 percent and 60 percent, while for the rest of America the figure is probably closer to 20 percent, so an overall elite-campus UC Asian-American enrollment of around 40 percent seems reasonably close to what a fully meritocratic admissions system might be expected to produce.

By contrast, consider the anomalous admissions statistics for Columbia. New York City contains America’s largest urban Asian population, and Asians are one-third or more of the entire state’s top scoring high school students. Over the last couple of decades, the local Asian population has doubled in size and Asians now constitute over two-thirds of the students attending the most selective local high schools such as

Stuyvesant and Bronx Science, perhaps triple the levels during the mid-1980s.⁴⁰ Yet whereas in 1993 Asians made up 22.7 percent of Columbia’s undergraduates, the total had dropped to 15.6 percent by 2011. These figures seem extremely difficult to explain except as evidence of sharp racial bias.

Asian-Americans and Jews

A natural question to consider is the surprising lack of attention this issue seems to have attracted, despite such remarkably telling statistics and several articles over the years in major newspapers by Golden and other prominent journalists. One would think that a widespread practice of racial discrimination by America’s most elite private universities—themselves leading bastions of “Political Correctness” and strident anti-racist ideology—would attract much more public scrutiny, especially given their long prior history of very similar exclusionary policies with regard to Jewish enrollment.⁴¹ Without such scrutiny and the political mobilization it generates, the *status quo* seems unlikely to change.⁴²

Indeed, Karabel convincingly demonstrates that the collapse of the long-standing Jewish quotas in the Ivy League during the decade following World War II only occurred as a result of massive media and political pressure, pressure surely facilitated by very heavy Jewish ownership of America’s major media organs, including all three television networks, eight of nine major Hollywood studios, and many of the leading newspapers, including both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. By contrast, Asian-Americans today neither own nor control even a single significant media outlet, and they constitute an almost invisible minority in films, television, radio, and print. For most Americans, what the media does not report simply does not exist, and there is virtually no major media coverage of what appear to be *de facto* Asian quotas at our top academic institutions.

But before we conclude that our elite media organs are engaging in an enormous “conspiracy of silence” regarding this egregious pattern of racial discrimination at our most prestigious universities, we should explore alternate explanations for these striking results. Perhaps we are considering the evidence from entirely the wrong perspective, and ignoring the most obvious—and relatively innocuous—explanation.

In recent decades, the notion of basing admissions on “colorblind” meritocratic standards such as standardized academic test scores has hardly been an uncontroversial position, with advocates for a fully

“diversified” student body being far more prominent within the academic community. Indeed, one of the main attacks against California’s 1996 Proposition 209 was that its requirement of race-neutrality in admissions would destroy the ethnic diversity of California’s higher education system, and the measure was vigorously opposed by the vast majority of vocal university academics, both within that state and throughout the nation. Most leading progressives have long argued that the students selected by our elite institutions should at least roughly approximate the distribution of America’s national population, requiring that special consideration be given to underrepresented or underprivileged groups of all types.

We must remember that at all the universities discussed above, Asian students are already enrolled in numbers far above their 5 percent share of the national population, and the Iron Law of Arithmetic is that percentages must always total to one hundred. So if additional slots were allocated to Asian applicants, these must necessarily come from some other group, perhaps blacks raised in the ghettos of Detroit or desperately poor Appalachian whites, who might be the first in their families to attend college. These days in America, most Asians are a heavily urbanized, highly affluent population,⁴³ overwhelmingly part of the middle- or upper-middle class, and boosting their Harvard numbers from three times their share of the population up to five or six might not be regarded as the best policy when other groups are far needier. To be sure, the broad racial category “Asian” hides enormous internal complexity—with Chinese, Koreans, and South Asians being far more successful than Filipinos, Vietnamese, or Cambodians—but that is just as true of the equally broad “white” or “Hispanic” labels, which also conceal much more than they reveal.

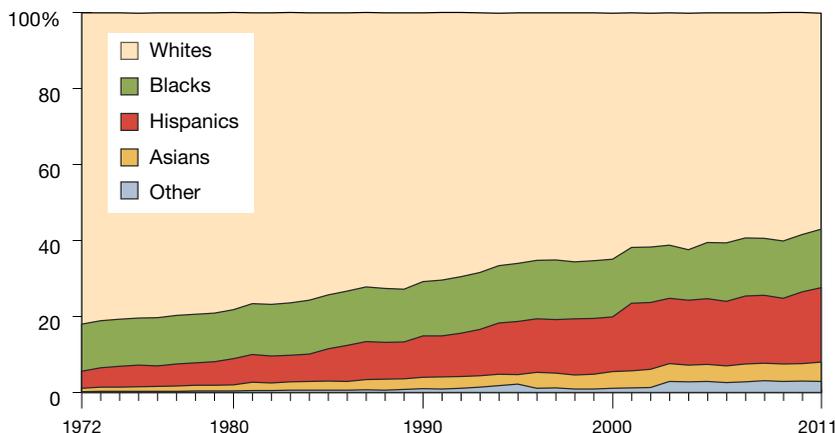
Furthermore, elite universities explicitly claim to consider a wide range of other admissions factors besides academic performance. Geographical diversity would certainly hurt Asian chances since nearly half their population lives in just the three states of California, New York, and Texas.⁴⁴ Top athletes gain a strong admissions edge, and few Asians are found in the upper ranks of basketball, football, baseball, and other leading sports, an occasional Jeremy Lin notwithstanding. Since most Asians come from a recent immigrant background, they would

rarely receive the “legacy boost” going to students whose families have been attending the Ivy League for generations. And it is perfectly possible that ideological considerations of diversity and equity might make administrators reluctant to allow any particular group to become too heavily over-represented relative to its share of the general population. So perhaps highly-qualified Asians are not being rejected as Asians, but simply due to these pre-existing ideological and structural policies of our top universities, whether or not we happen to agree with them.⁴⁵ In fact, when an Asian student rejected by Harvard filed a complaint of racial discrimination with the U.S. Department of Education earlier this year, the Harvard *Crimson* denounced his charges as “ludicrous,” arguing that student diversity was a crucial educational goal and that affirmative action impacted Asians no more than any other applicant group.⁴⁶

The best means of testing this hypothesis would be to compare Asian admissions with those of a somewhat similar control group. One obvious candidate would be the population of elite East Coast WASPs which once dominated the Ivy League. Members of this group should also be negatively impacted by admissions preferences directed towards applicants from rural or impoverished backgrounds, but there seems considerable anecdotal evidence that they are still heavily over-represented in the Ivy League relative to their academic performance or athletic prowess, strengthening the suspicion that Asian applicants are receiving unfair treatment. However, solid statistical data regarding this elite WASP subpopulation is almost non-existent, and anyway the boundaries of the category are quite imprecise and fluid across generations. For example, the two wealthy Winklevoss twins of Greenwich, Conn. and Harvard Facebook

Racial Trends for Americans

Age 18-21, 1972-2011



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fame might appear to be perfect examples of this social class, but their grandfather actually had an eighth-grade education and came from a long line of impoverished coalminers in rural Pennsylvania.⁴⁷

Fortunately, an alternate comparison population is readily available, namely that of American Jews,⁴⁸ a group which is both reasonably well-defined and one which possesses excellent statistical information, gathered by various Jewish organizations and academic scholars. In particular, Hillel, the nationwide Jewish student organization with chapters on most major university campuses, has for decades been providing extensive data on Jewish enrollment levels. Since Karabel's own historical analysis focuses so very heavily on Jewish admissions, his book also serves as a compendium of useful quantitative data drawn from these and similar sources.⁴⁹

Once we begin separating out the Jewish portion of Ivy League enrollment, our picture of the overall demographics of the student bodies is completely transformed. Indeed, Karabel opens the final chapter of his book by performing exactly this calculation and noting the extreme irony that the WASP demographic group which had once so completely dominated America's elite universities and "virtually all the major institutions of American life" had by 2000 become "a small and beleaguered minority at Harvard," being actually fewer in number than the Jews whose presence they had once sought to restrict.⁵⁰ Very similar results seem to apply all across the Ivy League, with the disproportion often being even greater than the particular example emphasized by Karabel.

In fact, Harvard reported that 45.0 percent of its undergraduates in 2011 were white Americans, but since Jews were 25 percent of the student body, the enrollment of non-Jewish whites might have been as low as 20 percent, though the true figure was probably somewhat higher.⁵¹ The Jewish levels for Yale and Columbia were also around 25 percent, while white Gentiles were 22 percent at the former and just 15 percent at the latter. The remainder of the Ivy League followed this same general pattern.

This overrepresentation of Jews is really quite extraordinary, since the group currently constitutes just 2.1 percent of the general population and about 1.8 percent of college-age Americans.⁵² Thus, although Asian-American high school graduates each year outnumber their Jewish classmates nearly three-to-one, American Jews are far more numerous at Harvard and throughout the Ivy League. Both groups are highly urbanized, generally affluent, and geographically concentrated within a few states, so the "diversity" factors considered above would hardly seem to apply; yet Jews

seem to fare much better at the admissions office.

Even more remarkable are the historical trajectories. As noted earlier, America's Asian population has been growing rapidly over the last couple of decades, so the substantial decline in reported Ivy League Asian enrollment has actually constituted a huge drop relative to their fraction of the population. Meanwhile, the population of American Jews has been approximately constant in numbers, and aging along with the rest of the white population, leading to a sharp decline in the national proportion of college-age Jews, falling from 2.6 percent in 1972 and 2.2 percent in 1992 to just 1.8 percent in 2012. Nevertheless, total Jewish enrollment at elite universities has held constant or actually increased, indicating a large rise in relative Jewish admissions. In fact, if we aggregate the reported enrollment figures, we discover that 4 percent of all college-age American Jews are currently enrolled in the Ivy League, compared to just 1 percent of Asians and about 0.1 percent of whites of Christian background.⁵³

One reasonable explanation for these remarkable statistics might be that although Asian-Americans are a high-performing academic group, American Jews may be far higher-performing, perhaps not unlikely for an ethnicity that gave the world Einstein, Freud, and so many other prominent intellectual figures. Thus, if we assume that our elite universities reserve a portion of their slots for "diversity" while allocating the remainder based on "academic merit," Jews might be handily beating Asians (and everyone else) in the latter competition. Indeed, the average Jewish IQ has been widely reported in the range of 110–115, implying a huge abundance of individuals at the upper reaches of the distribution of intellect. So perhaps what had seemed like a clear pattern of anti-Asian discrimination is actually just the workings of academic meritocracy, at least when combined with a fixed allocation of "diversity admissions."

The easiest means of exploring this hypothesis is to repeat much of our earlier examination of Asian academic performance, but now to include Jews as part of our analysis. Although Jewish names are not quite as absolutely distinctive as East or South Asian ones, they can be determined with reasonably good accuracy, so long as we are careful to note ambiguous cases and recognize that our estimates may easily be off by a small amount; furthermore, we can utilize especially distinctive names as a validation check. But strangely enough, when we perform this sort of analysis, it becomes somewhat difficult to locate major current evidence of the celebrated Jewish intellect and academic achievement discussed at such considerable length by

Karabel and many other authors.

For example, consider California, second only to New York in the total number of its Jews, and with its Jewish percentage far above the national average. Over the last couple of years, blogger Steve Sailer and some of his commenters have examined the complete 2010 and 2012 NMS semifinalist lists of the 2000 or so top-scoring California high school seniors for ethnicity, and discovered that as few as 4–5 percent of the names seem to be Jewish, a figure not so dramatically different than the state's 3.3 percent Jewish population, and an estimate which I have personally confirmed.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the state's 13 percent Asians account for over 57 percent of the top performing students. Thus, it appears that California Asians are perhaps three times as likely as Jews to do extremely well on academic tests, and this result remains unchanged if we adjust for the age distributions of the two populations.

One means of corroborating these surprising results is to consider the ratios of particularly distinctive ethnic names, and Sailer reported such exact findings made by one of his Jewish readers. For example, across the 2000-odd top scoring California students in 2010, there was just a single NMS semifinalist named Cohen, and also one each for Levy, Kaplan, and a last name beginning with "Gold." Meanwhile, there were 49 Wangs and 36 Kims, plus a vast number of other highly distinctive Asian names. But according to Census data, the combined number of American Cohens and Levys together outnumber the Wangs almost two-to-one, and the same is true for the four most common names beginning with "Gold." Put another way, California contains nearly one-fifth of all American Jews, hence almost 60,000 Cohens, Kaplans, Levys, Goldens, Goldsteins, Goldbergs, Goldmans, and Golds, and this population produced only 4 NMS semifinalists, a ratio almost identical to that produced by our general last name estimates. The 2012 California NMS semifinalist lists yield approximately the same ratios.

When we consider the apparent number of Jewish students across the NMS semifinalist lists of other major states, we get roughly similar results. New York has always been the center of the American Jewish community, and at 8.4 percent is half again as heavily Jewish as any other state, while probably containing a large fraction of America's Jewish financial and intellectual elite. Just as we might expect, the 2011 roster of New York NMS semifinalists is disproportionately filled with Jewish names, constituting about 21 percent of the total, a ratio twice as high as for any other state whose figures are available. But even here, New York's smaller and much less affluent Asian population is far better

represented, providing around 34 percent of the top scoring students. Jews and Asians are today about equal in number within New York City but whereas a generation ago, elite local public schools such as Stuyvesant were very heavily Jewish, today Jews are outnumbered at least several times over by Asians.⁵⁵

This same pattern of relative Asian and Jewish performance on aptitude exams generally appears in the other major states whose recent NMS semifinalist lists I have located and examined, though there is considerable individual variability, presumably due to the particular local characteristics of the Asian and Jewish populations. Across six years of Florida results, Asian students are more than twice as likely to be high scorers compared to their Jewish classmates, with the disparity being nearly as great in Pennsylvania. The relative advantage of Asians is a huge factor of 5.0 in Michigan and 4.1 in Ohio, while in Illinois Asians still do 150 percent as well as Jews. Among our largest states, only in Texas is the Asian performance as low as 120 percent, although Jews are the group that actually does much better in several smaller states, usually those in which the Jewish population is tiny.

As noted earlier, NMS semifinalist lists are available for a total of twenty-five states, including the eight largest, which together contain 75 percent of our national population, as well as 81 percent of American Jews and 80 percent of Asian-Americans, and across this total population Asians are almost twice as likely to be top scoring students as Jews. Extrapolating these results to the nation as a whole would produce a similar ratio, especially when we consider that Asian-rich California has among the toughest NMS semifinalist qualification thresholds. Meanwhile, the national number of Jewish semifinalists comes out at less than 6 percent of the total based on direct inspection of the individual names, with estimates based on either the particularly distinctive names considered by Sailer or the full set of such highly distinctive names used by Weyl yielding entirely consistent figures. Weyl had also found this same relative pattern of high Jewish academic performance being greatly exceeded by even higher Asian performance, with Koreans and Chinese being three or four times as likely as Jews to reach NMS semifinalist status in the late 1980s, though the overall Asian numbers were still quite small at the time.⁵⁶

Earlier we had noted that the tests used to select NMS semifinalists actually tilted substantially against Asian students by double-weighting verbal skills and excluding visuospatial ability, but in the case of Jews this same testing-bias has exactly the opposite impact. Jewish ability tends to be exceptionally strong in its

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verbal component and mediocre at best in the visuo-spatial,⁵⁷ so the NMS semifinalist selection methodology would seem ideally designed to absolutely maximize the number of high-scoring Jews compared to other whites or (especially) East Asians. Thus, the number of high-ability Jews we are finding should be regarded as an extreme upper bound to a more neutrally-derived total.

But suppose these estimates are correct, and Asians overall are indeed twice as likely as Jews to rank among America's highest performing students. We must also consider that America's Asian population is far larger in size, representing roughly 5 percent of college-age students, compared to just 1.8 percent for Jews. Therefore, assuming an admissions system based on strictest objective meritocracy, we would expect our elite academic institutions to contain nearly five Asians for every Jew; but instead, the Jews are far more numerous, in some important cases by almost a factor of two. This raises obvious suspicions about the fairness of the Ivy League admissions process.

Once again, we can turn to the enrollment figures for strictly meritocratic Caltech as a test of our estimates. The campus is located in the Los Angeles area, home to one of America's largest and most successful Jewish communities, and Jews have traditionally been strongly drawn to the natural sciences. Indeed, at least three of Caltech's last six presidents have been of Jewish origin, and the same is true for two of its most renowned faculty members, theoretical physics Nobel Laureates Richard Feynman and Murray Gell-Mann. But Caltech's current undergraduates are just 5.5 percent Jewish, and the figure seems to have been around this level for some years; meanwhile, Asian enrollment is 39 percent, or seven times larger. It is intriguing that the school which admits students based on the strictest, most objective academic standards has by a very wide margin the lowest Jewish enrollment for any elite university.

Let us next turn to the five most selective campuses of the University of California system, whose admissions standards shifted substantially toward objective meritocracy following the 1996 passage of Prop. 209. The average Jewish enrollment is just over 8 percent, or roughly one-third that of the 25 percent found at Harvard and most of the Ivy League, whose admissions standards are supposedly far tougher. Meanwhile, some 40 percent of the students on these UC campuses are Asian, a figure almost five times as high. Once again, almost no elite university in the country has a Jewish enrollment as low as the average for these highly selective UC campuses.⁵⁸

Another interesting example is MIT, whose students

probably rank fifth in academic strength, just below the three HYP schools and Caltech, and whose admissions standards are far closer to a meritocratic ideal than is found in most elite schools, though perhaps not quite as pristine as those of its Caltech rival. Karabel notes that MIT has always had a far more meritocratic admissions system than nearby Harvard, tending to draw those students who were academic stars even if socially undistinguished. As an example, in the 1930s Feynman had been rejected by his top choice of Columbia possibly due to its Jewish quota, and instead enrolled at MIT.⁵⁹ But today, MIT's enrollment is just 9 percent Jewish, a figure lower than that anywhere in the Ivy League, while Asians are nearly three times as numerous, despite the school being located in one of the most heavily Jewish parts of the country.

The Strange Collapse of Jewish Academic Achievement

From my own perspective, I found these statistical results surprising, even shocking.

I had always been well aware of the very heavy Jewish presence at elite academic institutions. But the underwhelming percentage of Jewish students who today achieve high scores on academic aptitude tests was totally unexpected, and very different from the impressions I had formed during my own high school and college years a generation or so ago. An examination of other available statistics seems to support my recollections and provides evidence for a dramatic recent decline in the academic performance of American Jews

The U.S. Math Olympiad began in 1974, and all the names of the top scoring students are easily available on the Internet. During the 1970s, well over 40 percent of the total were Jewish, and during the 1980s and 1990s, the fraction averaged about one-third. However, during the thirteen years since 2000, just two names out of 78 or 2.5 percent appear to be Jewish. The Putnam Exam is the most difficult and prestigious mathematics competition for American college students, with five or six Putnam winners having been selected each year since 1938. Over 40 percent of the Putnam winners prior to 1950 were Jewish, and during every decade from the 1950s through the 1990s, between 22 percent and 31 percent of the winners seem to have come from that same ethnic background. But since 2000, the percentage has dropped to under 10 percent, without a single likely Jewish name in the last seven years.

This consistent picture of stark ethnic decline recurs

when we examine the statistics for the Science Talent Search, which has been selecting 40 students as national finalists for America's most prestigious high school science award since 1942, thus providing a huge statistical dataset of over 2800 top science students. During every decade from the 1950s through the 1980s, Jewish students were consistently 22–23 percent of the recipients, with the percentage then declining to 17 percent in the 1990s, 15 percent in the 2000s, and just 7 percent since 2010. Indeed, of the thirty top ranked students over the last three years, only a single one seems likely to have been Jewish. Similarly, Jews were over one-quarter of the top students in the Physics Olympiad from 1986 to 1997, but have fallen to just 5 percent over the last decade, a result which must surely send Richard Feynman spinning in his grave.

Other science competitions provide generally consistent recent results, though without the long track record allowing useful historical comparisons. Over the last dozen years, just 8 percent of the top students in the Biology Olympiad have been Jewish, with none in the last three years. Between 1992 and 2012, only 11 percent of the winners of the Computing Olympiad had Jewish names, as did just 8 percent of the Siemens AP Award winners. And although I have only managed to locate the last two years of Chemistry Olympiad winners, these lists of 40 top students contained not a single probable Jewish name.

Further evidence is supplied by Weyl, who estimated that over 8 percent of the 1987 NMS semifinalists were Jewish,⁶⁰ a figure 35 percent higher than found in today's results. Moreover, in that period the math and verbal scores were weighted equally for qualification purposes, but after 1997 the verbal score was double-weighted,⁶¹ which should have produced a large rise in the number of Jewish semifinalists, given the verbal-loading of Jewish ability. But instead, today's Jewish numbers are far below those of the late 1980s.

Taken in combination, these trends all provide powerful evidence that over the last decade or more there has been a dramatic collapse in Jewish academic achievement, at least at the high end.

Several possible explanations for this empirical result seem reasonably plausible. Although the innate potential of a group is unlikely to drop so suddenly, achievement is a function of both ability and effort, and today's overwhelmingly affluent Jewish students may be far less diligent in their work habits or driven in their studies than were their parents or grandparents, who lived much closer to the bracing challenges of the immigrant experience. In support of this hypothesis, roughly half of the Jewish Math Olympiad winners from the last two

decades have had the sort of highly distinctive names which would tend to mark them as recent immigrants from the Soviet Union or elsewhere, and such names were also very common among the top Jewish science students of the same period, even though this group represents only about 10 percent of current American Jews. Indeed, it seems quite possible that this large sudden influx of very high performing immigrant Jews from the late 1980s onward served to partially mask the rapid concurrent decline of high academic achievement among native American Jews, which otherwise would have become much more clearly evident a decade or so earlier.

This pattern of third or fourth generation American students lacking the academic drive or intensity of their forefathers is hardly surprising, nor unique to Jews. Consider the case of Japanese-Americans, who mostly arrived in America during roughly the same era. America's Japanese have always been a high-performing group, with a strong academic tradition, and Japan's international PISA academic scores are today among the highest in the world. But when we examine the list of California's NMS semifinalists, less than 1 percent of the names are Japanese, roughly in line with their share of the California population.⁶² Meanwhile, Chinese, Koreans, and South Asians are 6 percent of California but contribute 50 percent of the top scoring students, an eight-fold better result, with a major likely difference being that they are overwhelmingly of recent immigrant origin. In fact, although ongoing Japanese immigration has been trivial in size, a significant fraction of the top Japanese students have the unassimilated Japanese first names that would tend to indicate they are probably drawn from that tiny group.

In his 1966 book *The Creative Elite in America*, Weyl used last name analysis to document a similarly remarkable collapse in achievement among America's Puritan-descended population, which had once provided a hugely disproportionate fraction of our intellectual leadership, but for various reasons went into rapid decline from about 1900 onward. He also mentions the disappearance of the remarkable Scottish intellectual contribution to British life after about 1800. Although the evidence for both these historical parallels seems very strong, the causal factors are not entirely clear, though Weyl does provide some possible explanations.⁶³

In some respects, perhaps it was the enormously outsize Jewish academic performance of the past which was highly anomalous, and the more recent partial convergence toward white European norms which is somewhat less surprising. Over the years,

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claims have been widely circulated that the mean Jewish IQ is a full standard deviation—15 points—above the white average of 100,⁶⁴ but this seems to have little basis in reality. Richard Lynn, one of the world's foremost IQ experts, has performed an exhaustive literature review and located some 32 IQ samples of American Jews, taken from 1920 to 2008. For the first 14 studies conducted during the years 1920–1937, the Jewish IQ came out very close to the white American mean, and it was only in later decades that the average figure rose to the approximate range of 107–111.⁶⁵

In a previous article “Race, IQ & Wealth,” I had suggested that the IQs of ethnic groups appear to be far more malleable than many people would acknowledge, and may be particularly influenced by factors of urbanization, education, and affluence.⁶⁶ Given that Jews have always been America's most heavily urbanized population and became the most affluent during the decades in question, these factors may account for a substantial portion of their huge IQ rise during most of the twentieth century. But with modern electronic technology recently narrowing the gaps in social environment and educational opportunities between America's rural and urban worlds, we might expect a portion of this difference to gradually dissipate. American Jews are certainly a high-ability population, but the innate advantage they have over other high-ability white populations is probably far smaller than is widely believed.

This conclusion is supported by the General Social Survey (GSS), an online dataset of tens of thousands of American survey responses from the last forty years which includes the Wordsum vocabulary test, a very useful IQ proxy correlating at 0.71. Converted into the corresponding IQ scores, the Wordsum-IQ of Jews is indeed quite high at 109. But Americans of English, Welsh, Scottish, Swedish, and Catholic Irish ancestry also have fairly high mean IQs of 104 or above, and their combined populations outnumber Jews by almost 15-to-1, implying that they would totally dominate the upper reaches of the white American ability distribution, even if we excluded the remaining two-thirds of all American whites, many of whose IQs are also fairly high. Furthermore, all these groups are far less highly urbanized or affluent than Jews,⁶⁷ probably indicating that their scores are still artificially depressed to some extent. We should also remember that Jewish intellectual performance tends to be quite skewed, being exceptionally strong in the verbal subcomponent, much lower in math, and completely mediocre in visuospatial ability; thus, a completely verbal-oriented test such as Wordsum would actually tend to exaggerate Jewish IQ.

Stratifying the white American population along religious lines produces similar conclusions. An analysis of the data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth found that Americans raised in the Episcopal Church actually exceeded Jews in mean IQ, while several other religious categories came quite close, leading to the result that the overwhelming majority of America's high-ability white population had a non-Jewish background.⁶⁸

Finally, in the case of Jews, these assimilation- or environment-related declines in relative academic performance may have been reinforced by powerful demographic trends. For the last generation or two, typical Jewish women from successful or even ordinary families have married very late and averaged little more than a single child, while the small fraction of Jewish women who are ultra-Orthodox often marry in their teens and then produce seven or eight children.⁶⁹ As a consequence, this extremely religious subpopulation has been doubling in size every twenty years, and now easily exceeds 10 percent of the total, including a far higher percentage of younger Jews. But ultra-Orthodox Jews have generally been academically mediocre, often with enormously high rates of poverty and government dependency.⁷⁰ Therefore, the combination of these two radically different trends of Jewish reproduction has acted to stabilize the total number of Jewish youngsters, while probably producing a sharp drop in their average academic achievement.

Meritocracy vs. Jews

Although the relative importance of these individual factors behind Jewish academic decline is unclear, the decline itself seems an unmistakable empirical fact, and the widespread unawareness of this fact has had important social consequences.

My casual mental image of today's top American students is based upon my memories of a generation or so ago, when Jewish students, sometimes including myself, regularly took home a quarter or more of the highest national honors on standardized tests or in prestigious academic competitions; thus, it seemed perfectly reasonable that Harvard and most of the other Ivy League schools might be 25 percent Jewish, based on meritocracy. But the objective evidence indicates that in present day America, only about 6 percent of our top students are Jewish, which now renders such very high Jewish enrollments at elite universities totally absurd and ridiculous. I strongly suspect that a similar time lag effect is responsible for the apparent confusion in many others who have considered the topic.

For example, throughout his very detailed book, Karabel always seems to automatically identify increasing Jewish enrollments with academic meritocracy, and Jewish declines with bias or discrimination, retaining this assumption even when his discussion moves into the 1990s and 2000s. He was born in 1950, graduated Harvard in 1972, and returned there to earn his Ph.D. in 1977, so this may indeed have been the reality during his formative years.⁷¹ But he seems strikingly unaware that the world has changed since then, and that over the last decade or two, meritocracy and Jewish numbers have become opposing forces: the stricter the meritocratic standard, the fewer the Jews admitted.

Most of my preceding analysis has focused on the comparison of Asians with Jews, and I have pointed out that based on factors of objective academic performance and population size, we would expect Asians to outnumber Jews by perhaps five to one at our top national universities; instead, the total Jewish numbers across the Ivy League are actually 40 percent higher. This implies that Jewish enrollment is roughly 600 percent greater relative to Asians than should be expected under a strictly meritocratic admissions system.

Obviously, all these types of analysis may be applied just as easily to a comparison of Jews with non-Jewish whites, and the results turn out to be equally striking. The key factor is that although Jewish academic achievement has apparently plummeted in recent decades, non-Jewish whites seem to have remained relatively unchanged in their performance, which might be expected in such a large and diverse population. As a consequence, the relative proportions of top-performing students have undergone a dramatic shift.

We must bear in mind that the official U.S. Census category of “Non-Hispanic white” (which I will henceforth label “white”) is something of an ethnic hodgepodge, encompassing all the various white European ancestry groups, as well as a substantial admixture of North Africans, Middle Easterners, Iranians, Turks, Armenians, and Afghans. It amounts to everyone who is not black, Hispanic, Asian, or American Indian, and currently includes an estimated 63 percent of all Americans.

Determining the number of whites among NMS semifinalists or winners of various academic competitions is relatively easy. Both Asian and Hispanic names are quite distinctive, and their numbers can be estimated by the methods already discussed. Meanwhile, blacks are substantially outnumbered by Hispanics and they have much weaker academic performance, so they would produce far fewer very

high scoring students. Therefore, we can approximate the number of whites by merely subtracting the number of Asian and Hispanic names as well as an estimated black total based on the latter figure, and then determine the number of white Gentiles by also subtracting the Jewish total.

Once we do this and compare the Jewish and non-Jewish white totals for various lists of top academic performers, we notice a striking pattern, with the historical ratios once ranging from near-equality to about one-in-four up until the recent collapse in Jewish performance. For example, among Math Olympiad winners, white Gentiles scarcely outnumbered Jews during the 1970s, and held only a three-to-two edge during the 1980s and 1990s, but since 2000 have become over fifteen times as numerous. Between 1938 and 1999, Putnam Exam winners had averaged about two white Gentiles for every Jew, with the ratios for each decade oscillating between 1.5 and 3.0, then rising to nearly 5-to-1 during 2001–2005, and without a single Jewish name on the winner list from 2006 onward.

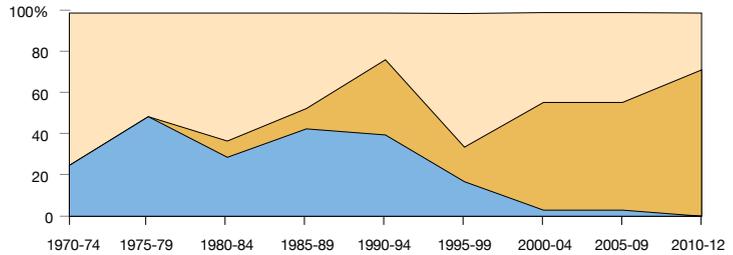
The elite science competitions follow a broadly similar pattern. Non-Jewish whites had only outnumbered Jews 2-to-1 among the Physics Olympiad winners during 1986–1997, but the ratio rose to at least 7-to-1 during 2002–2012. Meanwhile, white Gentiles were more numerous by nearly 6-to-1 among 1992–2012 Computing Olympiad winners, 4-to-1 among the 2002–2011 Siemens AP Award winners, and over 3-to-1 among 2003–2012 Biology Olympiad champions. Across the sixty-odd years of America’s Science Talent Search, Jews had regularly been named finalists at a relative rate fifteen- or even twenty-times that of their white Gentile classmates, but over the last decade or so, this has dropped by half.

The evidence of the recent NMS semifinalist lists seems the most conclusive of all, given the huge statistical sample sizes involved. As discussed earlier, these students constitute roughly the highest 0.5 percent in academic ability, the top 16,000 high school seniors who should be enrolling at the Ivy League and America’s other most elite academic universities. In California, white Gentile names outnumber Jewish ones by over 8-to-1; in Texas, over 20-to-1; in Florida and Illinois, around 9-to-1. Even in New York, America’s most heavily Jewish state, there are more than two high-ability white Gentile students for every Jewish one. Based on the overall distribution of America’s population, it appears that approximately 65–70 percent of America’s highest ability students are non-Jewish whites, well over ten times the Jewish total of under 6 percent.

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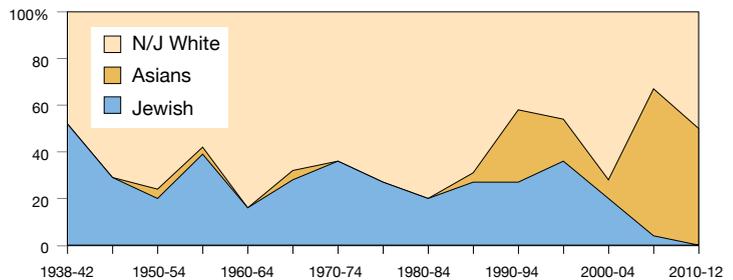
U.S. Math Olympiad Teams

Period	N/J White	Asian	Jewish
1970s	56%	0%	44%
1980s	54%	9%	37%
1990s	45%	27%	28%
2000s	43%	53%	3%
2010s	28%	72%	0%



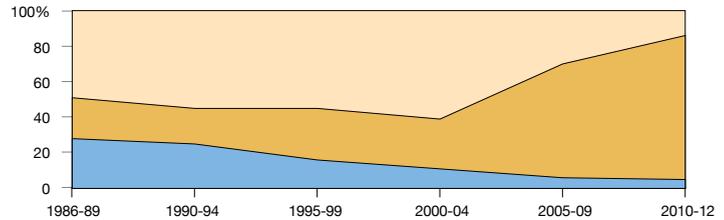
College Putnam Math Winners

Period	N/J White	Asian	Jewish
1938-49	59%	0%	41%
1950s	66%	3%	31%
1960s	76%	2%	22%
1970s	69%	0%	31%
1980s	75%	2%	24%
1990s	44%	24%	31%
2000s	52%	37%	12%
2010s	50%	50%	0%



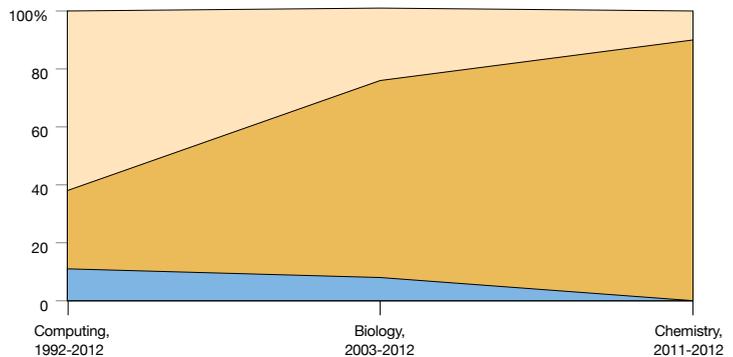
U.S. Physics Olympiad Winners

Period	N/J White	Asian	Jewish
1980s	49%	23%	28%
1990s	55%	25%	20%
2000s	46%	46%	9%
2010s	14%	81%	5%



Science Olympiad Winners

Competition	N/J White	Asian	Jewish
Computing, 1992-2012	62%	27%	11%
Biology, 2003-2012	25%	68%	8%
Chemistry, 2011-2012	10%	90%	0%

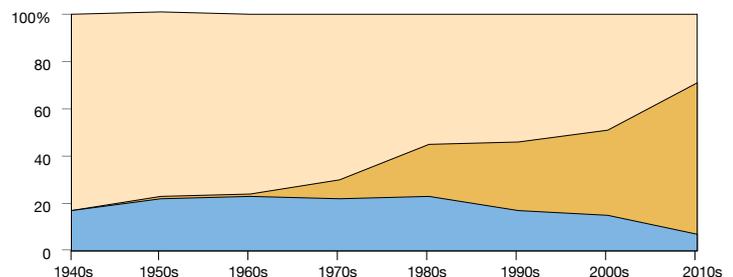


Siemens Science AP Winners

Period	N/J White	Asian	Jewish
2002-2011	31%	61%	8%

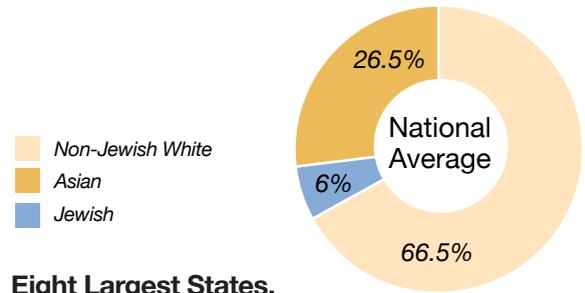
Science Talent Search Finalists

Period	N/J White	Asian	Jewish
1940s	83%	0%	17%
1950s	78%	1%	22%
1960s	76%	1%	23%
1970s	70%	8%	22%
1980s	55%	22%	23%
1990s	54%	29%	17%
2000s	49%	36%	15%
2010s	29%	64%	7%

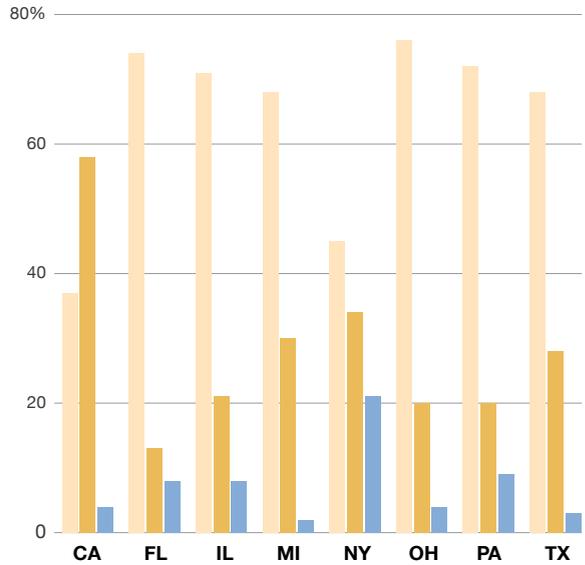


Recent NMS Semifinalists for Available States

State/Years	Total (2011)	N/J White	Asian	Jewish
Alabama/2008, 2010	208	83%	14%	2%
Arizona/2013	342	68%	26%	5%
California/2010, 2012	1,999	37%	58%	4%
Colorado/2012, 2013	256	78%	14%	7%
Florida/2008-13	867	74%	13%	8%
Illinois/2011-2013	693	71%	21%	8%
Indiana/2010, 2012-13	327	75%	18%	5%
Iowa/2011	191	80%	15%	4%
Kansas/2011	159	87%	9%	4%
Louisiana/2013	190	76%	19%	5%
Maryland/2010	327	57%	32%	11%
Michigan/2012, 2013	570	68%	30%	2%
Minnesota/2010, 2011	318	81%	13%	6%
Missouri/2011	344	87%	11%	2%
Nevada/2010, 2011	85	67%	20%	9%
New Mexico/2011	99	76%	11%	6%
New York/2011, 2012	957	45%	34%	21%
Ohio/2012, 2013	642	76%	20%	4%
Oklahoma/2008	187	83%	14%	3%
Pennsylvania/2012	700	72%	20%	9%
Tennessee/2010	279	80%	17%	2%
Texas/2010	1,344	68%	28%	3%
Virginia/2009	411	74%	19%	6%
Washington/2013	344	64%	31%	5%
Wisconsin/2012	324	87%	11%	3%
Eight Largest States	7,772	60%	33%	7%
25 State Aggregate	12,163	65%	28%	6%
National (estimated)	16,317	65-70%	25-30%	6%

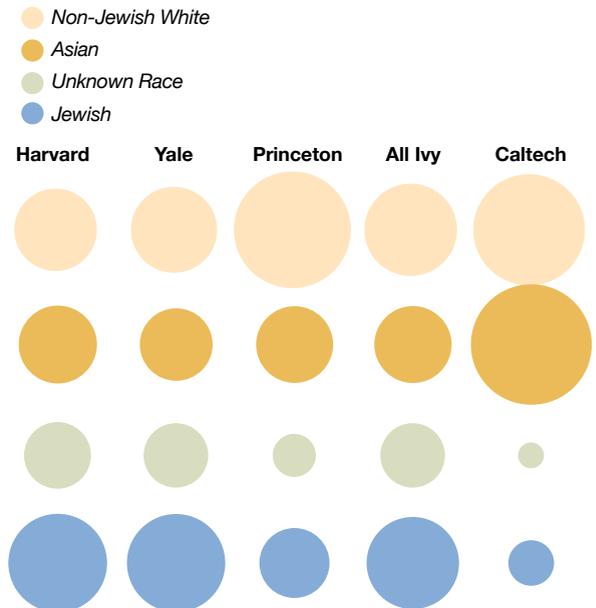


Eight Largest States, by Percentage



Elite University Undergraduate Enrollments, 2007-2011

University	Non-Jewish White	Asian	Unknown Race	Jewish
Harvard	18%	16%	12%	26%
Yale	20%	14%	11%	26%
Princeton	37%	16%	5%	13%
Brown	22%	15%	12%	24%
Columbia	15%	16%	10%	25%
Cornell	24%	16%	14%	23%
Dartmouth	42%	14%	6%	11%
Penn	17%	18%	13%	27%
All Ivy League	23%	16%	11%	23%
Caltech	33%	39%	2%	6%
MIT	27%	25%	6%	9%
Stanford	28%	21%	4%	10%
UC Berkeley	21%	40%	7%	10%
UCLA	24%	37%	4%	9%



Source: Appendices C-F

Education

Needless to say, these proportions are considerably different from what we actually find among the admitted students at Harvard and its elite peers, which today serve as a direct funnel to the commanding heights of American academics, law, business, and finance. Based on reported statistics, Jews approximately match or even outnumber non-Jewish whites at Harvard and most of the other Ivy League schools, which seems wildly disproportionate. Indeed, the official statistics indicate that non-Jewish whites at Harvard are America's most under-represented population group, enrolled at a much lower fraction of their national population than blacks or Hispanics, despite having far higher academic test scores.

When examining statistical evidence, the proper aggregation of data is critical. Consider the ratio of the recent 2007–2011 enrollment of Asian students at Harvard relative to their estimated share of America's recent NMS semifinalists, a reasonable proxy for the high-ability college-age population, and compare this result to the corresponding figure for whites. The Asian ratio is 63 percent, slightly above the white ratio of 61 percent, with both these figures being considerably below parity due to the substantial presence of under-represented racial minorities such as blacks and Hispanics, foreign students, and students of unreported race. Thus, there appears to be no evidence for racial bias against Asians, even excluding the race-neutral impact of athletic recruitment, legacy admissions, and geographical diversity.

However, if we separate out the Jewish students, their ratio turns out to be 435 percent, while the residual ratio for non-Jewish whites drops to just 28 percent, less than half of even the Asian figure. As a consequence, Asians appear under-represented relative to Jews by a factor of seven, while non-Jewish whites are by far the most under-represented group of all, despite any benefits they might receive from athletic, legacy, or geographical distribution factors. The rest of the Ivy League tends to follow a similar pattern, with the overall Jewish ratio being 381 percent, the Asian figure at 62 percent, and the ratio for non-Jewish whites a low 35 percent, all relative to their number of high-ability college-age students.

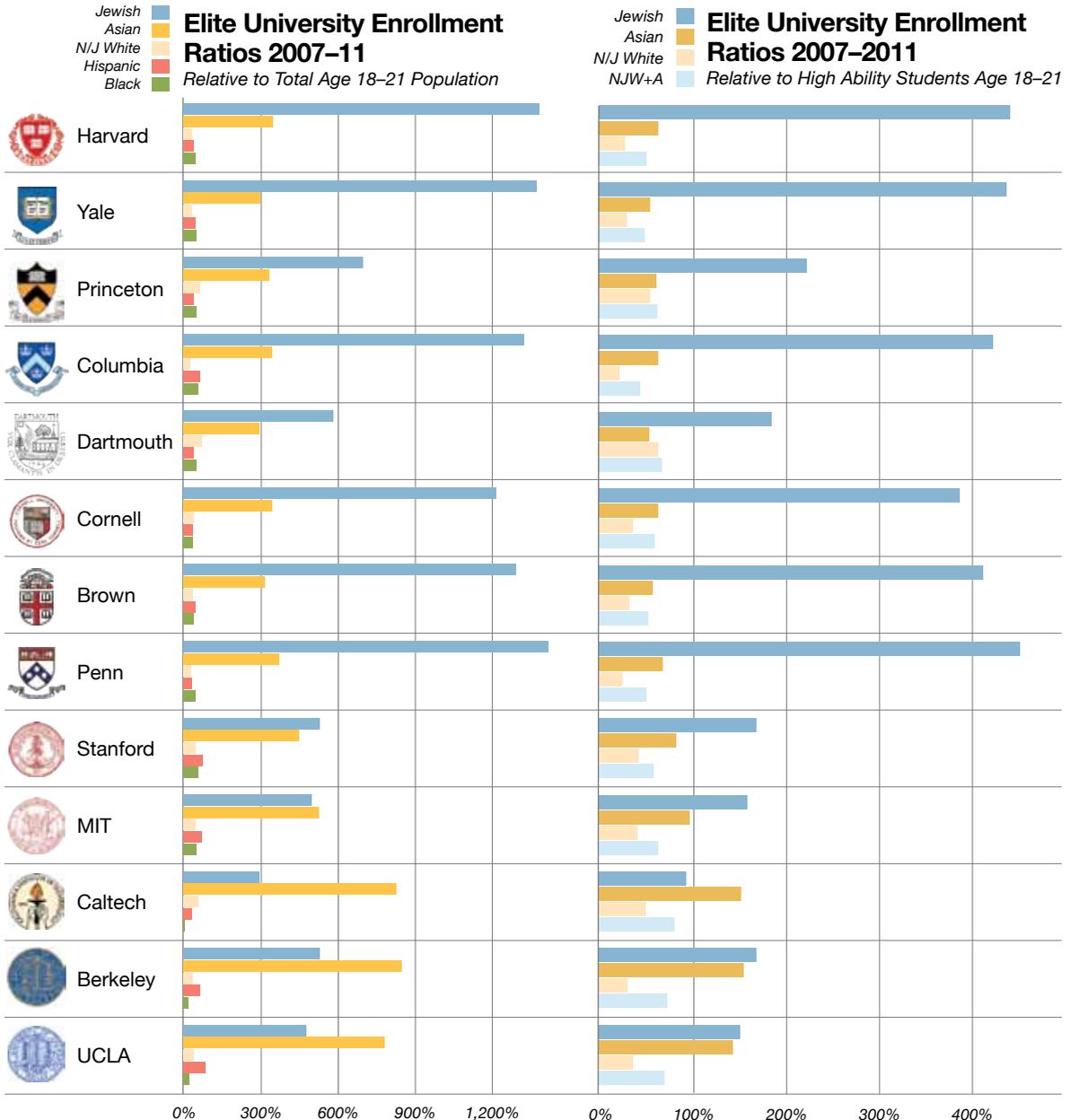
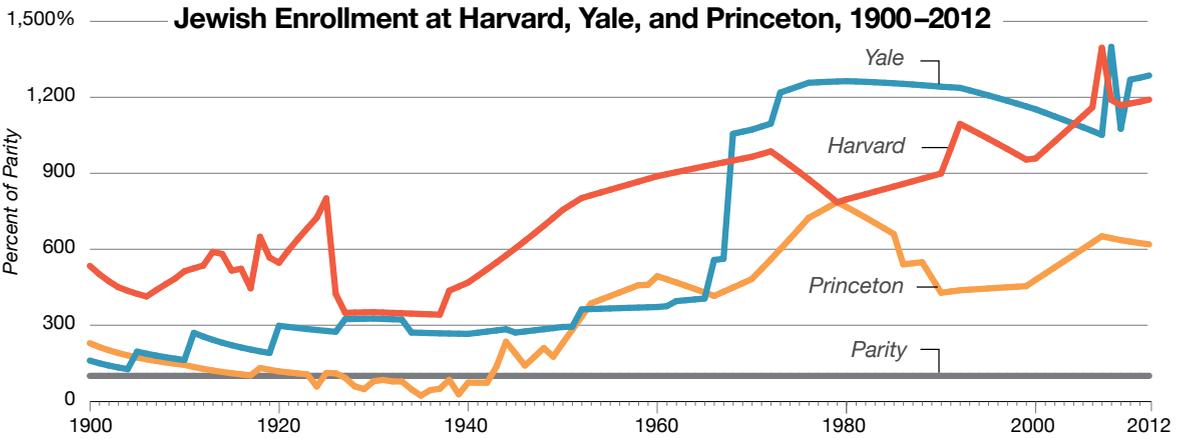
Just as striking as these wildly disproportionate current numbers have been the longer enrollment trends. In the three decades since I graduated Harvard, the presence of white Gentiles has dropped by as much as 70 percent, despite no remotely comparable decline in the relative size or academic performance of that population; meanwhile, the percentage of Jewish students has actually increased. This

period certainly saw a very rapid rise in the number of Asian, Hispanic, and foreign students, as well as some increase in blacks. But it seems rather odd that all of these other gains would have come at the expense of whites of Christian background, and none at the expense of Jews.

Furthermore, the Harvard enrollment changes over the last decade have been even more unusual when we compare them to changes in the underlying demographics. Between 2000 and 2011, the relative percentage of college-age blacks enrolled at Harvard dropped by 18 percent, along with declines of 13 percent for Asians and 11 percent for Hispanics, while only whites increased, expanding their relative enrollment by 16 percent. However, this is merely an optical illusion: in fact, the figure for non-Jewish whites slightly declined, while the relative enrollment of Jews increased by over 35 percent, probably reaching the highest level in Harvard's entire history. Thus, the relative presence of Jews rose sharply while that of all other groups declined, and this occurred during exactly the period when the once-remarkable academic performance of Jewish high school students seemed to suddenly collapse.

Most of the other Ivy League schools appear to follow a fairly similar trajectory. Between 1980 and 2011, the official figures indicate that non-Jewish white enrollment dropped by 63 percent at Yale, 44 percent at Princeton, 52 percent at Dartmouth, 69 percent at Columbia, 62 percent at Cornell, 66 percent at Penn, and 64 percent at Brown. If we confine our attention to the last decade or so, the relative proportion of college-age non-Jewish whites enrolled at Yale has dropped 23 percent since 2000, with drops of 28 percent at Princeton, 18 percent at Dartmouth, 19 percent at Columbia and Penn, 24 percent at Cornell, and 23 percent at Brown. For most of these universities, non-white groups have followed a mixed pattern, mostly increasing but with some substantial drops. I have only located yearly Jewish enrollment percentages back to 2006, but during the six years since then, there is a uniform pattern of often substantial rises: increases of roughly 25 percent at Yale, 45 percent at Columbia, 10 percent at Cornell, 15 percent at Brown, and no declines anywhere.

Fourteen years ago I published a widely-discussed column in the *Wall Street Journal* highlighting some of the absurdities of our affirmative action system in higher education.⁷² In particular, I pointed out that although Jews and Asians then totaled merely 5 percent of the American population, they occupied nearly 50 percent of the slots at Harvard and most of the other elite Ivies, while non-Jewish whites were left



Note that the ethnic enrollment ratios for Berkeley and UCLA are based on the national demographics, but their students are primarily drawn from within California, whose racial distribution is very different: the white student population is half the national average, while Asians and Hispanics are more numerous by a factor of two, implying different parity ratios. The underlying data for these charts is drawn from Appendix H.

Education

as the most under-represented student population, with relative numbers below those of blacks or Hispanics. Since then Jewish academic achievement has seemingly collapsed but relative Jewish enrollment in the Ivies has generally risen, while the exact opposite combination has occurred for both Asians and non-Jewish whites. I find this a strange and unexpected development.

It is important to recognize that all of these enrollment statistics are far less precise than we might ideally desire. As mentioned earlier, over the last couple of decades widespread perceptions of racial bias in admissions have led a significant number of students to refuse to reveal their race, which the official statistics classify as “race unknown.” This group almost certainly consists of Asians and whites, but it is impossible for us to determine the relative proportions, and without this information our above estimates can only be approximate.

Similarly, nearly all our figures on Jewish enrollment were ultimately drawn from the estimates of Hillel, the national Jewish campus organization, and these are obviously approximate. However, the Hillel data is the best we possess for recent decades, and is regularly used by the *New York Times* and other prominent media outlets, while also serving as the basis for much of Karabel’s award-winning scholarship. Furthermore, so long as any latent bias in the data remained relatively constant, we could still correctly analyze changes over time.

For these sorts of reasons, any of the individual figures provided above should be treated with great caution, but the overall pattern of enrollments—statistics compiled over years and decades and across numerous different universities—seems likely to provide an accurate description of reality.

Elite Colleges Look Neither Like America Nor Like America’s Highest-Ability Students

We are therefore faced with the clear conundrum that Jewish students seem to constitute roughly 6 percent of America’s highest-ability high school graduates and non-Jewish whites around 65–70 percent, but these relative ratios differ by perhaps 1000 percent from the enrollments we actually find at Harvard and the other academic institutions which select America’s future elites. Meanwhile, an ethnic distribution much closer to this apparent ability-ratio is found at Caltech, whose admissions are purely meritocratic, unlike the

completely opaque, subjective, and discretionary Ivy League system so effectively described by Karabel, Golden, and others.

One obvious explanatory factor is that the Ivy League is located in the Northeast, a region of the country in which the Jewish fraction of the population is more than twice the national average. However, these schools also constitute America’s leading national universities, so their geographical intake is quite broad, with Harvard drawing less than 40 percent of its American students from its own region, and the others similarly tending to have a nationally distributed enrollment. So this factor would probably explain only a small portion of the discrepancy. Furthermore, MIT utilizes a considerably more meritocratic and objective admissions system than Harvard, and although located just a few miles away has a ratio of Jewish to non-Jewish whites which differs by nearly a factor of four in favor of the latter compared to its crosstown rival.

By the late 1960s Jewish students had become a substantial fraction of most Ivy League schools and today some of their children may be benefiting from legacies. But until about twenty-five years ago, white Gentiles outnumbered their Jewish classmates perhaps as much as 3-to-1, so if anything we might expect the admissions impact of legacies to still favor the former group. Anyway, the research of Espenshade and his colleagues have shown that being a legacy provides an admissions advantage in the range of 19–26 percent,⁷³ while we are attempting to explain enrollment differences of roughly 1000 percent.

American Jews are certainly more affluent than most other groups, but all Ivy League universities admit their American students on a “need-blind” basis, so perceptions of ability to pay cannot be a factor, even if any evidence existed that Jewish applicants were actually wealthier than their non-Jewish counterparts. Many Jewish alumni are very generous to their alma maters, but so are non-Jews, and indeed nine of the ten largest university donations in history have come from non-Jewish individuals, nearly all in the last fifteen years;⁷⁴ thus, mercenary hopes of large future bequests would probably not be influencing these skewed admissions.

Perhaps Jews simply apply to these schools in far greater relative numbers, with successful, educationally-ambitious Jewish families being much more likely to encourage their bright children to aim at the Ivies than the parents of equally bright non-Jews. However, since these elite schools release no information regarding the ethnic or racial skew of their applications, we have no evidence for this hypothesis. And why would high-ability non-Jews be 600 percent or 800 percent more

likely to apply to Caltech and MIT than to those other elite schools, which tend to have a far higher national profile?

Anyway, the numbers alone render this explanation implausible. Each year, the Ivy League colleges enroll almost 10,000 American whites and Asians, of whom over 3000 are Jewish. Meanwhile, each year the NMS Corporation selects and publicly names America's highest-ability 16,000 graduating seniors; of these, fewer than 1000 are Jewish, while almost 15,000 are non-Jewish whites and Asians. Even if every single one of these high-ability Jewish students applied to and enrolled at the Ivy League—with none going to any of America's other 3000 colleges—Ivy League admissions officers are obviously still dipping rather deep into the lower reaches of the Jewish ability-pool, instead of easily drawing from some 15,000 other publicly identified candidates of far greater ability but different ethnicity. Why would these universities not simply send out inexpensive mailings to these 15,000 top students, encouraging them to apply, especially since their geographical, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds might help to considerably "diversify" undergraduate enrollments, while greatly raising the average student test scores by which these universities supposedly live or die in the competitive college-rankings.

The situation becomes even stranger when we focus on Harvard, which this year accepted fewer than 6 percent of over 34,000 applicants and whose offers of admission are seldom refused. Each Harvard class includes roughly 400 Jews and 800 Asians and non-Jewish whites; this total represents over 40 percent of America's highest-ability Jewish students, but merely 5 percent of their equally high-ability non-Jewish peers. It is quite possible that a larger percentage of these top Jewish students apply and decide to attend than similar members from these other groups, but it seems wildly implausible that such causes could account for roughly an eight-fold difference in apparent admissions outcome. Harvard's stated "holistic" admissions policy explicitly takes into account numerous personal characteristics other than straight academic ability, including sports and musical talent. But it seems very unlikely that any remotely neutral application of these principles could produce admissions results whose ethnic skew differs so widely from the underlying meritocratic ratios.

One datapoint strengthening this suspicion of admissions bias has been the plunge in the number of Harvard's entering National Merit Scholars, a particularly select ability group, which dropped by almost 40 percent between 2002 and 2011, falling from 396 to 248. This exact period saw a collapse in Jewish

academic achievement combined with a sharp rise in Jewish Harvard admissions, which together might easily help to explain Harvard's strange decline in this important measure of highest student quality.

Harvard could obviously fill its entire class with high-scoring valedictorians or National Merit Scholars but chooses not to do so. In 2003, Harvard rejected well over half of all applicants with perfect SAT scores, up from rejecting a quarter a few years earlier, and in 2010 Princeton acknowledged it also admitted only about half.⁷⁵ According to Harvard's dean of admissions, "With the SAT, small differences of 50 or 100 points or more have no significant effect on admissions decisions."⁷⁶ In fact, a former Senior Admissions Officer at Harvard has claimed that by the mid-2000s as few as 5 percent of the students at highly selective universities such as his own were admitted purely based on academic merit.⁷⁷

It is important to note that these current rejection rates of top scoring applicants are vastly higher than during the 1950s or 1960s, when Harvard admitted six of every seven such students and Princeton adopted a 1959 policy in which no high scoring applicant could be refused admission without a detailed review by a faculty committee.⁷⁸ An obvious indication of Karabel's obtuseness is that he describes and condemns the anti-meritocratic policies of the past without apparently noticing that they have actually become far worse today. An admissions framework in which academic merit is not the prime consideration may be directly related to the mystery of why Harvard's ethnic skew differs in such extreme fashion from that of America's brightest graduating seniors. In fact, Harvard's apparent preference for academically weak Jewish applicants seems to be reflected in their performance once they arrive on campus.⁷⁹

Having considered and largely eliminated these several possible explanatory factors, we can only speculate as to the true causes of such seemingly anomalous enrollment statistics at our Ivy League universities. However, we cannot completely exclude the possible explanation that these other top students are simply not wanted at such elite institutions, perhaps because their entrance in large numbers might drastically transform the current ethnic and cultural mix. After all, Karabel devoted hundreds of pages of his text to documenting exactly this pattern of Ivy League admissions behavior during the 1920s and 1930s, so why should we be surprised if it continues today, at least at an unconscious level, but simply with the polarities reversed?

It would be unreasonable to ignore the salient fact

that this massive apparent bias in favor of far less-qualified Jewish applicants coincides with an equally massive ethnic skew at the topmost administrative ranks of the universities in question, a situation which once again exactly parallels Karabel's account from the 1920s. Indeed, Karabel points out that by 1993 Harvard, Yale, and Princeton all had presidents of Jewish ancestry,⁸⁰ and the same is true for the current presidents of Yale, Penn, Cornell, and possibly Columbia, as well as Princeton's president throughout during the 1990s and Yale's new incoming president, while all three of Harvard's most recent presidents have either had Jewish origins or a Jewish spouse.⁸¹

At most universities, a provost is the second-ranking official, being responsible for day-to-day academic operations. Although Princeton's current president is not Jewish, all seven of the most recent Princeton provosts stretching back to 1977 have had such ancestry, with several of the other Ivies not being far behind.⁸² A similar degree of massive overrepresentation is found throughout the other top administrative ranks of the rest of the Ivy League, and across American leading educational institutions in general, and these are the institutions which select our future national elites.

I have not the slightest reason to doubt that the overwhelming majority of these individuals are honest and sincere, and attempt to do their best for their institutions and their students. But as our liberal intellectual elites regularly emphasize, unconscious biases or shared assumptions can become a huge but unnoticed problem when decision-making occurs within a very narrow circle, whose extreme "non-diversity" may lead to lack of introspection, and what else can be said when for the last two decades almost all of the leaders of our most elite universities have been drawn from an ethnic community constituting just 2 percent of America's population?

As a perfect example of such a situation, consider an amusing incident from the mid-1980s, when Asian groups first noticed a sharp decline in Asian admissions rates to Harvard and accused the university of having begun a quiet effort to restrict Asian numbers, criticism which was vigorously resisted by senior Harvard officials. During this period, Henry Rosovsky, Harvard's Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (and later Acting President), referred to Asian American students as "no doubt the most over-represented group in the university."⁸³ At that point, Harvard's Asian students were enrolled at 300 percent of parity, while those of Rosovsky's own ethnicity were probably at 900 percent or more of parity.⁸⁴

Unconscious biases may become especially serious when combined with an admissions system based on the extreme flexibility and subjectivity that exists at

these colleges. As mentioned, three of Caltech's last six presidents have been of Jewish origins, but the objective admissions system has produced no sign of ethnic favoritism, and largely meritocratic MIT also seems unaffected by having had two Jewish presidents of the last five.⁸⁵ But when machinery already exists for admitting or rejecting whomever a university wishes, on any grounds whatsoever, that machinery may be unconsciously steered in a particular direction by the shared group biases of the individuals controlling it.

The Disturbing Reality of the Elite College Admission System

Perhaps the most detailed statistical research into the actual admissions practices of American universities has been conducted by Princeton sociology professor Thomas J. Espenshade and his colleagues, whose results were summarized in his 2009 book *No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal*, co-authored with Alexandria Walton Radford. Their findings provide an empirical look at the individual factors that dramatically raise or lower the likelihood of acceptance into the leading American universities which select the next generation of our national elites.

The research certainly supports the widespread perception that non-academic factors play a major role in the process, including athletic ability and "legacy" status. But as we saw earlier, even more significant are racial factors, with black ancestry being worth the equivalent of 310 points, Hispanics gaining 130 points, and Asian students being penalized by 140 points, all relative to white applicants on the 1600 point Math and Reading SAT scale.⁸⁶

Universities always emphasize the importance of non-academic (and subjective) "leadership traits" as a central reason why they do not rely upon grades and academic test scores to select at least their white students, arguing that evidence of such personal initiative and leadership should often outweigh somewhat lower academic performance in predicting future success and value to our society. And on the face of it, these claims may seem plausible.

But the difficulty comes from the fact that such subjective factors must necessarily be assessed subjectively, by the particular individuals sitting in the Yale or Columbia admissions offices, and their cultural or ideological background may heavily taint their decision-making. One of Espenshade's most striking findings was that excelling in certain types of completely mainstream high school activities actually *reduced* a student's admission chances by 60–65 percent, appar-

ently because teenagers with such interests were regarded with considerable disfavor by the sort of people employed in admissions; these were ROTC, 4-H Clubs, Future Farmers of America, and various similar organizations.⁸⁷ Consider that these reported activities were totally mainstream, innocuous, and non-ideological, yet might easily get an applicant rejected, presumably for being cultural markers. When we recognize the overwhelmingly liberal orientation of nearly all our elite universities and the large communities of academics and administrators they employ, we can easily imagine what might become of any applicants who proudly proclaimed their successful leadership roles in an activity associated with conservative Christianity or right-wing politics as their extracurricular claim to fame.

Our imagination is given substance by *The Gatekeepers*, a fascinating and very disturbing inside look at the admissions system of Wesleyan, an elite liberal arts college in Middletown, Conn. The author was Jacques Steinberg, a veteran National Education Correspondent at the *New York Times*, and now its editor focusing on college admissions issues. Although Wesleyan definitely ranks a notch or so below the Ivies in selectivity, Steinberg strongly suggests that the admissions decision-making process is very similar, and while his 2002 book described the selection of the Fall 2000 entering class, his afterword to the 2012 edition states that the overall process has remained largely unchanged down to the present day. Whether or not Steinberg himself recognizes it, the most striking fact—which would surely shock students almost anywhere else in the Developed World—is the enormous focus on ideology and ethnic background compared to academic achievement or evidence of intellectual ability, as well as the powerful role of “connections” and clout.

Consider the case of Tiffany Wang, a Chinese immigrant student raised in the Silicon Valley area, where her father worked as an engineer. Although English was not her first language, her SAT scores were over 100 points above the Wesleyan average, and she ranked as a National Merit Scholarship semifinalist, putting her in the top 0.5 percent of high school students (not the top 2 percent as Steinberg mistakenly claims). Nevertheless, the admissions officer rated her just so-so in academics, and seemed far more positively impressed by her ethnic activism in the local school’s Asian-American club. Ultimately, he stamped her with a “Reject,” but later admitted to Steinberg that she might have been admitted if he had been aware of the enormous time and effort she had spent campaigning against the death penalty, a political cause

near and dear to his own heart. Somehow I suspect that a student who boasted of leadership in pro-death penalty activism among his extracurriculars might have fared rather worse in this process. And presumably for similar reasons, Tiffany was also rejected by all her other prestigious college choices, including Yale, Penn, Duke, and Wellsley, an outcome which greatly surprised and disappointed her immigrant father.⁸⁸

There was also the case of half-Brazilian Julianna Bentes, with slight black ancestry, who came from a middle-class family and attended on a partial scholarship one of America’s most elite prep schools, whose annual tuition now tops \$30,000; her SAT scores were somewhat higher than Tiffany’s, and she was an excellent dancer. The combination of her academic ability, dancing talent, and “multiracial” background ranked her as one of America’s top college recruitment prospects, gaining her admission and generous financial packages from Harvard, Yale, Stanford and every other elite university to which she applied, including the University of Chicago’s most prestigious academic scholarship award and a personal opportunity to meet

Excelling in certain types of mainstream high school activities, such as ROTC and 4-H Clubs, actually reduced a student’s admission chances by 60–65 percent.

Chelsea Clinton while visiting Stanford, which she did, before ultimately selecting Yale.⁸⁹

Finally, there was the case of Becca Jannol, a girl from a very affluent Jewish family near Beverly Hills, who attended the same elite prep school as Julianna, but with her parents paying the full annual tuition. Despite her every possible advantage, including test-prep courses and retaking the exam, her SAT scores were some 240 points lower on the 1600 point scale, placing her toward the bottom of the Wesleyan range, while her application essay focused on the philosophical challenges she encountered when she was suspended for illegal drug use. But she was a great favorite of her prep school counselor, who was an old college friend of the Wesleyan admissions officer, and using his discretion, he stamped her “Admit.” Her dismal academic record then caused this initial decision to be overturned by a unanimous vote of the other members of the full admissions committee, but he refused to give up, and moved heaven and earth to gain her a spot, even offering to rescind the admissions of one or more already

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selected applicants to create a place for her. Eventually he got her shifted from the Reject category to wait-list status, after which he secretly moved her folder to the very top of the large waiting list pile.⁹⁰

In the end “connections” triumphed, and she received admission to Wesleyan, although she turned it down in favor of an offer from more prestigious Cornell, which she had obtained through similar means. But at Cornell, she found herself “miserable,” hating the classes and saying she “didn’t see the usefulness of [her] being there.” However, her poor academic ability proved no hindrance, since the same administrator who had arranged her admission also wrangled her a quick entrance into a special “honors program” he personally ran, containing just 40 of the 3500 students in her year. This exempted her from all academic graduation requirements, apparently including classes or tests, thereby allowing her to spend her four college years mostly traveling around the world while working on a so-called “special project.” After graduation, she eventually took a job at her father’s successful law firm, thereby realizing her obvious potential as a member of America’s ruling Ivy League elite, or in her own words, as being one of “the best of the best.”⁹¹

Steinberg’s description of the remaining handful of Wesleyan applicants seems to fall into a very similar pattern, indicating that our elite admissions process operates under the principle of “Ideology and Diversity tempered by Corruption.” Certainly the majority of the decisions made seem to demonstrate that although the Maoist doctrine of favoring “Red over Expert” was abandoned decades ago in China, it is still alive and well in America’s elite university admissions process, though sometimes mitigated by factors of wealth and influence.⁹² The overwhelmingly liberal orientation of the elite university community, the apparent willingness of many liberals to actively discriminate against non-liberals, and the fact that American Jews remain perhaps the most liberal ethnic community may together help explain a significant portion of our skewed enrollment statistics.⁹³

We should also note that although admissions officers are poorly paid, earning less than public school teachers,⁹⁴ they nevertheless control a very valuable resource. According to Steinberg’s account, when individual officers are particularly forceful in their advocacy for an obviously under-qualified applicant, their colleagues regularly ask them, perhaps jokingly, “how much are they paying you to get that student admitted?”⁹⁵ Indeed, Golden states that admissions officers at top universities are constantly being offered explicit bribes, sometimes even including promises of houses or cruises.⁹⁶ And although Steinberg’s presentation of

Wesleyan’s admissions practices was glowingly favorable, it may have been more than pure coincidence that the particular admissions officer who was the focus of his reporting decided to seek employment elsewhere just before the book was scheduled to appear in print.⁹⁷

Steinberg’s narrative is engagingly written and he makes no effort to conceal his own ideological orientation, but some of his major lapses are troubling. For example, he accepts without question the notion that Asian-American applicants receive a racial “diversity” boost in elite admissions, though it has been obvious for decades that the exact opposite is true. And in his introduction, he describes the disturbingly exclusionary world of the past, explaining that until the late 1950s Jews “need not have bothered trying” to enroll at Harvard or the other Ivies.⁹⁸ Yet in fact, Jews were heavily, often massively over-represented in the Ivy League throughout the entire Twentieth Century, and by 1952 constituted 25 percent of Harvard undergraduates, a rate some 700 percent higher than their share of the general population.⁹⁹

Steinberg is an award-winning journalist who has spent most of the last 15 years covering education for the *New York Times*, and surely ranks near the very top of his profession; his book was widely reviewed and almost universally praised. For such huge factual errors to pass unnoticed is a very disturbing indication of the knowledge and assumptions of the individuals who shape our public perceptions on the realities of higher education in our society.

In fact, it seems likely that some of these obvious admissions biases we have noticed may be related to the poor human quality and weak academic credentials of many of the university employees making these momentous decisions. As mentioned above, the job of admissions officer is poorly paid, requires no professional training, and offers few opportunities for career advancement; thus, it is often filled by individuals with haphazard employment records. As one of the “Little Ivies,” Wesleyan is among America’s most prestigious liberal arts colleges, and Steinberg’s description of the career paths of its handful of admissions officers is eye-opening: the interim Director of Admissions had most recently screened food-stamp recipients and run a psychiatric half-way house; another had worked as an animal control officer and managed a camera store; a third unsuccessfully sought a job as a United Airlines flight attendant; others were recent college graduates, whose main college interests had been sports or ethnic studies.¹⁰⁰ The vast majority seem to possess minimal academic expertise and few intellectual interests, raising

serious questions about their ability to reasonably evaluate their higher-quality applicants.

As additional evidence, we can consider *What It Really Takes to Get into the Ivy League*, a 2003 advice book written by Chuck Hughes, who spent five years as a Senior Admissions Officer at Harvard, after having himself graduated from that university. Although he strongly emphasizes his own college participation in varsity sports, he never says a word about any personal academic interests, and near the end of his book on elite college admissions, he appears to describe Duke, Northwestern, and Rice as being members of the Ivy League.¹⁰¹

A more explicit statement of this exact problem is found in *A for Admission*, a very candid 1997 description of the admissions process at elite private universities written by Michele A. Hernandez, who had spent four years as Dartmouth's Assistant Director of Admissions. Near the beginning of her book, Hernandez explains that over half of Ivy League admissions officers are individuals who had not attended such academically challenging universities, nor probably had the intellectual capability to do so, and were sometimes confused about the relative ranking of SAT scores and other basic academic credentials. She also cautions students to avoid any subtlety in their essays, lest their words be misunderstood by their readers in the admissions office, whose degrees are more likely to have been in education than in any serious academic discipline.¹⁰²

It seems quite possible that poorly-paid liberal arts or ethnic-studies majors, probably with few quantitative skills and a vaguely "progressive" ideological focus, could implement highly unfair admissions decisions without even realizing their actions. According to Steinberg, admissions officers seem to assume that an important part of their duty is maximizing non-white enrollment, and this is especially true if they themselves are non-white, while there is no indication that they are actually aware of America's overall population distribution.¹⁰³

The last point is not a trivial one, since although our country is only about 13 percent black, according to a 2001 Gallup survey most people thought the figure was 33 percent, with the average non-white putting it at 40 percent.¹⁰⁴ This was roughly confirmed by the GSS respondents in 2000, who also believed that nearly 18 percent of Americans were Jewish, a figure more than eight times too large.¹⁰⁵ A very recent 2012 survey found that Americans believe Protestants outnumber Jews in this country by only 2.5 to 1, when the actual ratio is ten times greater.¹⁰⁶

Such shocking demographic ignorance is hardly confined solely to the uneducated. For example, soon after Karabel's book appeared, a prominent Massachu-

setts law school dean with a major interest in ethnic discrimination issues devoted two hours of his televised public affairs program to a detailed discussion of the topic with the author, but at the end let slip that he believed California's population was 50 percent Asian, an utter absurdity.¹⁰⁷ So perhaps many college administrators may have little idea about which ethnic groups are already enrolled above parity and which are below, instead taking their marching orders from an amorphous academic narrative which valorizes "racial diversity."

Meanwhile, any hint of "anti-Semitism" in admissions is regarded as an absolutely mortal sin, and any significant reduction in Jewish enrollment may often be denounced as such by the hair-trigger media. For example, in 1999 Princeton discovered that its Jewish enrollment had declined to just 50 percent of parity, down from more than 700 percent in the mid-1980s, and far below the comparable figures for Harvard or Yale. This quickly resulted in four front-page stories in the *Daily Princetonian*, a major article in the *New York Observer*, and extensive national coverage in both the *New York Times* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.¹⁰⁸ These articles included denunciations of Princeton's long historical legacy of anti-Semitism and quickly led to official apologies, followed by an immediate 30 percent rebound in Jewish numbers. During these same years, non-Jewish white enrollment across the entire Ivy League had dropped by roughly 50 percent, reducing those numbers to far below parity, but this was met with media silence or even occasional congratulations on the further "multicultural" progress of America's elite education system.

I suspect that the combined effect of these separate pressures, rather than any planned or intentional bias, is the primary cause of the striking enrollment statistics that we have examined above. In effect, somewhat dim and over-worked admissions officers, generally possessing weak quantitative skills, have been tasked by their academic superiors and media monitors with the twin ideological goals of enrolling Jews and enrolling non-whites, with any major failures risking harsh charges of either "anti-Semitism" or "racism." But by inescapable logic maximizing the number of Jews and non-whites implies minimizing the number of non-Jewish whites.

Problems with Pure Diversity and Pure Meritocracy

In recent decades, elite college admissions policy has frequently become an ideological battlefield between liberals and conservatives, but I would argue that both

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these warring camps have been missing the actual reality of the situation.

Conservatives have denounced “affirmative action” policies which emphasize race over academic merit, and thereby lead to the enrollment of lesser qualified blacks and Hispanics over their more qualified white and Asian competitors; they argue that our elite institutions should be color-blind and race-neutral. Meanwhile, liberals have countered that the student body of these institutions should “look like America,” at least approximately, and that ethnic and racial diversity intrinsically provide important educational benefits, at least if all admitted students are reasonably qualified and able to do the work.

It appears that both the values of meritocracy and diversity have gradually been overwhelmed and replaced by the influence of corruption and ethnic favoritism.

My own position has always been strongly in the former camp, supporting meritocracy over diversity in elite admissions. But based on the detailed evidence I have discussed above, it appears that both these ideological values have gradually been overwhelmed and replaced by the influence of corruption and ethnic favoritism, thereby selecting future American elites which are not meritocratic nor diverse, neither being drawn from our most able students nor reasonably reflecting the general American population.

The overwhelming evidence is that the system currently employed by most of our leading universities admits applicants whose ability may be unremarkable but who are beneficiaries of underhanded manipulation and favoritism. Nations which put their future national leadership in the hands of such individuals are likely to encounter enormous economic and social problems, exactly the sort of problems which our own country seems to have increasingly experienced over the last couple of decades. And unless the absurdly skewed enrollments of our elite academic institutions are corrected, the composition of these feeder institutions will ensure that such national problems only continue to grow worse as time passes. We should therefore consider various means of correcting the severe flaws in our academic admissions system, which functions as the primary intake valve of our future national elites.

One obvious approach would be to wave a magic wand and make the existing system “work better” by replacing many thousands of college admissions officers by individuals more competent and less venal, guardians of the common good who would properly balance objective academic merit against other intrinsic student qualities, while avoiding any lapse into rank favoritism. But this same simple solution could always be proposed for any other obviously failing system, including Soviet-style Communism.

A more fundamental change might be to directly adopt the implicit logic of America’s “academic diversity” movement—whose leadership has been overwhelmingly Jewish¹⁰⁹—and require our elite universities to bring their student bodies into rough conformity with the overall college-age population, ethnicity by ethnicity, in which case the Jewish presence at Harvard and the rest of the Ivy League would drop to between 1.5 and 2 percent.¹¹⁰

However, even leaving aside the rights and wrongs of such a proposal, it would be extremely difficult to implement in practice. The pattern of American ethnic origins is complex and interwoven, with high intermarriage rates, leading to categories being fluid and ambiguous. Furthermore, such an approach would foster clear absurdities, with wealthy Anglo-Saxons from Greenwich, Conn. being propelled into Yale because they fill the “quota” created on the backs of the impoverished Anglo-Saxons of Appalachia or Mississippi.

An opposite approach would be to rely on strictest objective meritocracy, with elite universities automatically selecting their students in academic rank-order, based on high school grades and performance on standardized exams such as the SAT. This approach would be similar to that used in many other developed countries around the world, but would produce severe social problems of its own.

Consider the notorious examples of the single-minded academic focus and testing-frenzy which are already sometimes found at many predominantly Asian immigrant high schools, involving endless cram-courses and massive psychological pressure. This seems very similar to the stories of extreme educational effort found in countries such as Japan, South Korea, and China, where educational success is an overriding social value and elite admissions are fully determined by rank-order academic performance. At present, these severe educational pressures on American teenagers have been largely confined to a portion of our small Asian-American population and perhaps some of their non-Asian schoolmates, but if

Harvard and its peers all selected their students based on such criteria, a huge fraction of American students would be forced to adopt similar work-habits or lose any hope of gaining admission. Do we really want to produce an entire nation of “Asian Tiger Moms” of all ethnicities and backgrounds, probably with horrible consequences for the future mental health, personal creativity, and even long-term academic performance of the next generation?

Also, we would expect such a system to heavily favor those students enrolled at our finest secondary schools, whose families could afford the best private tutors and cram-courses, and with parents willing to push them to expend the last ounce of their personal effort in endless, constant studying. These crucial factors, along with innate ability, are hardly distributed evenly among America’s highly diverse population of over 300 million, whether along geographical, socio-economic, or ethnic lines, and the result would probably be an extremely unbalanced enrollment within the ranks of our top universities, perhaps one even more unbalanced than that of today. Although American cultural elites may currently pay too much lip service to “diversity” as a value, there is also such a thing as too little educational diversity. Do we really want a system in which all of America’s top 100 universities selected their students much like Caltech does today, and therefore had a similar academic environment?

We should also consider that under such a selection system, any interest or involvement not directly contributing to the academic transcript—including activities associated with artistic talent, sports ability, or extra-curricular leadership—would disappear from our top universities, since students who devoted any significant time to those pursuits would tend to lose out to those who did not. Even those highest-ability students who gained admission would tend to forego the benefits of encountering classmates with a somewhat more balanced mix of interests and abilities, a group closer to the American mainstream, and might therefore develop a very one-sided and unrealistic view of our national population. And if every student admitted to Harvard believed, not without some justification, that he had been objectively determined to be among the smartest and hardest working 0.05 percent of all Americans his age, that might not be the best psychological starting point for a teenager just entering his adult life and future career.

These same problems would also manifest themselves in an admissions system based on strict meritocracy as adjusted by socio-economic status, which

Richard Kahlenberg prominently advocated in his 1996 book *The Remedy*, and various other writings. Although this approach has always seemed reasonably attractive to me and the results would certainly provide more socio-economical balance than straight meritocracy, other “diversity” enhancements might be minimal. We should remember that a significant fraction of our Asian immigrant population combines very low socio-economic status with extremely strong academic performance and educational focus, so it seems likely that this small group would capture a hugely disproportionate share of all admissions spots influenced by these modifying factors, which may or may not be fully realized by advocates of this approach.

An Inner Ring and an Outer Ring

But if selecting our future elites by purest “diversity” wouldn’t work, and using purest “meritocracy” would seem an equally bad idea, what would be the right approach to take as a replacement for today’s complex mixture of diversity, meritocracy, favoritism, and corruption?

Perhaps an important starting point would be to recognize that in any normal distribution curve, numbers widen greatly and differences become far less significant below the very top. Today’s academic supporters of “affirmative action” frequently claim that beneath the strongest tier of academic applicants to Yale or Stanford, the differences between particular students become relatively small, only slightly indicative of how they will perform at the college if they are enrolled;¹¹¹ and this claim is not entirely false. A large fraction of all the students applying have demonstrated that they have the ability and commitment to adequately perform the college work in question, and although they are unlikely to graduate in the top 5 percent of Princeton’s class, the same is also true of the vast majority of their classmates. The average student at Harvard is going to be an average Harvard student, and perhaps it would be better if a large majority of the admitted students would not find this prospect a horrifying disappointment after their previously stellar career of having always been the biggest student fish in their smallish academic ponds.

The notion of top universities only selecting a slice of their students based on purest academic merit certainly seems to be the standard today, and was so in the past as well. Karabel recounts how during the 1950s and 1960s, Harvard reserved about 10 percent of its spots for “top brains,” while selecting the remainder based on a mixture of different factors.¹¹² In *Choosing Elites*,

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Robert Klitgaard indicates that roughly this same approach continued into the 1980s, with only a fraction of admitted students being classified and admitted as “first-class scholars.”¹¹³ As already mentioned, according to Hughes, who served five years as a Harvard Senior Admissions Officer at Harvard, by the mid-2000s only 5 percent or less of Harvard undergraduates were selected purely on academic merit, with extracurricular activities and a wide variety of unspecified other criteria being used to choose among the other 80–85 percent of applicants who could actually handle the academic work; and this same pattern is found at most other highly selective universities.¹¹⁴ Given a widening funnel of ability, it is absurd to base admissions decisions on just a small difference of twenty or thirty points on the SAT, which merely encourages students to spend thousands of hours cramming in order to gain those extra crucial twenty or thirty points over their competitors.

But if our elite colleges were to select only a portion of their students based on purest academic merit, how should they pick the remainder, merely by flipping a coin? Actually, that might not be such a terrible idea, at least compared with the current system, in which these decisions are often seemingly based on massive biases and sometimes even outright corruption. After all, if we are seeking a student body which is at least somewhat diverse and reasonably representative of the American population, random selection is hardly the least effective means of ensuring that outcome. And the result would be true diversity, rather than the dishonest and ridiculous pseudo-diversity of our existing system.

The notion of using random selection to overcome the risk of unfair bias has been used for centuries, including in our own country, and is regularly found in matters of the greatest civic importance, especially those involving life and death. Our jury system relies on the random selection of a handful of ordinary citizens to determine the guilt or innocence of even the most eminent and powerful individuals, as well as to render corporate verdicts with penalties reaching into the billions. The millions of Americans ordered to fight and perhaps die in our major wars were generally called into the military by the process of a random draft lottery. And today, the enormous growth of games of chance and financial lotteries, often government-run, have become an unfortunate but very popular aspect of our entire economic system. Compared to these situations, requiring an excellent but hardly spectacular student to take his chances on winning a spot at Harvard or Yale hardly seems unreasonable.

In *The Big Test*, journalist Nicholas Lemann traces the history of meritocratic admissions policy, and the philosophical conflicts which liberals faced once

that policy first came into direct conflict with the racial diversity they also favored, beginning when the *DeFunis* “reverse discrimination” case reached the U.S. Supreme Court in 1974. At that point, one of the high court’s strongest liberal voices was Justice William O. Douglas, and he repeatedly considered the possible use of random lotteries as the fairest means of allocating college admissions slots below the top tier of most highly qualified applicants.¹¹⁵

Let us explore the likely social implications of such an admissions policy, focusing solely on Harvard and following a very simple model, in which (say) 300 slots or around 20 percent of each entering class are allocated based on pure academic merit (the “Inner Ring”), with the remaining 1300 slots being randomly selected from the 30,000 or so American applicants considered able to reasonably perform at the school’s required academic level and thereby benefit from a Harvard education (the “Outer Ring”).

First, we must recognize that the 300 applicants admitted by straight merit would be an exceptionally select group, representing just the top 2 percent of America’s 16,000 NMS semifinalists. Also, almost any American students in this group or even reasonably close would be very well aware of that fact, and more importantly, nearly all other students would realize they were far too distant to have any chance of reaching that level, no matter how hard they studied or how many hours they crammed, thus freeing them from any terrible academic pressure. Under today’s system, the opaque and haphazard nature of the admissions process persuades tens of thousands of students they might have a realistic shot at Harvard if only they would study a bit harder or participate in one more resume-stuffing extracurricular,¹¹⁶ but that would no longer be the case, and they would be able to relax a bit more during their high school years, just so long as they did well enough to qualify and try their luck as one of the “Outer Ring” of applicants.

The 300 Inner Ring students would certainly be quite different in all sorts of ways from the average high school student, even aside from their greater academic ability and drive; they might not be “diverse” in any sense of the word, whether geographically, ethnically, or socio-economically. But the remaining 1300 Outer Ring students would represent a random cross-section of the tens of thousands of students who applied for admission and had reasonably good academic ability, and since they would constitute 80 percent of the enrollment, Harvard would almost certainly become far more diverse and representative of America’s total population in almost all ways than is the case today, when 30 percent of its students come from private

schools, often the most elite and expensive ones.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, the vast majority of Harvard graduates—and everyone who later dealt with them—would know perfectly well that they had merely been “lucky” in gaining their admission, thereby tempering the sort of arrogance found among too many of today’s elite college graduates. And our vast and growing parasitic infrastructure of expensive cram-schools, private tutors, special academies, and college application consultants would quickly be reduced to what was merited by their real academic value, which may actually be close to nil. A general armistice would have been declared in America’s endlessly growing elite admissions arms-race.

Under such a system, Harvard might no longer boast of having America’s top Lacrosse player or a Carnegie Hall violinist or a Senatorial scion. But the class would be filled with the sort of reasonably talented and reasonably serious athletes, musicians, and activists drawn as a cross-section from the tens of thousands of qualified applicants, thereby providing a far more normal and healthier range of students.

The terrible family pressure which students, especially immigrant students, often today endure in the college admissions process would be greatly reduced. Even the most ambitious parents would usually recognize that their sons and daughters are unlikely to ever outrank 99.99 percent of their fellow students academically, so their only hope of reaching a school like Harvard would be the same as that of everyone else, via the admissions lottery. And losing in a random drawing can hardly be a source of major shame to any family.

One of the most harmful aspects of recent American society has been the growth of a winner-take-all mentality, in which finishing even just slightly below the top rung at any stage of the career ladder seems to amount to economic and sometimes personal failure. An aspect of this is that our most elite businesses tend to only recruit from the top universities, assuming that these possess a near-monopoly on the brightest and most talented students, even though it actually appears that favoritism and corruption these days are huge factors in admission. But if it were explicitly known that the vast majority of Harvard students had merely been winners in the application lottery, top businesses would begin to cast a much wider net in their employment outreach, and while the average Harvard student would probably be academically stronger than the average graduate of a state college, the gap would no longer be seen as so enormous, with individuals being judged more on their own merits and actual achievements. A Harvard student who graduated *magna cum laude* would surely have many

doors open before him, but not one who graduated in the bottom half of his class.

This same approach of an Inner Ring and an Outer Ring of admissions could similarly be applied to most of America’s other selective colleges, perhaps with some variations in the relative sizes of the two groups. It is possible that some universities such as Caltech, which today selects its 200 entering freshmen by purely meritocratic academic rank-order, might prefer to retain that system, in which case the Inner Ring would constitute the entire enrollment. Other universities, which glorify the extremes of total diversity, might choose to select almost all their students by random lot. But for most, the sort of split enrollment I have outlined might work reasonably well.

Since colleges would still be positioned in a hierarchy of national excellence and prestige, those students whose academic record just missed placing them within the Inner Ring of a Harvard or a Yale would almost certainly gain automatic admission to a Columbia, Cornell, or Duke, and the same sort of cascading effect would be found down through all subsequent layers of selectivity. Thus, although America’s top couple of thousand students each year would not all be found among the 4000 entering Harvard, Yale, or Princeton, they would at least gain admission to some Ivy or its equivalent, in contrast to the shocking examples of admissions injustice recounted by Golden.

Since essays, personal statements, lists of extracurricular achievements and so many other uniquely complex and time-consuming elements of the American admissions process would no longer exist, students could easily apply to long lists of possible colleges, ranking them in order of personal preference. Meanwhile, the colleges themselves could dispense with nearly their entire admissions staff, since the only remaining part of the admissions process would be determining the academic ranking of the tiny fraction of top applicants, which could be performed quickly and easily. Harvard currently receives almost 35,000 applications, which must each be individually read and evaluated in a massive undertaking, but applying a crude automatic filter of grades and test scores would easily winnow these down to the 1,000 plausible candidates for those 300 Inner Ring slots, allowing a careful evaluation of those highest-performing students on pure academic grounds.

Eliminating at a stroke the enormous expense and complexity of our baroque admissions process might actually raise the quality of the students attending elite colleges by drawing more applicants into the system, especially if, as I suggest elsewhere, tuition at our top private colleges were drastically reduced or even elim-

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inated (See “Paying Tuition to a Giant Hedge Fund”).

The late James Q. Wilson certainly ranked as one of America’s most highly-regarded social scientists of the second half of the twentieth century, and when he was awarded the Gold Medal of the National Institute of Social Sciences in 2011, his remarks provided some fascinating details of his own educational background. Although an outstanding high school student in Southern California, no one in his family had ever previously attended college nor had he himself given it any thought, instead starting work in his father’s auto repair shop after graduation in order to learn the trade of a car mechanic. However, one of his teachers arranged his admission to a small college on a full scholarship, which launched him on his stellar academic career.¹¹⁸

It seems likely that the vast paperwork and expense of today’s admissions system, with its endless forms, intrusive questionnaires, fee-waiver-applications, and general bureaucracy intimidates many bright students, especially those from impoverished or immigrant backgrounds, and deters them from even considering an application to our elite colleges, especially since they perhaps wrongly assume that they would stand no chance of success. But filling out a few very simple forms and having their test scores and grades scores automatically forwarded to a list of possible universities would give them at least the same chance in the lottery as any other applicant whose academic skills were adequate.

Following the 1991 collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union, some observers noted with unease that the United States was left as about the only remaining large and fully-functional multi-ethnic society, and the subsequent collapse and disintegration of ethnically diverse Yugoslavia merely strengthened these concerns. China is sometimes portrayed by the ignorant American media as having large and restive minority populations, but it is 92 percent Han Chinese, and if we exclude a few outlying or thinly populated provinces—the equivalents of Alaska, Hawaii, and New Mexico—closer to 95 percent Han, with all its top leadership drawn from that same background and therefore possessing a natural alignment of interests. Without doubt, America’s great success despite its multiplicity of ethnic nationalities is almost unique in modern human history. But such success should not be taken for granted.

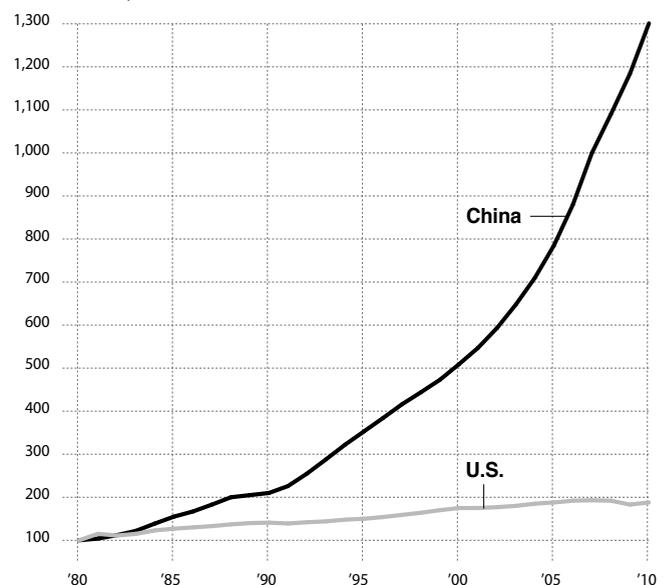
Many of the Jewish writers who focus on the history of elite university admissions, including

Karabel, Steinberg, and Lemann, have critiqued and rebuked the America of the first half of the Twentieth Century for having been governed by a narrow WASP ascendancy, which overwhelmingly dominated and controlled the commanding heights of business, finance, education, and politics; and some of their criticisms are not unreasonable. But we should bear in mind that this dominant group of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants—largely descended from among the earliest American settlers and which had gradually absorbed and assimilated substantial elements of Celtic, Dutch, German, and French background—was generally aligned in culture, religion, ideology, and ancestry with perhaps 60 percent of America’s total population at the time, and therefore hardly represented an alien presence.¹¹⁹ By contrast, a similarly overwhelming domination by a tiny segment of America’s current population, one which is completely misaligned in all these respects, seems far less inherently stable, especially when the institutional roots of such domination have continually increased despite the collapse of the supposedly meritocratic justification. This does not seem like a recipe for a healthy and successful society, nor one which will even long survive in anything like its current form.

Power corrupts and an extreme concentration of power even more so, especially when that concentration of power is endlessly praised and glorified by the major media and the prominent intellectuals which

GDP per capita growth

Constant international dollars adjusted for purchasing power parity Ratios, 1980=100



together constitute such an important element of that power. But as time goes by and more and more Americans notice that they are poorer and more indebted than they have ever been before, the blandishments of such propaganda machinery will eventually lose effectiveness, much as did the similar propaganda organs of the decaying Soviet state. Kahlenberg quotes Pat Moynihan as noting that the stagnant American earnings between 1970 and 1985 represented “the longest stretch of ‘flat’ income in the history of the European settlement of North America.”¹²⁰ The only difference today is that this period of economic stagnation has now extended nearly three times as long, and has also been combined with numerous social, moral, and foreign policy disasters.

Over the last few decades America’s ruling elites

have been produced largely as a consequence of the particular selection methods adopted by our top national universities in the late 1960s. Leaving aside the question of whether these methods have been fair or have instead been based on corruption and ethnic favoritism, the elites they have produced have clearly done a very poor job of leading our country, and we must change the methods used to select them. Conservative William F. Buckley, Jr. once famously quipped that he would rather entrust the government of the United States to the first 400 names listed in the Boston telephone directory than to the faculty of Harvard. So perhaps an important step in solving our national problems would be to apply a similar method to selecting the vast majority of Harvard’s students. ■

Appendices to this article can be found at www.theamericanconservative.com/meritocracy-appendices

Paying Tuition to a Giant Hedge Fund

From its 1636 foundation Harvard had always ranked as America’s oldest and most prestigious college, even as it gradually grew in size and academic quality during the first three centuries of its existence. The widespread destruction brought about by the Second World War laid low its traditional European rivals, and not long after celebrating its third centennial, Harvard had become the world’s greatest university.

Harvard only improved its standing during the successful American postwar decades, and by its 350th anniversary in 1986 was almost universally recognized as the leader of the world’s academic community. But over the decade or two which followed, it quietly embarked upon a late-life career change, transforming itself into one of the world’s largest hedge funds, with some sort of school or college or something attached off to one side for tax reasons.

The numbers tell the story. Each September, Harvard’s 6,600 undergraduates begin their classes at the Ivy-covered walls of its traditional Cambridge campus owing annual tuition of around \$37,000 for the privilege, up from just \$13,000 in 1990. Thus, over the last two decades, total tuition income (in current dollars) has increased from about \$150 million to almost \$250 million, with a substantial fraction of this list-price amount being discounted in the form of the university’s own financial aid to the families of its less wealthy students.

Meanwhile, during most of these years, Harvard’s own endowment has annually grown by five or ten or

even twenty times that figure, rendering net tuition from those thousands of students a mere financial bagatelle, having almost no impact on the university’s cash-flow or balance-sheet position. If all the students disappeared tomorrow—or were forced to pay double their current tuition—the impact would be negligible compared to the crucial fluctuations in the mortgage-derivatives market or the international cost-of-funds index.

A very similar conclusion may be drawn by examining the expense side of the university’s financial statement. Harvard’s Division of Arts and Sciences—the central core of academic activity—contains approximately 450 full professors, whose annual salaries tend to average the highest at any university in America. Each year, these hundreds of great scholars and teachers receive aggregate total pay of around \$85 million. But in fiscal 2004, just the five top managers of the Harvard endowment fund shared total compensation of \$78 million, an amount which was also roughly 100 times the salary of Harvard’s own president. These figures clearly demonstrate the relative importance accorded to the financial and academic sides of Harvard’s activities.

Unlike universities, the business model of large and aggressive hedge funds is notoriously volatile, and during the 2008 Financial Crisis, Harvard lost \$11 billion on its net holdings, teetering on the verge of bankruptcy as its highly illiquid assets could not easily be redeployed to cover hundreds of millions of dollars in ongoing capital commitments to

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various private equity funds. The desperate hedge fund—ahem, academic institution—was forced to borrow \$2.5 billion from the credit markets, lay off hundreds of university employees, and completely halt construction work on a huge expansion project, ultimately surviving and later recovering in much the same way as did Goldman Sachs or Citibank.

During all these untoward events, the dollars being paid in by physics majors and being paid out to professors of medieval French literature were of no significance whatsoever, and if institutional investors had balked at the massive bond sales, both groups might have arrived at the classroom one morning only to see a “Closed for Bankruptcy” notice, while Cerberus Capital Management and the Blackstone Group began furiously bidding for the liquidated real estate properties and private equity holdings of what had once been America’s most storied center of learning. Meanwhile, Bill Gates might have swooped in and acquired the unimportant educational properties themselves for a song, afterward renaming the campus itself Microsoft U.-East.

It is commendable that so many former students feel gratitude to their academic alma mater, but personal loyalty to a wealthy hedge fund is somewhat less warranted, and if Harvard’s residual and *de minimis* educational activities provide it with enormous tax advantages, perhaps those activities should be brought into greater alignment with benefit to our society. The typical private foundation is legally required to spend 5 percent of its assets on charitable activities, and with Harvard’s endowment now back over \$30 billion, that sum would come to around \$1.5 billion annually. This is many times the total amount of undergraduate tuition, which should obviously be eliminated, thereby removing a substantial financial barrier to enrollment or even application.

One of the major supposed reasons Harvard disproportionately admits the children of the wealthy or those of its alumni is the desperate need to maintain its educational quality by soliciting donations, and the endless irritations of fund-raising drives are an inevitable accompaniment to the reunion process. But the all-time record for a total alumni class contribution was set earlier this year by the Class of 1977 at just \$68.7 million, or about 0.2 percent of the existing endowment; and even the aggregate amount of annual alumni donations to support the college is quite trivial compared to the overall income and expenditure statement.

There is also the Internet gossip of an explicit “Harvard Price,” a specific donation dollar amount which would get your son or daughter admitted. The figure is said to be \$5 million these days for an ap-

plicant who is reasonably competitive and \$10 million for one who is not. Daniel Golden’s *The Price of Admission* provides a specific example which tends to generally confirm this disturbing belief.

But if such claims are true, then Harvard is following an absurd policy, selling off its good name and reputation for just pennies on the dollar, not least because the sums involved represent merely a day or two of its regular endowment income. Harvard surely ranks as the grandest academic name in the world, carrying a weight of prestige that could be leveraged to extract far greater revenue at far lower cost of academic dignity.

Suppose, for example, that instead of such surreptitious and penny-ante wheeling and dealing, Harvard simply auctioned off a single admissions slot each year to the highest blind bidder on the international markets. I suspect that the same sorts of individuals who currently pay \$50 million or \$100 million for a splotchy painting they can hang on their walls would surely be willing to spend a similar amount to have their son or daughter embossed with the Harvard stamp of approval. The key factor is that such prestige goods are almost entirely positional in value, with most of the benefit derived from the satisfaction of having outbid your rival Internet billionaires, oil sheikhs, or Russian oligarchs, so the higher the price goes, the more valuable the commodity becomes. And since the goal would be to extract as much money as possible from the wealthy bidders, a non-refundable bidding deposit of 2 percent or 5 percent, win or lose, might double or triple the total dollars raised.

Thus, instead of extracting steep net tuition from thousands of undergraduates (and perhaps quietly selling a handful of spots each year for a few million dollars each), Harvard could probably raise just as much revenue by enrolling a single under-qualified student in a process which would publicly establish the gigantic financial value contained in a Harvard diploma. It’s even quite likely that a useful side-benefit of the publicity would be a large rise in Harvard’s total applicants, including those of highest quality, as families all across the country and the world sought to obtain at zero cost the exact same product which a billionaire had just bought for \$70 million.

If Harvard wishes to retain its primary existence as a gigantic profit-maximizing hedge fund, that is well and good, but meanwhile perhaps it should be required to provide a free top quality college education to a few thousand deserving students as a minor community service.

—Ron Unz

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The Chosen People: A Study of Jewish Intelligence and Achievement (2011) Richard Lynn

How to Be a High School Superstar (2010) Cal Newport

Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale (1985) Dan A. Oren

How They Got Into Harvard (2005) *The Harvard Crimson*

The Gatekeepers (2002/2012) Jacques Steinberg

The Half-Opened Door (1979/2010) Marcia Graham Synnott

The Retreat from Race (1992/1998) Dana Y. Takagi

The Abilities and Achievements of Orientals in North America (1982) Philip E. Vernon

The Creative Elite in America (1966) Nathaniel Weyl

The Geography of American Achievement (1989) Nathaniel Weyl

ENDNOTES

¹ “Harvard Says 125 Students May Have Cheated on a Final Exam,” Richard Perez-Pena and Jess Bidgood, *The New York Times*, August 30, 2012: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/31/education/harvard-says-125-students-may-have-cheated-on-exam.html>

² By 2010, the top 1% of Americans possessed 35.4% of the national net wealth, while the bottom 95% held 36.9%. See Edward N. Wolff, “The Asset Price Meltdown and the Wealth of the Middle Class,” *New York University*, August 26, 2012: <http://appam.confex.com/appam/2012/webprogram/Paper2134.html>.

³ See Ho (2009) pp. 11, 13, 40-69 *passim*, 256 for an extensive discussion of the college background and recruitment choices made by Wall Street firms in recent years. According to her “ethnography” of Wall Street, major financial firms recruit very heavily from Harvard and Princeton, somewhat less at the remaining Ivy League schools and a few others such as Stanford and MIT, and rarely anywhere else, partly because they believe admission to elite universities provide evidence of “smartness,” which Wall Street values above all else (p. 38).

The claim that attendance at an Ivy League or other elite university provides a substantial advantage over similarly talented individuals has been disputed by the recent research of Stacy Dale and Alan B. Krueger, but their findings are based on students who graduated college almost two decades ago,

and probably do not capture the dramatic recent changes in the American economy and Wall Street practices since that time.

See David Leonhardt, “Revisiting the Value of Elite Colleges,” *The New York Times*, February 21, 2011: <http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/21/revisiting-the-value-of-elite-colleges/>.

⁴ Ezra Klein, “Wall Street Steps In When Ivy League Fails,” *Washington Post*, February 16, 2012: http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/wall-street-steps-in-when-ivy-league-fails/2012/02/16/gIQAAX2weIR_story.html

⁵ Austin Bramwell, “Top of the Class,” *The American Conservative*, March 13, 2012: <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/top-of-the-class/>

⁶ As an example of these extreme efforts, see “NYC’s Kindergarten Wars,” *The New York Post/PageSix Magazine*, October 5, 2008: <http://www.nypost.com/pagesixmag/issues/20081005/NYCs+Kindergarten+Wars>

⁷ Jenny Anderson and Peter Applebome, “Exam Cheating on Long Island Hardly a Secret,” *The New York Times*, December 1, 2011: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/02/education/on-long-island-sat-cheating-was-hardly-a-secret.html>

⁸ Golden (2006) pp. 44-48.

⁹ Ssu-yu Teng, “Chinese Influence on the Western Examination System,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Sept. 1943, pp. 267-312.

¹⁰ Karabel (2005) pp. 89-109.

- ¹¹ Oren (1985) p. 62.
- ¹² Karabel (2005) p. 126.
- ¹³ Karabel (2005) pp. 387-391.
- ¹⁴ Karabel (2005) p. 364.
- ¹⁵ Karabel (2005) pp. 93, 194-195, 486-499.
- ¹⁶ Karabel (2005) pp. 524-525.
- ¹⁷ Admittedly, surveys show that the vast majority of Asian-Americans do not believe their racial background hurts their chances of college admission, but such factors would obviously apply primarily only at the elite, highly selective universities, which only a small fraction of Asians seek to attend. See “The Rise of Asian Americans,” *Pew Research Center*, June 19, 2012: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/>.
- ¹⁸ Jesse Washington, “Some Asians’ College Strategy: Don’t Check ‘Asian,’” *The Associated Press*, December 3, 2011: <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/story/2011-12-03/asian-students-college-applications/51620236/1>. See also Jon Marcus, “Competitive Disadvantage,” *The Boston Globe*, April 17, 2011: http://www.boston.com/news/education/higher/articles/2011/04/17/high_achieving_asian_americans_are_being_shut_out_of_top_schools/ and Scott Jaschik, “Is It Bias? Is It Legal?,” *Inside Higher Ed*, February 3, 2012: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/02/03/federal-probe-raises-new-questions-discrimination-against-asian-american-applicants>.
- ¹⁹ Espanshade (2009) p. 92-93.
- ²⁰ Golden (2006) p. 200.
- ²¹ The elite university enrollment statistics for Asians and other racial and ethnic groups derived from the NCES data are provided in Appendix C. All the Asian figures provided by the NCES exclude “mixed race” individuals, who were previously included in the “Race Unknown” category but since 2009 have been provided separately.
- ²² Hsia (1988) pp. 93-148, Takagi (1992/1998).
- ²³ For example, see Oren (1985) pp. 320-322 and Synnott (1979/2010) pp. 112, 195.
- ²⁴ A portion of this decline in relative Asian enrollment may be apparent rather than real. As noted earlier, some Asian applicants, especially those of mixed parentage and without an identifying Asian name, may attempt to conceal their non-white ancestry in hopes of enhancing their likelihood of admission. But such a situation can hardly be used to justify Ivy League policy, and since the numbers are unknown, we must generally confine our analysis to the officially reported statistics.
- ²⁵ It should be noted that some former Ivy League admissions officers strongly deny such charges of anti-Asian bias. For example, Chuck Hughes, who spent five years as a Harvard Senior Admissions Officer, claims in his 2003 book that Asian American applicants—just like blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, and other non-whites—actually receive a beneficial “tip” in evaluating their application packages. It should also be noted that Hughes strongly emphasizes his own enthusiastic participation in varsity sports as a Harvard undergraduate, while avoiding mention of any academic interests. See Hughes (2003) pp. 86, 145.
- ²⁶ Hsia (1988) pp. 98-99; Karabel (2005) p. 500.
- ²⁷ Indeed, Dean L. Fred Jewett of Harvard suggested in 1985 that among Asians “family pressure makes more marginal students apply” but provided no evidence for this claim, which seems contradicted by the objective evidence. See Hsia (1988) p. 97.
- ²⁸ College Confidential, September 16, 2011: <http://talk.collegeconfidential.com/13210307-post724.html>.
- ²⁹ One apparent difficulty in such Asian surname analysis might be the case of mixed-race individuals with Asian names, but this difficulty is quite insignificant. First, mixed-race Asians are only about 15% of the total Asian population, and are excluded from our Asian statistics for college enrollments. Meanwhile, until quite recently, the overwhelming majority of marriages between Asians and non-Asians involved an Asian wife, hence the last names of any children would tend not to be Asian and would be excluded from our list analysis. Thus, both our college enrollment figures and our academic performance estimates tend to exclude part-Asians and should be fully consistent.
- ³⁰ The 2000 Census lists 310,125 Nguyens, or about 1 in 3.6 of the total Vietnamese population of 1,122,528. Meanwhile, there were 194,067 Kims, representing 1 in 5.5 of the 1,076,872 Koreans.
- ³¹ Weyl (1987) pp. 26-27.
- ³² Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom, *America in Black and White* (1997) pp. 398-400 provides some racial statistics on the past distribution of top SAT scores which would strongly support this conclusion. In 1981, Asians were just 2% of the college-age population but accounted for over 4% of students with Verbal scores of 700 or above and 11% of those with Math scores of 750 or above. By 1995, college-age Asians were still just 3% of the total, but produced over 14% of those high Verbal scores and a remarkable 28% of the high Math scores. Since Asian-Americans have now increased to roughly 5% of students of college age and have also become much more affluent, we would expect such figures to be far higher today.
- ³³ Although the primary measure of human “fluid intelligence”—so-called “g”—is measured consistently across different groups, for reasons not entirely clear the three principal subcomponents of Verbal, Mathematical, and Visuospatial abilities sometimes vary substantially across racial or ethnic lines. For example, East Asians tend to be especially strong in Visuospatial ability but much less so in Verbal ability, Jews are extremely strong in Verbal but mediocre in Visuospatial skills, while most white Europeans tend to be intermediate in both these different categories. See Vernon (1982) pp. 20-21, 160-163, 178-180, 272-277.
- ³⁴ Suein Hwang, “The New White Flight,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 19, 2005: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB113236377590902105-search.html>.
- ³⁵ At his 1992 Milwaukee trial, Jeffrey Dahmer freely admitted torturing, killing, and cannibalizing 17 young men, but vigorously denied he had selected his mostly black victims out of any racial bias. In a more typical case, after black Connecticut truck driver Omar Thornton massacred five of his white co-workers, the media focused considerable attention on whether they had been innocent victims or “racists” as Thornton had alleged.
- ³⁶ In recent years, the Reading and Writing SAT scores for entering freshmen at all four universities have been almost identical, while the Math SAT scores at Caltech have been significantly higher, as have been the percentages of National Merit Scholars. See the NCES website: <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> and Steve Hsu, “Elite Universities and Human Capital Mongering,” October 10, 2010: <http://infoproc.blogspot.com/2010/10/elite-universities-and-human-capital.html>.
- ³⁷ Indeed, the 1988 official register of Harvard, intended for prospective applicants, actually described the Harvard admissions process as “complex, subjective, and sometimes difficult to comprehend.” See Takagi (1992/1998) p. 63.
- ³⁸ As Asian applications to the University of California system grew rapidly during the 1980s, there were major efforts to replace a simple and objective meritocratic admissions system with a “holistic” and opaque system, closer to that of the Ivies, which had the initial effect of sharply reducing Asian admissions. See Hsia (1988) pp. 106-119, Takagi (1992/1998).

However, political resistance by Asian groups in California and especially the subsequent passage of Proposition 209 eventually overcame these policies.

³⁹ Earlier this month, a lengthy New York Times article on Asian admissions issues written by the newspaper's former Education Editor argued that the use of objective admissions standards had caused the Berkeley and UCLA campuses to become more than half Asian, and suggested that this had led to adverse social and educational consequences. However, this claim contains serious factual errors, given that the 2011 Asian undergraduate enrollments were just 37% and 34% respectively, and had never come close to half at any point in history. See Ethan Bronner, "Asian-Americans in the Argument," *The New York Times*, November 4, 2012: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/04/education/edlife/affirmative-action-a-complicated-issue-for-asian-americans.html>.

⁴⁰ Asians are currently 72% of the students at Stuyvesant and 63% at Bronx Science, while the latter school was just 20% Asian in 1986. See Kyle Spencer, "For Asians, School Tests Are Vital Steppingstones," *The New York Times*, October 28, 2012: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/27/education/a-grueling-admissions-test-highlights-a-racial-divide.html> and Deborah Anderluh, "High School for Gifted Kids May Open in L.A.," *The Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, September 28, 1986: <http://www.ronunz.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/HeraldExaminer-1986-SAS1.jpg>.

⁴¹ In the mid-1980s, charges that anti-Asian discrimination in the UC system were similar to the old "Jewish quotas" of the Ivy League quickly provoked television network coverage. See Takagi (1992/1998) pp. 50-51.

⁴² Media coverage played a huge role in influencing the growth and outcome of the battle over the admissions of Asians to the UC system. See Takagi (1992/1998) pp.49-51, 74-77, 100-103.

⁴³ Asian-Americans had 2010 median annual household income of \$66,000, about 22% higher than the white figure and were almost 60% more likely to have graduated from college, in each case ranking the highest of any racial group. See "The Rise of Asian Americans," *Pew Research Center*, June 19, 2012: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/>.

⁴⁴ In defending Harvard against 1980s accusations of anti-Asian discrimination in admissions, Dean Fred Jewett made exactly this point regarding the impact of Asian geographical concentration. See Takagi (1992/1998) p. 69.

⁴⁵ These were exactly the arguments made by a relatively recent Harvard graduate who had served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Harvard Independent* and also reported on admissions practices. See Matthew Yglesias, "Harvard and Princeton Clearly Discriminate Against Asian Applicants; the Question Is Whether It's Illegal," *Slate.com*, February 14, 2012: http://www.slate.com/blogs/moneybox/2012/02/14/harvard_and_princeton_clearly_discriminate_against_asian_applicants_the_question_is_whether_it_s_illegal.html.

⁴⁶ Daniel Golden, "Harvard Targeted in U.S. Asian-American Discrimination Probe," *Bloomberg News*, February 2, 2012: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-02-02/harvard-targeted-in-u-s-asian-american-discrimination-probe.html>; Daniel E. Slotnik, "Do Asian-Americans Face Bias in Admissions at Elite Colleges?," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2012: <http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/08/do-asian-americans-face-bias-in-admissions-at-elite-colleges/>; Editorial, "A Ludicrous Lawsuit," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 8, 2012: <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2012/2/8/lawsuit-admissions-fair/>.

⁴⁷ Dana Vachon, "The Code of the Winklevii," *Vanity Fair*, December 2011: <http://www.vanityfair.com/business/fea->

[tures/2011/12/winklevosses-201112](http://www.vanityfair.com/business/fea-tures/2011/12/winklevosses-201112).

⁴⁸ For decades, comparing and contrasting Asian-Americans with Jews has been a commonplace in public policy analysis, given that both groups are small but high-performing minorities in American society. See, for example, "The Triumph of Asian-Americans" and "Asians and Jews," David A. Bell, *The New Republic*, July 15-22, 1985 and Michael Barone, *The New Americans* (2001) pp. 193-274. Indeed, one-third of Barone's book consists of the section entitled "Jews and Asians." Most recently, the entire front page of the *Wall Street Journal* Weekly Review section was devoted to exactly this topic; see Lee Siegel, "Rise of the Tiger Nation," *Wall Street Journal*, October 27-28, 2012: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204076204578076613986930932.html>.

⁴⁹ Jewish enrollment estimates for elite universities are summarized in Appendix D.

⁵⁰ Karabel (2005) p. 536.

⁵¹ Since the overwhelming majority of Harvard's foreign students are drawn from non-white countries or countries with negligible Jewish populations, it is likely that nearly all the Jewish students reported by Hillel are American. However, 6.2% of Harvard undergraduates refused to report their race in 2011, and many of these, possibly a majority, may actually be white. This "Race Unknown" category has typically ranged between 5% and 15% of Harvard undergraduates over the last couple of decades, with roughly similar numbers at most other Ivy League schools.

⁵² For all these Jewish demographic estimates, see Appendix B.

⁵³ The combined undergraduate enrollment of the eight Ivy League universities includes roughly 12,000 Jews, 9,000 Asians, and 13,000 non-Jewish whites, as well as 5,000 students whose racial background is unknown. The population of college-age Americans consists of roughly 10 million whites, including 300,000 Jews, and 800,000 Asians.

⁵⁴ Steve Sailer, "National Merit Semifinalists by School and Name," September 18, 2010: <http://isteve.blogspot.com/2010/09/national-merit-semifinalists-by-school.html>; "The Far East Rises in the West," *Takimag.com*, February 29, 2012: http://takimag.com/article/the_far_east_rises_in_the_west_steve_sailer/print; "More Views on California Surnames of Semifinalists," February 29, 2012: <http://isteve.blogspot.com/2012/02/more-views-on-california-surnames-of.html>. Obviously such a Jewish surname analysis would miss the children of intermarried families in which the husband was non-Jewish, hence only count half the half-Jews. However, any such errors introduced are probably small relative to the broader uncertainty in defining and estimating total Jewish numbers, the ambiguity in identifying Jewish names, and the likely estimation errors in the Jewish college enrollment statistics.

⁵⁵ Fernanda Santos, "To Be Black at Stuyvesant High," *The New York Times*, February 25, 2012: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/26/education/black-at-stuyvesant-high-one-girls-experience.html>. In 2012, Asians were 72.5% of Stuyvesant students, with all whites at just 24%, of whom an unspecified fraction were Jewish. Charles Murray has noted that in 1954, Jewish children comprised 24/28 or 85% of the highest-scoring students in NYC on a citywide IQ test, although at that point Jews were probably a little less than 30% of the city's total white population, so a similar degree of over-representation at the local elite academic schools seems plausible. See Charles Murray, "Jewish Genius," *Commentary*, April 2007.

⁵⁶ Weyl (1989) p. 26-27.

⁵⁷ Vernon (1982) 160-162, 178-179, 273; Richard Lynn, "The Intelligence of American Jews," *Personality and Individual Differences*, January 2004; Margaret E. Backman, "Patterns of

- Mental Abilities: Ethnic, Socioeconomic, and Sex Differences,” *American Educational Research Journal*, Winter 1972.
- ⁵⁸ Evidence that these low Jewish enrollments are due to meritocratic admissions factors rather than merely lack of possible applicants may be seen if we compare different UC campuses. Berkeley and UCLA are the most selective, and at those Jewish enrollment averages about 9.5% or about one-quarter the Asian total; meanwhile, Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara are much less selective, and the Jewish percentages are nearly twice as high and also close to the local Asian figures. Jewish enrollments are also very substantial at the lower-tier California State University system, with numbers being much higher both at CS Northridge than nearby UCLA and at San Diego State compared to UCSD. Large numbers of Jewish students also attend the schools in the lowest-tier community college system as well, such as Pierce College in the San Fernando Valley. If these Jewish students had had higher academic performance, most would almost certainly have selected the much more prestigious University of California campuses.
- ⁵⁹ Kimball A. Milton and Jagdish Mehra, *Climbing the Mountain: The Scientific Biography of Julian Schwinger*, 2003, p. 218.
- ⁶⁰ Weyl (1989) p. 26-27 estimates Jews as having a “performance coefficient” of 339 on the 1987 NMS semifinalist list. Since Jews were then approximately 2.4% of the American population, they would have been roughly 8.1% of the 1987 NMS semifinalists.
- ⁶¹ David W. Murray, “The War Against Testing,” *Commentary*, September 1998.
- ⁶² California contains a large fraction of America’s mainland Japanese-Americans, who represent approximately 1.1% of the state’s population, while roughly 0.8% of the state’s NMS semifinalists have Japanese surnames. However, the older mean age of this group implies that it probably represents a relatively reduced fraction of the high school population.
- ⁶³ Weyl (1966) pp. 53-54, 83-84.
- ⁶⁴ Most recently, Judge Richard Posner, one of America’s most highly regarded jurists, made such a claim that Jews have a mean IQ of 115 on his blog, together with an even more absurd claim that the same was also true for Asian-Americans. See “Rating Teachers,” *The Becker-Posner Blog*, September 23, 2012, <http://www.becker-posner-blog.com/2012/09/rating-teachersposner.html>.
- ⁶⁵ Lynn (2011) pp. 274-278.
- ⁶⁶ Ron Unz, “Race, IQ, and Wealth,” *The American Conservative*, August 2012: <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/race-iq-and-wealth/>.
- ⁶⁷ For example, the GSS indicates that just 3% of Jews live in rural areas, a tenth of the overall white rate, while Jews are over twice as likely to live in major cities or suburbs than the general white population.
- ⁶⁸ Helmuth Nyborg, “The Intelligence-Religiosity Nexus: A Representative Study of White Adolescent Americans,” *Intelligence* (2009) pp. 81-93.
- ⁶⁹ See Appendix A.
- ⁷⁰ Sam Roberts, “A Village With the Numbers, Not the Image, of the Poorest Place,” *The New York Times*, April 20, 2011: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/21/nyregion/kiryas-joel-a-village-with-the-numbers-not-the-image-of-the-poorest-place.html>.
- ⁷¹ See Appendix G.
- ⁷² Ron Unz, “Some Minorities Are More Minor Than Others,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 16, 1998: <http://www.ronunz.org/1998/11/16/some-minorities-are-more-minor-than-others/>.
- ⁷³ Espenshade (2009) p. 113.
- ⁷⁴ See <http://www.onlinecolleges.net/2012/02/21/the-10-most-generous-college-donations-of-all-time/>.
- ⁷⁵ Hughes (2003) p. 31. In 2003, roughly 450 students with perfect SAT scores of 1600 applied to Harvard, and fewer than 200 were accepted. For the 2000 rates, see Steinberg (2002) p. 220, and for the case of Princeton, see Kim Clark, “Do Elite Private Colleges Discriminate Against Asian Students?,” *US News & World Report*, October 7, 2009: <http://www.usnews.com/education/articles/2009/10/07/do-elite-private-colleges-discriminate-against-asian-students>.
- ⁷⁶ William R. Fitzsimmons, “Guidance Office: Answers From Harvard’s Dean, Part 2,” *The New York Times*, September 11, 2009: <http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/09/11/harvarddean-part2/>
- ⁷⁷ Hughes (2003) 49, 57-58.
- ⁷⁸ Karabel (2005) pp. 292, 311.
- ⁷⁹ Privacy considerations prevent the public release of information on honors degrees awarded to graduates, but the top 10% of each Harvard class is inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, the national honors society, and the university’s PBK rosters of the last fifty years are available on the Internet: <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k19082&pageid=icb.page189954>. Thirty or forty years ago, Jewish names were very common on the PBK lists, but more recently they have dropped to fairly low levels. It appears that Harvard’s non-Jewish whites are now perhaps five times as likely as their Jewish classmates to achieve such high academic performance, with Asian students doing nearly as well. See Appendix G.
- In recent years, Jewish conservatives have often been in the forefront of accusations that ethnic favoritism leads elite academic institutions to unfairly admit large numbers of blacks and Hispanics, who subsequently underperform once on campus. But perhaps such critics should consider looking into a mirror.
- ⁸⁰ Karabel (2005) p. 667n95.
- ⁸¹ Harvard’s most recent presidents have been Neil Rudenstine (1991-2001), Larry Summers (2001-2006), and Drew Faust (2007-present); the first two were of Jewish ancestry, while the last has been married to Charles E. Rosenberg since 1980. Richard Levin has served as president of Yale since 1993, as did Harold Shapiro at Princeton (1988-2001), while the current presidents of Penn and Cornell are Amy Gutmann (2004-present), and David Skorton (2006-present) respectively, all of Jewish origins, as is Yale’s newly named incoming president Peter Salovey. In addition, former NYC Mayor Ed Koch identified Columbia President Lee Bollinger (2002-present) as being of Jewish ancestry in an angry column regarding Iran, but I have been unable to independently verify that claim. See Ed Koch, “Columbia Prez Should Have Stood Up for America, Too,” *Jewish World Review*, September 26, 2007.
- ⁸² Princeton’s last seven provosts have been Neil Rudenstine (1977-1987), Paul Benacerraf (1988-1991), Hugo Sonnenschein (1991-1993), Stephen Goldfeld (1993-1995), Jeremiah Ostriker (1995-2001), Amy Guttmann (2001-2004), and Christopher Eisgruber (2004-present), and all were of Jewish ancestry. Four of Harvard’s last five provosts have had similar ethnicity, as well as three of three at Brown and two of five at Yale, including in each case the current officeholder.
- ⁸³ Fox Butterfield, “Harvard’s ‘Core’ Dean Glances Back,” *The New York Times*, June 2, 1984.
- ⁸⁴ See Appendix D. It is also curious that the weighty 1998 defense of preferential ethnic admissions policies at elite institutions written by former Harvard President Derek Bok and former Princeton President William G. Bowen contains no mention whatsoever of the widespread claims of anti-Asian

discrimination at their own institutions, and does not even include a single reference to “Jews” in their very detailed index. See Bowen (1998).

⁸⁵ Three of Caltech’s most recent six presidents have been Harold Brown (1969-1977), Marvin Goldberger (1978-1987), and David Baltimore (1997-2006), all of Jewish ancestry. Two of MIT’s most recent five presidents have been Jerome Wiesner (1971-1980) and Leo Reif (2012-present), who have the same ethnic background.

⁸⁶ Espenshade (2009) pp. 92-93.

⁸⁷ Espenshade (2009) p. 126.

⁸⁸ Steinberg (2002/2012) pp. 124-136, 219-220.

⁸⁹ Steinberg (2002/2012) pp. 27-38, 204-210, 243-252.

⁹⁰ Steinberg (2002/2012) pp. 38-47, 173-195, 256-257.

⁹¹ Steinberg (2002/2012) pp. 258-261, 281-282, 298-299.

⁹² For example, Harvard President Derek Bok once denigrated the compensatory rationale for affirmative action, instead praising “diversity” as “the hallmark” and the “core” of a university experience. As a positive instance of such “diversity,” he cited the benefits of enrolling a friend of his who had served as a captain of the women’s track team, and came from a background wealthy enough that she celebrated her birthday with a trip to Italy. See Kahlenberg (1996) p. 29.

⁹³ See Howard Kurtz, “College Faculties A Most Liberal Lot, Study Finds,” *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2005: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A8427-2005Mar28.html>; Emily Esfahani Smith, “Survey Shocker: Liberal profs admit they’d discriminate against conservatives in hiring, advancement,” *The Washington Times*, August 1, 2012: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/aug/1/liberal-majority-on-campus-yes-were-biased/>; Eric Alterman, “Think Again: Jews Are Still Liberal,” *The Center for American Progress*, April 19, 2012: <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/media/news/2012/04/19/11420/think-again-jews-are-still-liberal/>.

⁹⁴ Steinberg (2002/2012) p. 9.

⁹⁵ Steinberg (2002/2012) pp. 181-182.

⁹⁶ Golden (2006) p. 60.

⁹⁷ Steinberg (2002/2012) pp. 282-284.

⁹⁸ Steinberg (2002/2012) pp. xiii, 130-131.

⁹⁹ See Appendix D.

¹⁰⁰ Steinberg (2002/2012) pp. 59-63, 265-266.

¹⁰¹ Hughes (2003) p. 86, 202.

¹⁰² Hernandez (1997) pp. 1-5. She suggests that the Harvard is the only Ivy League university in which a majority of the Admissions Officers tend to have an Ivy League background.

¹⁰³ Steinberg (2002) p. 131, 177-178.

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Carroll, “Public Overestimates U.S. Black and Hispanic Populations,” *Gallup News Service*, June 4, 2001. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/4435/public-overestimates-us-black-hispanic-populations.aspx>

¹⁰⁵ Razib Khan, “How Many Minorities Are There in the USA?,” *Discover Magazine/GNXP Blog*, January 7, 2012: <http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/gnxp/2012/01/how-many-minorities-are-there-in-the-usa/>.

¹⁰⁶ Grey Matter Research Consulting, September 13, 2012

¹⁰⁷ Dean Lawrence R. Velvel of the Massachusetts School of Law interviewing Prof. Jerome Karabel on “Books of Our Time,” a public affairs show. The remarks described appear in the last nine minutes of the second hour segment. Hour One: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-8911761293819497494>; Hour Two: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4805892219974282>.

¹⁰⁸ “Sharp Drop in Jewish Enrollment at Princeton U. Stirs Concern,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 7, 1999;

Ben Gose, “Princeton Tries to Explain a Drop in Jewish Enrollment,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 14, 1999; Caroline C. Pam, “Enrollment of Jews at Princeton Drops by 40% in 15 Years,” *The New York Observer*, May 31, 1999; Karen W. Arenson, “Princeton Puzzle: Where Have Jewish Students Gone?,” *The New York Times*, June 2, 1999. It should be noted that Princeton’s president at the time was Harold Shapiro, of Jewish ancestry, and just a few years earlier, the university had opened a \$4.5 million Center for Jewish Life. See Synnott (1979/2010) p. xxvi-xxvii.

¹⁰⁹ See William Lind, “The Origins of Political Correctness,” February 5, 2000, Accuracy in Academia: <http://www.academia.org/the-origins-of-political-correctness/>. Nearly all the figures mentioned were of Jewish origins.

¹¹⁰ As discussed earlier, the recent accusations of Harvard racial discrimination from a rejected Asian applicant were denounced as “ludicrous” and “surreal” by the student editors of the *Harvard Crimson*, who emphasized the tremendous importance of affirmative action policies in maintaining student ethnic “diversity” at elite colleges and pointed out that Asians were anyway already over-represented by 200% relative to their portion of the American population. It so happens that the two top names on the *Crimson* masthead both came from an ethnic group over-represented at Harvard by nearly 1300%.

¹¹¹ For example, Bowen (1998) p. 37-39 attempts to compare the academic strength of black students admitted under affirmative action policies with the bottom decile of admitted white students, as a proxy for those whites rejected under affirmative action, and notes that the gap is smaller than often believed. The authors, former presidents of Harvard and Princeton, also emphasize that the crucial factor is to ensure that all admitted are above a high academic threshold and able to reasonably perform the work in question (p. 23). One obvious problem with this analysis is that if elite universities admit many under-qualified white students based on favoritism or corruption, these would constitute the bottom decile in question, and the comparison made would merely highlight this fact.

¹¹² Karabel (2005) p. 292.

¹¹³ Klitgaard (1985) pp. 23-30.

¹¹⁴ Hughes (2003) pp. 15, 49, 56. Also, in 1990 Harvard officials told federal investigators that 80-90% of applicants could probably do the academic work and 50-60% could do superb work. See Takagi (1992/1998) p. 194.

¹¹⁵ Lemann (1999) pp. 206-207.

¹¹⁶ Examples of the extreme effort students take in building their resumes for elite college admissions purposes are discussed throughout Newport (2010) and Harvard Crimson Editors (2005).

¹¹⁷ See for example Austin Bramwell, “Top of the Class,” *The American Conservative*, March 13, 2012: <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/top-of-the-class/>.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Heather Higgins, “Remembering James Q. Wilson,” *US News and World Report*, March 5, 2012: <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2012/03/05/remembering-james-q-wilson>.

¹¹⁹ The quota provisions of the 1924 Immigration Act were based on the national origins of the existing American population and therefore required a detailed analysis of existing ethnicities, and the totals for 1920 are presented in Madison Grant, *Conquest of a Continent* (1933) pp. 278-280. Around that time, well over one-third of all Americans were of British ancestry, 80 percent were Protestant, and 85% of whites had origins in Northwestern Europe.

¹²⁰ Quoted in Kahlenberg (1996) p. 115.