

[연구논문]

Ivy Halls and Ivy Walls: The Continuing Legacy of the Ivy League*

Jane Desmond

(University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

My title, “Ivy Halls and Ivy Walls,” aims to capture two things: a sense of exclusivity invoked by the idea of walling out and walling in—excluding those without, who must “scale the walls” to gain entrance, and protecting and enclosing those within the walls, creating a sense of bounded and bonded community—those who freely share the halls that transit the Ivy League spaces.

This article grows out of an invitation to give a presentation at the 2009 conference on Elites and Elitism in the U.S. held at Seoul National University. Like many of the participants in that conference, I am a “product” of the Ivy League, and have served on the faculty in those institutions as well. I decided on this topic when I noticed on the call for papers a listing, among possible topics, of U.S. preparatory

* This paper was originally presented at Seoul National University, American Studies Institute International Conference “Elites and Elitism in American Democracy,” Nov. 13, 2009.

or “prep” schools, those elite, nearly all private, and very expensive secondary schools which serve as feeder schools for some of the most selective colleges and universities in the U.S. I immediately recalled my surprise in my first weeks as a Freshman at Brown University in 1969 when I met people who had attended Choate, Andover, and Miss Porters. A product of the public schools in the Washington, D.C. area, where most of our neighbors worked for the federal government in a predominantly white new suburban post-war neighborhood of middle and upper middle class tract housing, I had thought that prep schools were a thing of the past—a sort of conservative 1950s relic that had gone the way of white gloves and high heels in an era of the mini-skirt, political protest, and Jimi Hendrix playing the national anthem at Woodstock, from which I had just returned.

I was surprised to see that prep schools were thriving, and that many of my classmates not only attended them, but took skiing vacations in the Rockies, or had fathers who ran major department stores in New York. My father, the first in his family to attend college, did so on the GI Bill, and then kept going, eventually earning a Ph.D. and becoming a professor of biology at George Washington University. Professors—while high in cultural capital—were, at the time, relatively low in monetary capital, so skiing vacations in the Rockies were never an option. Just as my life as a teenager up to that point had included very little direct exposure to working class communities, or to the largely disenfranchised African American communities living nearby in Washington, D.C., it had also included very little exposure to the lives of the economic upper class. I was in for a surprise and the beginning of an education about social class, race, economic

capital and cultural capital and the complex ways they interweave.

Another telling moment of surprise occurred several decades later when I moved to the University of Iowa, one of the “Big 10”—a set of leading public research universities located in the Midwest—in 1993 to join the American Studies faculty there. I was struck sharply by the difference between the major public institutions and the leading private ones. My degrees were from Brown University, Sarah Lawrence College, and Yale University, and my previous faculty positions had been at Cornell University and Duke Universities, all relatively small-scale private institutions. Large public research institutions were outside of my experience, and I began to think a lot about the differences in my students, in the politics of the university, and about the best ways to be an effective professor teaching a cohort of students who often came from small Midwestern towns and farming communities instead of—like my previous students—urban centers and the east coast, and a significant percentage of whom were the first in their family to attend college.

This exposure began to put my own past experiences as student and faculty member into a wider context, and I want to draw on some of these experiences not just to bring the debates alive, or to claim a special status as a “native informant,” but rather to spark some questions which may sometimes remain submerged in the larger scale interrogations of elite education. These include the following:

- Do the most elite educational institutions in the U.S., exemplified by the Ivy League, still merely function to reproduce U.S. elites? If so, which elites are these? What are the demographics of their populations and how

have they changed over the last 30-40 years? What power do they exert nationally? Internationally?

- How are the Ivies unique, or typical, and of what? What are the hallmarks of an Ivy League education? Experientially? Symbolically?
- Are there implicit and explicit tensions between the idea of an Ivy League set of elite institutions and that of a broad based, capitalist, society with an ideology of class mobility and meritocracy?
- What can we understand about education in America, and its influence or status elsewhere, by examining the current status of the Ivy League at home and abroad? Can such investigations help us re-chart any territory in the intellectual landscape of “American Studies”?
- What can we grasp by considering the Ivy League as a “brand?” How does this branding function outside the U.S.?

Let me approach these questions first by defining some terms. The Ivy League has both a specific referent: eight elite, old schools in the U.S. Northeast, as well as a brand name connotation. As a denotative referent the term “Ivy League”—which emerged in the 1930s—actually refers to an athletic conference or set of competitors, comprising the following universities: Cornell, Brown, Columbia, Dartmouth, Yale, Princeton, Harvard, and the University of Pennsylvania. All of these universities were founded before the Revolutionary war (with the exception of Cornell, founded 1865) and have a long history of educating the sons and, much later, the daughters of the northeastern elite families. While they used to be bastions of white privilege, since the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the demographic profile of these institutions has changed. And even earlier, the 1944 GI bill began to open the prospect of a college education to members of the middle and lower middle classes as well as the working class. The

Ivies began to admit more students from public schools.

If Ivy League is a specific referent, it is also a generic one indicating prestige, money, the highest scholastic achievement, and implied access to the wings of power in politics, education, and professions like law and medicine. As such, the term also gets redeployed, with referents like “the Black Ivy League” referring to outstanding academic institutions like the historically African American schools of Morehouse College, the alma mater of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Howard University in Washington, D.C., a top research institution, Spelman College, a leading college for women, and Hampton University.

In addition there are the so-called “Public Ivy’s.” This term is an attempt to redeploy the term to indicate the top publicly funded major research institutions in the country, a list which usually includes the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Michigan, and sometimes other institutions like the University of Illinois, and the University of Virginia. I’ve even seen the term used to refer to institutions outside the U.S. A recent (2006) issue of the journal *Foreign Policy* featured an article on the “The Ivy League of the [so called] Developing World.” On the list: Beijing University, the University of Cape Town in South Africa, Seoul National University, the Indian Institute of Management at Ahmedabad, and King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in Saudi Arabia.¹⁾ And the *Chronicle for Higher Education* recently reported that China now has its own “Ivy League,”—the “C-9” a cohort of a nine leading universities into which the government will be pouring millions of dollars.²⁾

1) “The List: The Ivy League of the Developing World,” *Foreign Policy*, October 2006.

But all of us familiar with the U.S. educational landscape know of other superb institutions that are the Ivy peers. Other outstanding private universities like the University of Chicago, Stanford, Duke, and Northwestern are seen as Ivy League competitors, along with M.I.T. and CalTech, and in the last decade, New York University and Emory. But beyond this small number of institutions, there are many more outstanding liberal arts colleges which, if they do not lead in research productivity, nonetheless offer superb undergraduate educations: the so called “Seven Sisters,” which were originally colleges for women, like Wellesley, Smith, and Vassar, or the Claremont Colleges in California, including Harvey Mudd College, renowned for its math and science. With more institutions of higher education than any other country in the world, at approximately 3,000 colleges and universities,³⁾ it is not surprising that more than eight out of those thousands can offer truly world-class scholarly opportunities for students and professors.

Several institutions in the University of California system, such as Santa Cruz, with its emphasis on undergraduate education, or Davis, with its strength in environmental studies, along with the University of Washington’s outstanding profile in Asian studies, and so on, sketch a complex landscape of tertiary education in the United States that offers relatively wide access through the two year community colleges, publicly funded institutions (or more accurately very partially-publicly funded), which generally have lower tuitions than many of the private

2) “China Gets Its Own Ivy,” blog post, *The Chronicle for Higher Education*, October 27, 2009, http://chronicle.com/blogPost/China-gets-its-Own_Ivy.

3) Figure taken from Henry Hansmann, “Higher Education as a Public Good” (working paper #99-13, Yale Law School Program for Studies in Law, Economics, and Public Policy, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, 1999), 2.

institutions, and a full range of colleges, universities and technical training institutes in between. Some of these offer rigorous educations. Others offer courses that would be hard to distinguish from advanced high school work. The range of quality, size, cost, selectivity, and academic preparation of the student populations is remarkably wide, probably more so than in most of the rest of the world where access to higher education has often been very tightly controlled. In the U.S. today fully 50 percent of the population has attended some sort of “college.”⁴⁾

Within this complex landscape, where the meaning of “going to college” varies so widely, the Ivy League offers a brand name that signifies highly competitive access, well-trained faculty who are leaders in their fields involved in creating new knowledge, and entry into a cohort of the elitely educated in this country. Outstanding faculty can be found throughout the nation in a tertiary system that is so nationally competitive for faculty jobs that an interdisciplinary advertisement in American Studies can yield hundreds of applications from across the country.

But it is at the Ivies (and their peers) that the rigorous training of the faculty will most likely be matched by a cohort of selectively chosen, highly motivated students who are well prepared to take advantage of that. This “cohort” effect is one of the key experiences that the Ivy League guarantees. Henry Hansmann terms this an “associative good”—the highly coveted benefit that comes from being associated with the other students, past and present, and which influences each student’s

4) Figures based on 2000 census. “Education,” *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education>.

educational and social experience while at college and helps shape her or his reputation after college. “In short,” says Hansmann, “the thing that a …university is selling to its students is, in large part, its other students.”⁵⁾

In a way the Ivies provide a short hand, a branding, a guarantee of excellence that lets those *not* in the know know. While many people would not have heard of Harvey Mudd College, or may mistakenly think of the University of Virginia as merely a regional school, even those people will have heard of Harvard and Yale. And the same holds true outside of the U.S. Part of this recognition factor comes thorough the public media where even Hollywood comedies like “Legally Blonde” feature a narrative with the lead character attending Harvard Law after committing to a marathon of study and preparation to take the Law School Admissions national test.

And there is no doubt that the Ivies *are* highly selective. Let me note a few figures to concretize this claim. Dartmouth, for example, for its class of 2013, enrolled 1,095 students out of 18,132 in a need-blind admissions process, meaning that ability to pay plays no role in the selection. Brown, Cornell and Penn all post similar statistics (www.admissionsconsultants.com/college/Ivy_League), with Yale, Harvard and Columbia accepting even fewer. But these statistics show us something only of those who applied, not of those thousands who, thinking they’d never be chosen, didn’t. In other words, a highly competitive applicant pool is a given.

To give a sense of the numbers, again for the class of 2013, at

5) Hansmann, “Higher Education,” 1.

Brown: 25,000 students applied, 2,800 were admitted (11%) and 1,485 enrolled. All of the Ivies have undergraduate populations in the same range (roughly between 1,000 to 1,500 in each class), so let's say a total of 10,000 Ivy League freshmen might be incoming each year, 95% of whom graduated in the top 10% of their high school classes, and even that does not tell the story. At Brown for example, only 26% of the valedictorians who applied were accepted, and only about 13% of those who applied with scores of 800 (the highest possible) on the SAT math and writing exams were accepted. Compare this to the incoming size of the freshman class at my current institution, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, at approximately 7,000—also a competitive institution, but not as competitive overall, and 5 times the size of some of the Ivies with 30,000 undergrads and 10,000 graduate and professional students this year. Putting these figures in an even greater context consider the fact that the 2008 U.S. Census reports that college attendance among young adults in 2008 hit an all time high: about 11.5 million or 39.6% of 18-24 year olds were attending two year or four year colleges.⁶⁾ Today's Ivy League student population represents at most approximately 48,000 out of 11.5 million students, or somewhere around 4/10ths of one per cent.

I cite these statistics, drawn from the universities' admissions web

6) "Number of Young Adults Attending College Hits All-Time High," *Chronicle for Higher Education*, October 29, 2009. UNESCO reports that in 2007: approximately 30 percent of both men and women held bachelors degrees in the U.S. compared to approximately 28% of men and 17% of women in the Republic of Korea, and for Japan 31% of men and 12% of women, for Mexico 17% and 11%, just to provide a sample from a few parts of the world. *Education Counts: Benchmarking Progress in 19 WEI Countries*, World Education Indicators-2007 (Montreal: UNESCO Institutes for Statistics, 2007), 30-34.

pages, to indicate something of the criteria (class rank, SAT scores) that is used by those institutions and regarded as a form of measurement by many in the public. Educators, and some parents and education activists, have for years criticized these tests as potentially racially, culturally, and gendered in their biases, and serving less to measure potential for taking advantage of a rigorous academic institution than in measuring the ability to test well on a set of prescribed tasks and modes of thinking. Elise Brezis and Francois Crouzet, in their comparison of the French and American systems, suggest that the SAT was originally introduced (first adopted in 1930 by Harvard) as a way of recruiting a meritocracy not limited solely to the social elite. But, in fact, they find that it is the children of the elite who are proportionately more successful on these exams than others, and therefore “meritocratic choice is therefore not equivalent to equal opportunity, since success in exams is correlated with family wealth and education.”⁷⁾ Nonetheless these measures—like the SAT, or scholastic aptitude test—continue to be a part of students’ portfolios. Imagine all of the skills and aptitudes and forms of knowledge that these exams do not measure: visual creativity, aptitude for learning languages, imagination, design ability, creative problem solving, and so on.

In general many of our educational institutions are limited in what they regard as important, although not quite so limited as the China Shanghai Jiao Tong 2009 “Academic Rating of World Universities” index of the “world’s best schools.” This index bases its ratings on

7) Elise Brezis and Francois Crouzet, “The role of Higher Education Institutions: Recruitment of Elites and Economic Growth,” (CESIFO Working Paper No. 1360, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitaet and the Ifo Institute for Economic Research, Munich, Germany, December 2004), 30.

the number of Nobel Laureates or Fields Medal (math) winners, rankings of faculty in citation indexes, and number of articles by faculty published in *Nature* or *Science*, two of the leading international science journals. The humanities, rarely included in the COS (Community of Science Citation Index), not eligible for the Fields medals, and under-represented in fields acknowledged by the Nobel prizes, drop out of these equations, and the arts are not even an after thought. Unfortunately, however, these limited rankings, like those of the *U.S. News and World Report*, carry weight with the public even if academic professionals may be well aware of their limitations.

In this index the United States, with approximately 4.5% of the world's population and 24% of the world's GDP leads the pack of the top 100 rated institutions in the world, with 55% (Note that UNESCO reports that its nearest competitor is the U.K. with 11%. China, with approximately 20% of the world's population, holds 6% of the top 500 ranked institutions, and recently, for the first time, produced more college graduates in absolute numbers than the U.S.). And in the last few years (2006 and 2005 specifically), Chinese Universities—especially Tsinghua and Peking Universities, were the largest undergraduate suppliers of students who went on to earn Ph.D.'s in *American* institutions, taking away the top spot from Berkeley. In the sciences and engineering, these two ranked first and second, with SNU ranking third, with Cornell and Berkeley trailing at 4th and 5th.

These figures, along with the complex multi-national arrangements and partnerships made by U.S.-based universities opening branches abroad or partnering with foreign universities, make the U.S. higher

education landscape ever more complex. Within this complexity though, the undergraduate experience at the Ivy League institutions, which enroll only about 10% of their populations from outside the U.S., entails largely U.S. domains within the U.S., and U.S. branded entities outside of the U.S. In almost any list or index of excellent institutions the Ivies appear, and their staying power over time in those positions has been relatively remarkable given the explosion in the college populations over the course of the 20th century.

Yet for all this consistency, there *have* been notable demographic changes in who is attending the Ivies over the past 35 years. Jews, once subject to quotas in Ivy League schools like Yale, are now present in substantial numbers—making up 23% of the Ivy League [in 2002], reports the Jewish organization Hillel International, but only around 2% of the U.S. population. At the University of Pennsylvania, Jewish students make up one third of attendees.⁸⁾ African Americans, who comprise approximately 13% of the U.S. population, represent a low of 5% of Dartmouth’s student body to a high of 9% of Yale’s. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, collectively comprising around 4 to 5 % of the U.S. population, form 14 to 16 % of Ivy student bodies. Those self-identifying as Latino or Hispanic, represent 10 % of Columbia’s student body, but only 5% of the University of Pennsylvania’s. In the U.S. population, census

8) “You Don’t Have to Be a Gay Jew, but It Probably Helps,” *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, August 16, 2002, www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode-171119. For a history of quotas limiting Jewish student enrollment, see Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

figures estimate approximately 12 to 13% of the U.S. population identifies as Hispanic or Latino. Native Americans comprise about 1% at these schools and schools nationwide.

These numbers, while useful in some ways for capturing broad strokes, always reify the complexities of social categories and their changes in meaning over time, and mask significant differences in, for example, familial national origin, as well as the details of self-description of affiliations. As Amy Liu in her article “Critical Race Theory and Asian Americans” reminds us, the category of Asian Americans masks a huge variety of life experiences, as the “demographic diversity of the Asian American Student population extends vastly across ethnicity, immigration, socioeconomic status, generation, language proficiency, gender and geography.⁹⁾ Teranishi et. al., cited by Liu, notes that some populations included in the Asian American rubric (like Chinese Americans) “have a higher likelihood of attending selective campuses than other (i.e. Southeast Asian Americans)” with the picture further complicated by socioeconomic status within each group.¹⁰⁾ So any generalizations made from these figures describing large categories must be approached gingerly.

And we must remember that getting into the Ivies is not the end of the story. Many members of minority groups have different experiences there than do Euro-Americans. While some minority students may benefit more than whites in terms of increase in projected income from their parents, all too often their experiences on the campus are

9) Amy Liu, “Critical Race Theory and Asian Americans,” *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 5, no. 2 (2009): 6.

10) *Ibid*, 7.

difficult. White peers may suspect minority group students of being less well prepared, of getting in because of affirmative action initiatives, and minority students say they often feel isolated, or asked to speak for their entire population. Some Native American students, for example, report feeling torn between being a “good” Indian and being a “good” student simultaneously, as Native scholar Bryan Brayboy reports in his article “Hiding in the Ivy.”¹¹⁾ In these ways the Ivies are not different from many other majority/minority situations in the U.S. and despite significant changes in demographics of students, faculty, and administrators in 30 years, there is still a long way to go. However, with that caveat in mind, we can still see large outlines of community presences and absences.

When we map these student numbers onto those of the general population we find that Asian American and Jews are represented in the Ivy League at significantly higher numbers than they are in the general population, while African Americans, (non-Jewish) Euro-Americans, and those of Latin American family origin are represented somewhat less. No statistics are available for sexual orientation and whether gays and lesbians for example are any more likely to attend these campuses than others. However, starting in the late 1980s, Yale became known as “the Gay Ivy.” A recent extensive 2009 article in the *Yale Alumni Magazine* notes that “the central point of the Gay Ivy tag is that Yale is a gay-friendly school [and] the campus is unusually welcoming to gay and lesbian students.”¹²⁾

11) Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, “Hiding in the Ivy: American Indian Students and Visibility in Elite Educational Settings,” *Harvard Educational Review* 74, no. 2 (2004): 125-152.

12) Editor’s Note, *Yale Alumni Magazine*, July/August, 2009, 33. This was not

To some extent the faculty has changed as well in terms of demographic categories, and just within the past few years we have witnessed a symbolically important shift in the leadership of these institutions as women and members of racialized minorities who began their educations in the 1970s now reach the pinnacle of their careers and move into highly visible presidencies. Brown now has an African American female president—Ruth Simmons, who took the helm a few years ago. Euro-American women have recently moved into the presidencies of Penn and Harvard, the latter long known for its slow pace of hiring female faculty over the decades since the 1970s, and most recently for the provocative and distressing statements by its previous president that women can't do math.

And just this past year Dartmouth appointed its first Asian-American president, Korean American Jim Yong Kim, who is also the first Asian American president of any of the Ivy League institutions, a fact that garnered a lot of press. Michigan and Iowa are now led by women as well. The symbolic importance of these appointments is very strong, just as it is with Obama or would have been had Hilary Clinton been elected. And while we know that leadership at the top does not necessarily reflect equality of access and opportunity throughout all of an institution or community, it at least signals that some change has happened on some dimensions.

always the case, however, and Yale was one of the last schools in the Ivy League to establish an Office of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) Resources to assist students, and the Yale GALA (Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association) just held its first reunion in 2009. For more on these issues, see George Chauncey, "Gay at Yale: How Things Changed," *Yale Alumni Magazine*, July/August, 2009, 32-47.

As these figures show, racial and ethnic as well as male/female proportions of the Ivy League population (now approximately 50/50) have changed dramatically from the 1950s. What has remained more impermeable to change is the social class of attendees.

In 2008 Andrew Delbanco, director of American Studies at Columbia, and Roger Lehecka, a former dean of students there, called attention to this problem in a piece called “Ivy-League Letdown.”¹³⁾ Some of the financial figures they supply are distressing in an era when need blind admission seems to hold the promise of diversifying elite universities in terms of social class. Delbanco and Lehecka were reacting to an announcement in December 2007 by Harvard (later duplicated by Yale) that it had changed the way it calculated student financial aid “to make Harvard college more affordable for families across the income spectrum,” as the Harvard press release put it. Starting in fall 2008 each of these two institutions would increase by more than \$20 million what they already spend on aid, in order to provide more assistance to middle and upper middle income families—by which they mean those families earning between \$120,000 and \$180,000 a year (the median family income they explain is around \$50,000 in the U.S.). This means that those at the top end of this spectrum will now only have to pay about \$18,000 a year instead of \$30,000 a year (tuition is around \$40,000 a year, not counting room and board).

They note that as of 2004 then President of Harvard Lawrence Summers “pointed out that three-fourths of the students at selective colleges come from the top income quartile and only 9 percent from

13) Andrew Delbanco and Roger Lehecka, “Ivy-League Letdown,” *New York Times*, January 22, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/22/opinion>.

the bottom two quartiles combined.” The authors note that the new policy actually “represents a step backward” for some elite colleges, including Harvard, which had under Summers increased its recruitment of students from financially needy students. Nationwide the rate at which low income students earn BAs is less than one third of the rate of high-income students, they note. The net result, as Alexander Astin and Leticia Oseguera argue in their article “The Declining ‘Equity’ of American Higher Education,” is that, when it comes to socioeconomic status, “American higher education now appears to be even more stratified than it was 30 years ago.”¹⁴⁾

We can expect a similar pattern when we look abroad. Just as the Ivy brand is widely known in the U.S. it is also one of the best short-hands for quality U.S. education outside the U.S. And, without a doubt the Ivies do educate a fair share of a global elite. At Brown today, for instance, about 10% of their students are from abroad. Again the family trajectory is key. Economic elites replicate themselves, and while theoretically a well prepared gifted student from a lower middle class family outside the U.S. could apply to, say, Columbia, and be accepted, this is less likely to happen than if the child is born into a family of professionals with high cultural capital. We might expect that the same child may not apply to the world-class educational institutions in his or her home country either.

In the case of South Korea, where research by South Korean scholars has shown that “educational attainment is the most critical determinant of occupational status and earnings,” and where the “South Korean

14) Alexander Astin and Leticia Oseguera, “The Declining ‘Equity’ of American Higher Education,” *The Review of Higher Education* 27, no. 3 (2004): 334.

higher education system is characterized by the clear hierarchical ranking of schools,” the market for Ivy League admissions along with admissions to top schools in Korea, like SNU, is very competitive.¹⁵⁾ For example, as noted in the *New York Times* in 2008, the elite Daewon prep school in Seoul and the Minjok Leadership Academy, three hours east of Seoul, both have striking records of preparing their students to survive “examination hell,” and specifically to garner admission to U.S. Ivy League schools. “Preparing to get to the best American universities has become something of a national obsession in Korea,” notes Alexander Vershbow, the American Ambassador to South Korea.¹⁶⁾

Eric Cho, college counselor at Daewon says that “grinding competition for elite jobs and even marriages produces a Korean fixation on famous name schools.” He notes that “getting families to ‘settle’ for excellent non-Ivy League institutions—such as Harvey Mudd College [or], Swarthmore— is a big challenge.”¹⁷⁾ Korean applications to Harvard alone have tripled [in 2008] to 213, up from 66 in 2003, says William Fitzsimmons, Harvard dean of admissions. Annually, 70,000 Korean college students study in the U.S.,¹⁸⁾ and only a handful can be in the Ivy League.

Part of our transnational turn in “American Studies” in the U.S. could include paying scholarly attention to these global educational

15) Sunhwa Lee and Mary C. Frinton, “Elite Education and social Capital: the Case of South Korea,” *Sociology of Education* 69, no. 3 (July 1996): 181.

16) Sam Dillon, “Elite Korean Schools, Forging Ivy League Skills,” *The New York Times*, April 27, 2008.

17) Anthony Kuhn, “Korean School Preps Students for Ivy League,” National Public Radio, July 2, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=106121695>.

18) Figures, 2008, International Institute of Education figures, cited in Kuhn, “Korean School Preps Students.”

elites. In addition, as papers from the *South Korean American Studies Journal*, 2008 special section on Education reveal, American institutions are often used in South Korea as prototypes, counterpoints, or benchmarks for the development and assessment of Korean ones, so that entanglement adds another layer of complexity to the elite education landscape.¹⁹⁾

Given the cost of around \$40,000 a year in Ivy League tuition alone, and the selectivity, we can find discussions in public discourse, on line for example, about exactly what an Ivy League education “gets” you. This consumerist approach tends to focus on tangibles not intangibles. For example, some discussions focus on the question of whether or not Ivy League graduates will earn more money than other college graduates (not necessarily) or whether such a diploma will help land you a “better” job (usually defined as more prestigious and higher paying). The answer to the latter is—maybe—especially due to the fact that elite law firms and corporations often recruit on Ivy League campuses.²⁰⁾

But few of these studies ask the deeper question: what does it mean to have access to some of the “best” academic training in the world? What does the descriptor “best” refer to? What capacities are being trained and valued? What views of the world and of community are being fostered? Are these things that should be widely replicated? Are there societal obligations that the public should demand in return? Is a “good” academic education one which teaches problem solving?

19) *South Korean American Studies Journal* 31, no. 2 (2008).

20) Kate Lorenz, “What Does an Ivy League Degree Get You?” *CareerBuilder.com*, September 24, 2007, <http://msn.careerbuilder.com/Article/MSN-939-College>.

Creative thinking? Visionary thinking? Or is it all about preparing to get a good LSAT (Law School Admission Test) score to go to the Ivy League law school of your choice, or into a big law firms or into politics? (Since 1950, approximately 70% of the U.S. Supreme Court justices have been graduates of Ivy League institutions, and overall about one third of U.S. presidents have been Ivy League graduates, ranging from John Adams to Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush to Barack Obama—an indication perhaps that the Ivy League serves still as a replicator of the elite, at least in the realm of law and politics).²¹⁾

If the Ivies don't guarantee a higher earning power than other well-regarded schools, what DO they "get you?" William Dresiewicz, writing the cover story for a 2008 issue of *The American Scholar*, published by the Phi Beta Kappa national honor society, issues an excoriation of the narrow type of education he sees elite institutions as providing, based on his experiences over "two dozen years at Yale and Columbia."²²⁾ Dresiewicz punctures what he sees as an overblown sense of entitlement inculcated among those who have "made it" by gaining entry to the Ivy League. They are taught, he asserts, from the

21) For the claims about the percentage of Ivy League-educated Supreme Court Justices, see "Ivy League Justice," blog "post, June 9, 2009, *Half Sigma: The New Politics of Common Sense*, blog, www.halfsigma.com/2009/06/ivy-league-justice.html, and "Presidents of the United States," website, <http://www.presidentsusa.net>. For figures on U.S. Presidents who attended Ivy League universities, see "How Many US Presidents attended Ivy League Schools?" comment thread, April 15, 2008, Yahoo! Answers, <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20080415065221AAbMfAR>.

22) William Dresiewicz, "The Disadvantages of an Elite Education," *The American Scholar*, June 1, 2008, <http://www.theamericanscholar.org/the-disadvantages-of-an-elite-education>.

very first day, that they are special, that they will always get second chances, that things will always come out alright. He calls this “the self-protectiveness of the old-boy network even if it now includes girls. And he probably would have added, although he didn’t, the (white) old-boy network even though every one is no longer “white.”

Dresiewicz tells us that Ivy Leaguers are smart in very limited ways, having developed analytic skills through years of hard work and hoop-jumping, but may know nothing of emotional intelligence or social intelligence or creative ability. They are the “best and brightest” only in the narrowest of senses, and yet they do not know it. They want to advocate for the working class but are incapable of holding a conversation with anyone in it. They are told to think big ideas, but trained to think small ones successfully. They are terrified of failure because they have never failed, and are afraid not to pursue high prestige careers in law and medicine because being an elementary school teacher, or a social worker, or an artist, or a community organizer is regarded as less prestigious.

Dresiewicz is right about some things, notably the limited class experience that the Ivy cohort of students provides, but he is wrong about many others. My own trajectory may not be typical, but it involved choosing between legal advocacy for the homeless and choreography when I pondered my career path as a junior at Brown. It led me into a first professional life in the arts, a risky career indeed, and drove me to take some responsibility for my learning as I pursued a self-designed major and an ungraded transcript for all four years. My closest friends from undergraduate days are a drama professor who works in theater for AIDS education, a non-profit housing coordinator,

and a Freudian child psychologist.²³⁾

Doug Kellner, in an extensive discussion of Herbert Marcuse's educational project, describes that project as seeking "to mediate aesthetic education, the humanities, and the sciences with a critical theory of the contemporary era and a radical politics aiming at emancipation and a non-repressive society."²⁴⁾ In the romantic haze of looking back 30 years, perhaps I see my own extraordinary opportunity for education as edging towards that ideal vision. Surely it was less than that. But, to the extent that the vision of the past drives our sense of what is possible in the future, that education was for me not just a starting point but a trampoline.

It would be a mistake to say that all Ivies are the same in their approach to education. Princeton's home page describes itself as the "quiet Ivy." Dartmouth says it: "educates the most promising students and prepares them for a lifetime of learning and of responsible leadership." Brown proclaims its curriculum "is designed to give you the freedom to explore, the freedom to focus, the freedom to take risks, the freedom to fail, and the freedom to succeed...[and] the opportunity to discover new interests and passions." Brown may be the only Ivy which invites its students to risk failing. And fail I did, or nearly so, signing up in my first semester for a senior seminar in Russian politics full of political science majors. I'd never heard of Mikhail Bakunin,

23) This may reflect not only a generational cohort experience, but also the "safety net" that an upper middle class origin provides and the guarantee of cultural capital that such an education imparts. Money and prestige of employment become less important in these cases than they might be for other individuals without such guarantees of economic and cultural capital.

24) Doug Kellner, "Introduction: Marcuse's Challenges to Education," *Policy Futures in Education* 4, no. 1 (2006): 2.

and didn't realize I should have.

But to the extent that a generalization *is* possible, I'd like to suggest that one of the greatest gains that an Ivy education can provide students is the sense of expanded horizons of the possible. For many students who come from families with high cultural capital and upper middle to upper class socioeconomic status, this just builds and consolidates what they have been exposed to as children. But for those from the middle classes, and lower middle classes, from more rural communities, from the working class, and sometimes from outside the northeast, which still retains its aura of concentrated elite (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant or Jewish) power, this can be a life changing experience.

Ivy Leaguers are told they can lead and are expected to do so. They are encouraged to "think big" and given access to faculty mentors who take them and their ideas seriously (if Darsiewicz is right, this is a sham, but I think he is wrong). One of my colleagues, a member of the very first class of women admitted to Yale in 1969, remembers well the first welcoming address to the freshman class when the president intoned: "Welcome to the men and women of the class of 1973, the next 1,230 leaders of America and the world."²⁵) This combination of expectation, seriousness of purpose, and privileged access to opportunities is a sort of golden elixir that those at elite educational institutions everywhere are offered. In the Ivies with their relatively small class size of only a few thousand undergraduates at a time, this elixir may be especially concentrated. Ultimately this is what a \$40,000 a year in tuition buys (and, given the Ivies attempt to do "need blind" admi-

25) Virginia Dominguez, personal conversation with author, October 3, 2009.

ssion, theoretically that access is available without regard to family or individual income).

Still, William Chace, a former president of two excellent institutions, Wesleyan and Emory, notes that “more than half of the freshmen at selective colleges, public and private, come from the highest-earning quarter of households.”²⁶) As long as U.S. schools rely on property taxes to fund public schools, the best public schools will be in the wealthiest neighborhoods (offering the advanced placement classes and extra opportunities that equip applicants for the leading universities).

The freedom to fail and the expectation that one’s reach will eventually exceed one’s grasp, and should, in a variety of modes of intelligence, empathy and understanding of the world—this is something that the Ivies can and do offer. In part this is because their upper class students have a safety net. They may not psychically be ready to experience “failure” after years of successful hoop jumping, but they often have the familial safety net to allow them to try. My own family pattern is typical of class dimensions when education changes the class of origin and social class of “attainment.” My father, the first in his family to go to college, raised by his single mother and grandmother, went to college on the GI bill and majored in science. Science was solid, and employable. He continued on to an Ivy League Ph.D.—becoming a cell biologist. His daughter had not only science lessons but ballet lessons, and the freedom to choose the risky life of the arts over the more predictable job prospects of say, law. If I failed, my family could support me. If I had no insurance,

26) Quoted in Andrew Delbanco, “Scandals of Higher Education,” *New York Review of Books*, March 29, 2007.

they could pay my medical bills. This generational pattern is quite common, with humanities Ph.Ds and artists often coming from the upper middle classes.

The confidence that can come from this safety net counts for a lot. Can we give it to students from other classes? Can we encourage all our students to think about big problems, not just small ones, because it is big ones that need solving? Can we instill in them the confidence that even if they fail they will eventually succeed in getting a job, supporting themselves, and others? Can we do this in part by helping them become good social analysts who can combine conceptual acumen with life experience to grasp better how the world works in terms of power? Can we convince them that they *can* make a difference in the world because we've given them some of the tools to understand more about how that world works and to intervene in it?

In a sense this brings us back not to the Ivies, and not to the limits and gifts of elite education, but to the possibilities we have as professors from a range of both private and public universities and as scholars committed to our own versions of understanding the U.S. One of the foundational goals of American Studies in the U.S., after all is that our scholarship can contribute to the development of a more just society, no matter how we define that justice.

The Ivy League still exerts a strong presence in the U.S. and abroad as it educates .5 per cent of the college graduates in that country. It replicates the class elites while somewhat and unevenly beginning to expand beyond the largely male and largely white parameters of its origins. At their best, in my opinion, the Ivies inculcate a sense of empowerment to their graduates. Yes, this empowerment may appear

in the form of a patronizing sense of noblesse oblige, or it may surface as an insufferable sense of entitlement. It may even grow its own forms of intolerance and greedy ambition.

But I propose here today that one thing we can do is clone the sense of being driven to experiment, the confidence to risk failing, and the encouragement to think big that, at their best, can be the hallmarks of an elite education. It may be easy to dismiss this by saying only the elite would/could take those risks and working class students can't afford to think big or to fail at something. But the horizon of the possible is something that the Ivies expand, and we owe it to our students, wherever we teach, to expand their horizons beyond their town or region or country—a sense of expanded possibilities may be the birthright of the rich, but it should not be limited to them.

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Abstract

**Ivy Halls and Ivy Walls:
The Continuing Legacy of the Ivy League**

Jane Desmond

(University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

This article analyses the changes in access to U.S. “Ivy League” universities over the last forty years in terms of gender, racial and ethnic diversity, to argue that despite greater access for women and racialized populations, these elite institutions still largely reproduce social class, with only a small percentage of their students drawn from the lower middle and working classes. The continuing lure of the Ivy League is examined, including specifically the lure for students in South Korea, and the article concludes with a discussion of which aspects of elite education should be widely available and might be transferable to other domains like public education.

Key Words

Ivy League, Elite Education, Public Education, Gender, Racial and Ethnic Diversity, Reproduction of Social Class