



HOME

MINDING THE CAMPUS

Reforming Our Universities

FORUM

OUR ESSAYS

MUST READS



LINKS

ABOUT US

CAU

OUR ESSAYS

July 12, 2010

How Diversity Punishes Asians, Poor Whites and Lots of Others

By Russell K. Nieli



When college presidents and academic administrators pay their usual obeisance to "diversity" you know they are talking first and foremost about race. More specifically, they are talking about blacks. A diverse college campus is understood as one that has a student body that -- at a minimum -- is 5 to 7 percent black (i.e., equivalent to roughly half the proportion of blacks in the general population). A college or university that is only one, two, or three percent black would not be considered "diverse" by college administrators regardless of how demographically diverse its student body might be in other ways. The blacks in question need not be African Americans -- indeed at many of the most competitive colleges today, including many Ivy League schools, an estimated 40-50 percent of those categorized as black are Afro-Caribbean or African immigrants, or the children of such immigrants.

As a secondary meaning "diversity" can also encompass Hispanics, who together with blacks are often subsumed by college administrators and admissions officers under the single race category "underrepresented minorities." Most colleges and universities seeking "diversity" seek a similar proportion of Hispanics in their student body as blacks (since blacks and Hispanics are about equal in number in the general population), though meeting the black diversity goal usually has a much higher priority than meeting the Hispanic one.

Asians, unlike blacks and Hispanics, receive no boost in admissions. Indeed, the opposite is often the case, as the quota-like mentality that leads college administrators to conclude they may have "too many" Asians. Despite the much lower number of Asians in the general high-school population, high-achieving Asian students -- those, for instance, with SAT scores in the high 700s -- are much more numerous than comparably high-achieving blacks and Hispanics, often by a factor of ten or more. Thinking as they do in racial balancing and racial quota terms, college admissions officers at the most competitive institutions almost always set the bar for admitting Asians far above that for Hispanics and even farther above that for admitting blacks.

"Diversity" came to be so closely associated with race in the wake of the Supreme Court's Bakke decision in 1978. In his decisive opinion, Justice Lewis Powell rejected arguments for racial preferences based on generalized "societal discrimination," social justice, or the contemporary needs of American society as insufficiently weighty to overrule the color-blind imperative of the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause. That imperative, however, could be overruled, Powell said, by a university's legitimate concern for the educational benefits of a demographically diverse student body.

Virtually all competitive colleges after Bakke continued with their racial preference policies ("affirmative action"), though after Powell's decision they had to cloak their true meaning and purpose behind a misleading or dishonest rhetoric of "diversity." Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz, a critic of racial preferences, accurately explains the situation: "The *raison d'être* for race-specific affirmative action programs," Dershowitz writes, "has simply never been diversity for the sake of education. The checkered history of 'diversity' demonstrates that it was designed largely as a cover to achieve other legally, morally, and politically controversial goals. In recent years, it has been invoked -- especially in the professional schools -- as a clever post facto justification for increasing the number of minority group students in the student body."

While almost all college administrators and college admissions officers at the most elite institutions think in racial balancing and racial quota-like terms when they assemble their student body, they almost always deny this publicly in a blizzard of rhetoric about a more far-flung "diversity." Indeed, there is probably no other area where college administrators are more likely to lie or conceal the truth of what they are doing than in the area of admissions and race.

Most elite universities seem to have little interest in diversifying their student bodies when it comes to the numbers of born-again Christians from the Bible belt, students from Appalachia and other rural and small-town areas, people who have served in the U.S. military, those who have grown up on farms or ranches, Mormons, Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, lower-middle-class Catholics, working class "white ethnics," social and political conservatives, wheelchair users, married students, married students with children, or older students first starting out in college after raising children or spending several years in the workforce. Students in these categories are often very rare at the more competitive colleges, especially the Ivy League. While these kinds of people would surely add to the diverse viewpoints and life-experiences represented on college campuses, in practice "diversity" on campus is largely a code word for the presence of a substantial proportion of those in the "underrepresented" racial minority groups.

The Diversity Colleges Want

A new study by Princeton sociologist Thomas Espenshade and his colleague Alexandria Radford is a real eye-opener in revealing just what sorts of students highly competitive colleges want -- or don't want -- on their campuses and how they structure their admissions policies to get the kind of "diversity" they seek. The Espenshade/Radford study draws from a new data set, the National Study of College Experience (NSCE), which was gathered from eight highly competitive public and private colleges and universities (entering freshmen SAT scores: 1360). Data was collected on over 245,000 applicants from three separate application years, and over 9,000 enrolled students filled out extensive questionnaires. Because of confidentiality agreements Espenshade and Radford could not name the institutions but they assure us that their statistical profile shows they fit nicely within the top 50 colleges and universities listed in the *U.S. News & World Report* ratings.



Consistent with other studies, though in much greater detail, Espenshade and Radford show the substantial admissions boost, particularly at the private colleges in their study, which Hispanic students get over whites, and the enormous advantage over whites given to blacks. They also show how Asians must do substantially better than whites in order to reap the same probabilities of acceptance to these same highly competitive private colleges. On an "other things equal basis," where adjustments are made for a

MONTHLY ARCHIVES:

Browse by month:

Diversity
Quotas and Preferences

variety of background factors, being Hispanic conferred an admissions boost over being white (for those who applied in 1997) equivalent to 130 SAT points (out of 1600), while being black rather than white conferred a 310 SAT point advantage. Asians, however, suffered an admissions penalty compared to whites equivalent to 140 SAT points.

The box students checked off on the racial question on their application was thus shown to have an extraordinary effect on a student's chances of gaining admission to the highly competitive private schools in the NSCE database. To have the same chances of gaining admission as a black student with an SAT score of 1100, an Hispanic student otherwise equally matched in background characteristics would have to have a 1230, a white student a 1410, and an Asian student a 1550. Here the Espenshade/Radford results are consistent with other studies, including those of William Bowen and Derek Bok in their book *The Shape of the River*, though they go beyond this influential study in showing both the substantial Hispanic admissions advantage and the huge admissions penalty suffered by Asian applicants. Although all highly competitive colleges and universities will deny that they have racial quotas -- either minimum quotas or ceiling quotas -- the huge boosts they give to the lower-achieving black and Hispanic applicants, and the admissions penalties they extract from their higher-achieving Asian applicants, clearly suggest otherwise.

Espenshade and Radford also take up very thoroughly the question of "class based preferences" and what they find clearly shows a general disregard for improving the admission chances of poor and otherwise disadvantaged whites. Other studies, including a 2005 analysis of nineteen highly selective public and private universities by William Bowen, Martin Kurzweil, and Eugene Tobin, in their 2003 book, *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education*, found very little if any advantage in the admissions process accorded to whites from economically or educationally disadvantaged families compared to whites from wealthier or better educated homes. Espenshade and Radford cite this study and summarize it as follows: "These researchers find that, for non-minority [i.e., white] applicants with the same SAT scores, there is no perceptible difference in admission chances between applicants from families in the bottom income quartile, applicants who would be the first in their families to attend college, and all other (non-minority) applicants from families at higher levels of socioeconomic status. When controls are added for other student and institutional characteristics, these authors find that on an other-things-equal basis, [white] applicants from low-SES backgrounds, whether defined by family income or parental education, get essentially no break in the admissions process; they fare neither better nor worse than other [white] applicants."

Distressing as many might consider this to be -- since the same institutions that give no special consideration to poor white applicants boast about their commitment to "diversity" and give enormous admissions breaks to blacks, even to those from relatively affluent homes -- Espenshade and Radford in their survey found the actual situation to be much more troubling. At the private institutions in their study whites from lower-class backgrounds incurred a huge admissions disadvantage not only in comparison to lower-class minority students, but compared to whites from middle-class and upper-middle-class backgrounds as well. The lower-class whites proved to be all-around losers. When equally matched for background factors (including SAT scores and high school GPAs), the better-off whites were more than three times as likely to be accepted as the poorest whites (.28 vs. .08 admissions probability). Having money in the family greatly improved a white applicant's admissions chances, lack of money greatly reduced it. The opposite class trend was seen among non-whites, where the poorer the applicant the greater the probability of acceptance when all other factors are taken into account. Class-based affirmative action does exist within the three non-white ethno-racial groupings, but among the whites the groups advanced are those with money.

When lower-class whites are matched with lower-class blacks and other non-whites the degree of the non-white advantage becomes astronomical: lower-class Asian applicants are seven times as likely to be accepted to the competitive private institutions as similarly qualified whites, lower-class Hispanic applicants eight times as likely, and lower-class blacks ten times as likely. These are enormous differences and reflect the fact that lower-class whites were rarely accepted to the private institutions Espenshade and Radford surveyed. Their diversity-enhancement value was obviously rated very low.

Poor Non-White Students: "Counting Twice"

The enormous disadvantage incurred by lower-class whites in comparison to non-whites and wealthier whites is partially explained by Espenshade and Radford as a result of the fact that, except for the very wealthiest institutions like Harvard and Princeton, private colleges and universities are reluctant to admit students who cannot afford their high tuitions. And since they have a limited amount of money to give out for scholarship aid, they reserve this money to lure those who can be counted in their enrollment statistics as diversity-enhancing "racial minorities." Poor whites are apparently given little weight as enhancers of campus diversity, while poor non-whites count twice in the diversity tally, once as racial minorities and a second time as socio-economically deprived. Private institutions, Espenshade and Radford suggest, "intentionally save their scarce financial aid dollars for students who will help them look good on their numbers of minority students." Quoting a study by NYU researcher Mitchell Stevens, they write: "ultimate evaluative preference for members of disadvantaged groups was reserved for applicants who could be counted in the college's multicultural statistics. This caused some admissions officers no small amount of ethical dismay."

There are problems, however, with this explanation. While it explains why scarce financial aid dollars might be reserved for minority "twofers," it cannot explain why well-qualified lower-class whites are not at least offered admission without financial aid. The mere offer of admission is costless, and at least a few among the poor whites accepted would probably be able to come up with outside scholarship aid. But even if they couldn't, knowing they did well enough in their high school studies to get accepted to a competitive private college would surely sit well with most of them even if they couldn't afford the high tuition. Espenshade and Radford do not address this conundrum but the answer is easy to discern. The ugly truth is that most colleges, especially the more competitive private ones, are fiercely concerned with their ratings by rating organizations like *U.S. News & World Report*. And an important part of those ratings consist of a numerical acceptance rate (the ratio of applicants received to those accepted) and a yield score (the ratio of those accepted to those who enroll). The lower the acceptance rate and the higher the yield score the more favorably colleges are looked upon. In extending admissions to well-qualified but financially strapped whites who are unlikely to enroll, a college would be driving both its acceptance rate and its yield score in the wrong direction. Academic bureaucrats rarely act against either their own or their organization's best interests (as they perceive them), and while their treatment of lower-class whites may for some be a source of "no small amount of ethical dismay," that's just how it goes. Some of the private colleges Espenshade and Radford describe would do well to come clean with their act and admit the truth: "Poor Whites Need Not Apply!"

Besides the bias against lower-class whites, the private colleges in the Espenshade/Radford study seem to display what might be called an urban/Blue State bias against rural and Red State occupations and values. This is most clearly shown in a little remarked statistic in the study's treatment of the admissions advantage of participation in various high school extra-curricular activities. In the competitive private schools surveyed participation in many types of extra-curricular activities -- including community service activities, performing arts activities, and "cultural diversity" activities -- conferred a substantial improvement in an applicant's chances of admission. The admissions advantage was usually greatest for those who held leadership positions or who received awards or honors associated with their activities. No surprise here -- every student applying to competitive colleges knows about the importance of extracurriculars.

But what Espenshade and Radford found in regard to what they call "career-oriented activities" was truly shocking even to this hardened veteran of the campus ideological and cultural wars. Participation in such Red State activities as high school ROTC, 4-H clubs, or the Future Farmers of America was found to reduce very substantially a student's chances of gaining admission to the competitive private colleges in the NSCE database on an all-other-things-considered basis. The admissions disadvantage was greatest for those in leadership positions in these activities or those winning honors and awards. "Being an officer or winning awards" for such career-oriented activities as junior ROTC, 4-H, or Future Farmers of America, say Espenshade and Radford, "has a significantly negative association with admission outcomes at highly selective institutions." Excelling in these activities "is associated with 60 or 65 percent lower odds of admission."

Espenshade and Radford don't have much of an explanation for this find, which seems to place the private colleges even more at variance with their stated commitment to broadly based campus diversity. In his Bakke ruling Lewis Powell was impressed by the argument Harvard College offered defending the educational value of a demographically diverse student body: "A farm boy from Idaho can bring something to Harvard College that a Bostonian cannot offer. Similarly, a black student can usually bring something that a white person cannot offer." The Espenshade/Radford study suggests that those farm boys from Idaho would do well to stay out of their local 4-H clubs or FFA organizations -- or if they do join, they had better not list their membership on their college application forms. This is especially true if they were officers in any of these organizations. Future farmers of America don't seem to count in the diversity-enhancement game played out at some of our more competitive private colleges, and are not only not recruited, but seem to be actually shunned. It is hard to explain this development other than as a case of ideological and cultural bias.

This same kind of bias seems to lurk behind the negative association found between acceptance odds and holding leadership positions in high school ROTC. This is most troubling because a divorce between the campus culture of its universities and its military is poisonous for any society, and doesn't do the military or the civilian society any good. The lack of comfort with many military commanders that our current president is said to have seems to be due not only to his own lack of military experience but to the fact of having spent so many of his formative years on university campuses like Harvard, Columbia, and the University of Chicago, where people with military experience are largely absent and the campus culture is often hostile to military values and military personnel.

In an attempt to find out what kind of diversity exists -- or doesn't exist -- on the Princeton University campus, I once asked students in a ten-member discussion group to raise their hands if they knew one or more Princeton undergraduates who had served a year or more on active military duty (in the late 1940s or early 1950s, of course, undergraduates at Princeton would have encountered legions of such people coming back from WWII and the Korean War). I made it plain that I wasn't asking if the students had a close friend or roommate who was a veteran, just a single person with military experience that they had at sometime encountered during their Princeton undergraduate careers. Only one student -- a female -- raised her hand: this student once met someone who had served in the Israeli military. On a second occasion I asked this question to a larger group and again only one hand went up -- this student once met a Princeton undergraduate who had served in the Turkish military.

Many universities, including Princeton, are interested in enrolling foreign students, along with students from disparate regions of the U.S. But the more competitive private universities seem to have little interest in diversifying their student bodies when it comes to people who have served in the American military or people who intend to make a career out of military service. Even if they don't shun such people, or hold their military service or aspirations against them, they clearly don't seek them out or court them the way they do "underrepresented" racial minorities. And while many universities host college-level ROTC programs (often for financial reasons), the military/civilian relationship on campus is usually far from amicable.

Military veterans and aspiring military officers, like poor whites and future American farmers, are clearly not what most competitive private colleges have in mind when they speak of the need for "diversity". If nothing else the new Espenshade/Radford study helps to document what knowledgeable observers have long known: "diversity" at competitive colleges today involves a politically engineered stew of different groups. drawn from the ingredients selected by reigning campus ideology. Since that ideology is mainly dictated by the Left, it is no surprise that the diversity achieved is what the larger American landscape looks like when it is viewed through a leftist lens. I suggest a different approach: elite colleges should get out of the diversity business altogether and focus on enrolling students who are the most academically talented and the most eager to learn. These students should make up the bulk of their entering classes. Call it the Cal Tech Model since the California Institute of Technology seems to be the only elite institution that comes close to realizing such an ideal. Or call it the U.S. Olympic Team Model, or the Major League All-Stars Model, since it is based on the same strict merit-selection principle governing our Olympic sports teams and our major league baseball all-star teams. Let the diversity chips fall where they may and focus on recruiting the most intelligent, most creative, and most energetic of the rising generation of young people. In my naive way this is what I always thought elite universities were supposed to be about.

Russell K. Nieli received his Ph.D. in political philosophy from Princeton University and currently works for Princeton's James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions. He has been a lecturer in Princeton's Politics Department and for ten years was an academic adviser to Princeton freshmen.

[Share on Facebook](#)

POST A COMMENT

Leave comments here. Unless they are vicious or obscene, they will be printed.

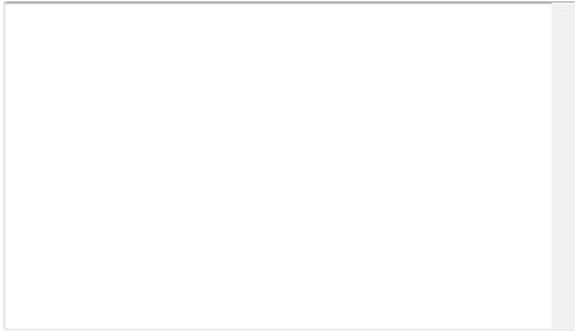
Name:

Email Address:

URL:

Remember personal info?

Comments: (you may use HTML tags for style)



Published by the Manhattan Institute





HOME

MINDING THE CAMPUS

Reforming Our Universities

FORUM

OUR ESSAYS

MUST READS



LINKS

ABOUT US

CAU

FORUM

MONTHLY ARCHIVES:

Browse by month:

August 2, 2010

Prof. Espenshade Runs From His Own Research

Posted by **John Rosenberg**

On July 12th **Russell Nieli** reminded readers of Minding the Campus what critics of racial preference policies (widely known by the euphemism "affirmative action") have long known --- that when university administrators talk about "diversity," what they really mean is blacks ... and to a lesser degree Hispanics. "Most elite universities," he pointed out,

seem to have little interest in diversifying their student bodies when it comes to the numbers of born-again Christians from the Bible belt, students from Appalachia and other rural and small-town areas, people who have served in the U.S. military, those who have grown up on farms or ranches, Mormons, Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, lower-middle-class Catholics, working class "white ethnics," social and political conservatives, wheelchair users, married students, married students with children, or older students first starting out in college after raising children or spending several years in the workforce.

Drawing on a recent study by Princeton sociologist **Thomas Espenshade and Alexandria Walton Radford**, Nieli pointed out the rather extreme preference enjoyed by favored minorities and the negative preference suffered by one of the most disfavored minorities, Asian Americans.

On an "other things equal basis," where adjustments are made for a variety of background factors, being Hispanic conferred an admissions boost over being white (for those who applied in 1997) equivalent to 130 SAT points (out of 1600), while being black rather than white conferred a 310 SAT point advantage. Asians, however, suffered an admissions penalty compared to whites equivalent to 140 SAT points.

.... To have the same chances of gaining admission as a black student with an SAT score of 1100, an Hispanic student otherwise equally matched in background characteristics would have to have a 1230, a white student a 1410, and an Asian student a 1550.

Asians, however, were not the only minority Espenshade and Walton found to suffer from negative preference.

At the private institutions in their study whites from lower-class backgrounds incurred a huge admissions disadvantage not only in comparison to lower-class minority students, but compared to whites from middle-class and upper-middle-class backgrounds as well. The lower-class whites proved to be all-around losers.

Writing in the *New York Times*, **Ross Douthat**, citing both Nieli and Espenshade, emphasized that the Espenshade study

provides statistical confirmation for what alumni of highly selective universities already know. The most underrepresented groups on elite campuses often aren't racial minorities; they're working-class whites (and white Christians in particular) from conservative states and regions.

"For minority applicants," Douthat noted,

the lower a family's socioeconomic position, the more likely the student was to be admitted. For whites, though, it was the reverse. An upper-middle-class white applicant was three times more likely to be admitted than a lower-class white with similar qualifications.

What is really interesting here is not so much what Nieli and Douthat have taken from Espenshade's work but that Professor Espenshade appears uncomfortable, to say the least (and below I will say considerably more than the least), with the idea that anyone would think his data --- any of his data --- support the conclusion that university administrators discriminate against anyone. As **John Leo** noted on Minding the Campus a few days ago.

If damaging evidence against affirmative action turns up in a pro-affirmative action book, the author often explains it away as misunderstood or exaggerated. This has happened once again, this time to a book that made no splash when it was published last October, but drew attention here at Minding the Campus in criticism that spread to Ross Douthat's column in *The New York Times*, Pat Buchanan's syndicated **column** and now *Time* magazine.

Princeton's Thomas Espenshade is the poster boy for pretending that he (or his evidence) doesn't mean what almost everyone else thinks it says. In a **reply** to Douthat, for example, Espenshade charges that Douthat "seizes on one relatively minor finding in the entire book to push an interpretation that goes far beyond the bounds of the actual evidence," a charge he has recently repeated to interviewers from both *Newsweek* and *Time*. To *Time* he stated, in a now familiar fashion, that Douthat took "a relatively minor finding and push[ed] an interpretation that goes beyond the bounds of available evidence."

To a *Newsweek* interviewer he was a bit more expansive:

"We didn't have a particular point of view and wanted to just be a mouthpiece for the data," said Espenshade, who told me that Douthat had "overreached" in his interpretation of the Princeton research....

And while Espenshade's data does conclude that the chances for admission improve for poorer black, Hispanic, and Asian-American students and decrease for poor white students, he doesn't believe this is a plot to deny poor whites an Ivy League education. "There aren't that many poor students applying to these schools," he explains. "The applicant pool itself tends to trend toward middle and upper-middle class. But all elite schools value diversity, both racial and socioeconomic, so maybe giving scarce financial [sic] aid dollars to poor black kids achieves two aims at once and

they're already admitting a lot of white kids." Please note that Espenshade is not drawing a conclusion, only coming up with what could be a reasonable interpretation of the data....

[For Douthat's reply to these charges, see his "[The White Anxiety Debate, Continued.](#)"] Now, not to put too fine a point on it, Espenshade's claim that he is merely an opinion-less "mouthpiece for the data," and *Newsweek's* glibly swallowing it, is pure, unadulterated malarkey. Not drawing a conclusion? Give me a break. He's certainly drawing the conclusion that the conclusions others have drawn from his data is unjustified.

But at least there's nothing new here. Espenshade has a long pattern and practice of denying the clear implications of his data, using the same strained arguments over and over. No plot to deny access to poor whites? Not surprising, since he also found no "smoking gun" evidence to deny access to Asians. Indeed, he won't even admit that his data reveal the presence of discrimination.

For example, in [discussing](#) back in February Prof. Espenshade's steadfast refusal, either obstinately or obtusely, to acknowledge what his numbers, charts, graphs, and statistical analyses clearly reveal --- that "affirmative action" as practiced by admissions officers at elite colleges results in massive discrimination against Asian-Americans, I quoted from an [interview](#) with him in the Princeton News Service in which he said that he couldn't conclude discrimination was present in the admissions process

because I've never actually sat in on an admission committee. But I'm convinced they don't have an equation like this and say, "OK, if you are Hispanic, you get a certain number of points; if your SAT scores are in this category, you get a certain number of points," right down the list.

See? No "plot" means no discrimination. I concluded at the time that this dodge was not only lame but silly, and quoted more from his interview:

People may read this and want to say, "Oh, because I'm Asian American, my SAT scores have been downgraded." That is not really the way to interpret these data. Many times people will ask me, "Do your results prove that there is discrimination against Asian applicants?" And I say, "No, they don't." Even though in our data we have much information about the students and what they present in their application folders, most of what we have are quantifiable data. We don't have the "softer" variables -- the personal statements that the students wrote, their teacher recommendations, a full list of extracurricular activities. Because we don't have access to all of the information that the admission office has access to, it is possible that the influence of one applicant characteristic or another might appear in a different light if we had the full range of materials.

Espenshade practiced the same evasion in almost identical terms in an [interview](#) with Inside Higher Ed back in November 2009.

Espenshade said in an interview that he does not think his data establish this bias [against Asians]. He noted that while his formulas are notably more complete than typical test score comparisons by race and ethnicity, he doesn't have the "softer variables," such as teacher and high school counselor recommendations, essays and lists of extracurricular activities. It is possible, he said, that such factors explain some of the apparent SAT and ACT disadvantage facing Asian applicants.

At the same time, he said he understood that these numbers would certainly not reassure Asian applicants or those who believe they are suffering discrimination.

"I understand the worry of Asian students, but do I have a smoking gun? No," he said.

If these passages mean anything they mean that those Asians may look good on paper (grades, test scores, etc.), but for all Espenshade knows they may all share an inability to write admissions essays that can compete with those written by blacks and Hispanics and a similar inability to garner enthusiastic letters of recommendations from their teachers. Actually, this attempt to deny the evidence of discrimination against Asians is neither lame nor silly; it is almost humorously dumb, and offensive.

Critics of race preferences do not believe that admissions officers "plot" to discriminate. Quite the contrary, despite Espenshade's unconvincing attempts to deny what his data reveal, discrimination in favor of some and against others on the basis of race and ethnicity is the very heart and soul of affirmative action admissions. Otherwise, why would the defenders of affirmative action get so up in arms against proposals to prohibit racial preferences? The only "smoking gun" necessary is the data itself, and those data reveal that a shot is fired every time an applicant is turned away who would have been accepted in the absence of preferential treatment based on race.

I'm not the only one to notice Espenshade's evasions. See, for example, Robert VerBruggen's excellent [review](#) of Espenshade's book and his [additional comments](#) about it. Even more pointedly, a friend who is quite familiar with all the social science literature on affirmative action and has friends at Princeton emailed me in response to one of my earlier posts that he'd heard some students there were so impressed by Espenshade's "almost Soviet-commisar-esque ability to boldly deny the obvious implications of his evidence that they referred to him as Prof. Espenshady."

Finally, I think it is noteworthy that Prof. Espenshade, certainly widely believed to be one of the foremost academic authorities on the practice of "diversity" these days, is so revealingly, carelessly sloppy when he discusses it. Asked by the *Time* interviewer "What is it about diversity that is so important? People take its value to be axiomatic, but why does it matter?" he gave two reasons. The first:

I think it matters in two respects. One has to do with opening up pathways to leadership for all members of society. This would be true whether we're talking about the legal profession, the medical profession, Congress, whatever. We want to make sure that our society is creating opportunities, access to these elite schools and pathways to upper mobility for all groups in the population.

One needn't be a constitutional law professor, nor even a regular reader of [Discriminations](#), to recognize that "opening up pathways to leadership" has absolutely nothing to do with "diversity." It is racial balancing pure and simple, which university administrators take great pains to deny they practice. You'd think a pro-preference Princeton professor would know better than to let this particular cat out of the bag.

The second reason:

It also matters in another respect. In the old days, going back to, say, the 1950s, if you looked at the Princeton campus and who came here, it was all white men, most of whom were from privileged backgrounds. Their perspectives on life didn't vary that much from one student to another. So the learning that they did was largely book learning, but there's another aspect of learning that one hopes takes place in college, and that has to do with expanding one's horizons, expanding one's perspectives, coming into contact with people whose life circumstances are different than your own and broadening your outlook as a result of that. That can't happen if there isn't a diverse group of students.

This sounds more like diversity as most people understand the term, but note that, like all such defenses of the preferential treatment on which affirmative action admissions depend, it is all but irrelevant to the actual "diversity" policies practiced at elite institutions. Those policies, day in and day out, as Espenshade's data show to everyone's but his own satisfaction, define "diversity" almost entirely in terms of skin color.

[Permalink](#)

POST A COMMENT

Leave comments here. Unless they are vicious or obscene, they will be printed.

Name:

Email Address:

URL:

Remember personal info?

Comments: (you may use HTML tags for style)

Published by the Manhattan Institute

