

Racial Gap in College Admissions Taking Harvard University as an Example

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ABSTRACT

College admission is highly related to senior high school students, which would have a great influence on students' whole lives. Therefore, equality in college admission is important. In this paper, the author applied the research methods of quantitative research, qualitative research, analytical research, conclusive research, surveys, and case studies to find out the existence of inequality in the Harvard Administration and offer suggestions and solutions at the end of the paper. According to the research and analysis, the paper concludes that the disparity is ghastly enough to exist in the progress of the admission examinations for Harvard University. Such a conclusion may also apply to the decisions of other admission offices of famous universities. Therefore, the Civil Rights Movement in the US is still far away from obtaining victory, where everyone could live in actual equality.

Keywords: college admission, racial gap, senior high school students, Harvard Administration

1. INTRODUCTION

College admission is highly related to senior high school students, which would have a great influence on students' whole lives. Therefore, equality in college admission is important. In most of the papers and essays, the author seldomly sees those authors directly using the case judgment related to their topic from the Supreme Court. Given this, the author applied the research methods of quantitative research, qualitative research, analytical research, conclusive research, surveys, and case studies to find out the existence of inequality in the Harvard Administration and offer suggestions and solutions. For example, the author used the method of case studies to gain some conclusions from the Supreme Court, which has the power to explain the Constitution of the US. Then, the paper can use some of the judgments from the Supreme Court as proof of the author's argument. It is hoped that the paper can make some insightful suggestions for further studies in this field.

2. ANALYSIS

2.1 The phenomenon of racial gap in college admission

Since the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, people have solved most social equality problems, such as racial problems, in the United States. However, is it true? Does it mean people eventually achieve triumph in the movement of gaining equality? It may be too early to draw such a conclusion for the public, as inequality still manifests itself in many aspects of people's lives, such as college applications. According to a poll from the Associated Press, which asks people whether they think college admissions are fair, 61% of people do not believe admissions are fair. [1] Some people who think the college admission process is not entirely impartial are Asian-Americans, whom American society has long ignored. "Recent research suggests that a lack of civic presence can shut immigrant groups out of urban planning, marginalize them in local decision-making, and hurt their ability to access municipal social service grants," Hamlin and her colleagues explain. [2] It is necessary to point out that such a statement could apply to Asian Americans as well. Even though minorities have achieved much progress since the 60s, the Harvard College admissions office offends the civil rights of Asian applicants in its admission policy.

In 2014, the Students For Fair Admissions (SFFA) sued Harvard College for discriminating against Asian American applicants, who believed they were adequate to attend the college, but the admissions office still rejected them. After losing district and circuit court decisions, the SFFA appealed to the Supreme Court for alleged unconstitutional racial policies in its admissions process. At the beginning of their statement, Harvard is eager to prove they are innocent and demonstrate that they treat racial diversity seriously. The Harvard Brief states that Harvard equally admits minority students. However, there is something questionable and unpersuasive about their arguments. Even though

Harvard admits some minority students, it does not mean Harvard treats all applicants equally. In *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, a previous case that got a judgment from the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court banned the University of Michigan Law School from setting a specific number of minority first-year students. Before the *Grutter v. Bollinger* case, colleges accepted minorities, but the admissions program limited the total number of minority students. [3] As a result, people should always remind themselves that the enrollment of minorities is not the same as fairness in admission.

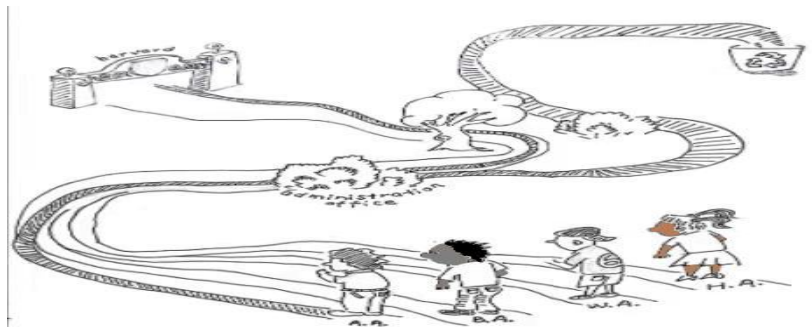


Figure 1 Different People, Different Result

In addition, another thing people need to understand is that the definition of fairness in college enrollment varies among different groups of people. Instead of being selected by ambiguous standards such as personality or leadership, fair admission for Asian people means that admission offices examine all applicants by a clear benchmark, such as numerical criteria like the SAT, ACT, and GPA. The disappointment of Asians is somehow understandable because the decision of Harvard University makes people feel as if it is a black-box operation. What makes the Asian public feel worse is that Harvard does not elaborate on the reasons for rejections. From Ms. Binqi Chen, mother of two Asian American students, "Of course, I hope Harvard will admit my children, and I can guarantee their academic scores are satisfying. However, there is a huge unknown about some components in the checklist of the admission system at Harvard, and there is also a serious potential issue because my children have an Asian face.

Furthermore, according to the official website of Harvard University, the self-given mission of Harvard University is to "educate future leaders." [4] Moreover, Harvard always gives negative comments on the so-called personalities of Asian applicants. [5] According to

internet data, 19.6 million students attended colleges and universities in 2019 [6], and the 3982 schools in the United States accepted 4922 students on average. However, Harvard only admits 1968 students. Why does Harvard not think about increasing the total number of their students and making some space for Asian students? What is the point of higher education if it cannot make students develop themselves? Asian students demonstrate their academic abilities with higher scores on tests and GPAs than students of other races. [8] Why cannot Harvard educate students on skills such as leadership? In addition, some teachers and advisors say that most applicants who want to be enrolled in famous universities have a strong academic background. As a result, admissions officers must scrutinize students on a variety of other factors, such as personalities. However, there is an obvious option for universities, but they seldom talk about it: the expansion of their campuses and faculties. When the US population averagely increases by 0.9% every year [9], it does not make sense for universities to change their size. With all due respect, if Harvard insists on maintaining its population of students, it might give people the feeling that it is creating an educational hierarchy and monopoly.

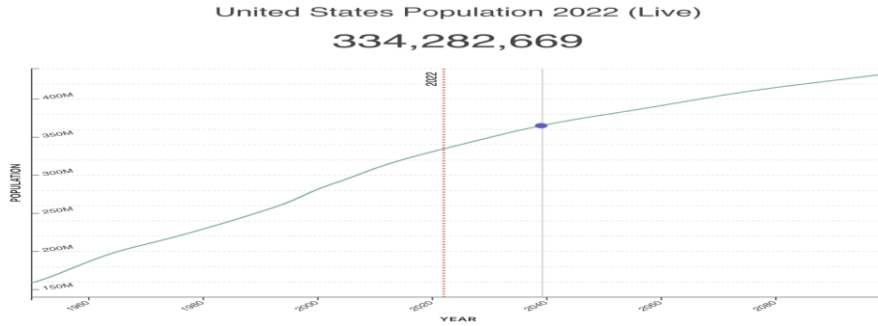


Figure 2 The Increasing Tendency of USA Population

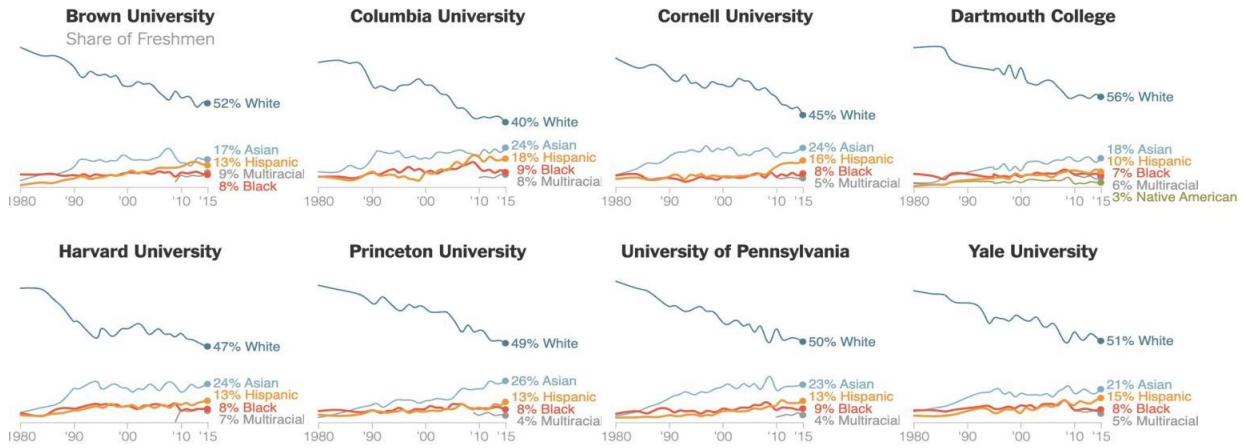


Figure 3 Students Percentage in Some of the Famous Universities in the US

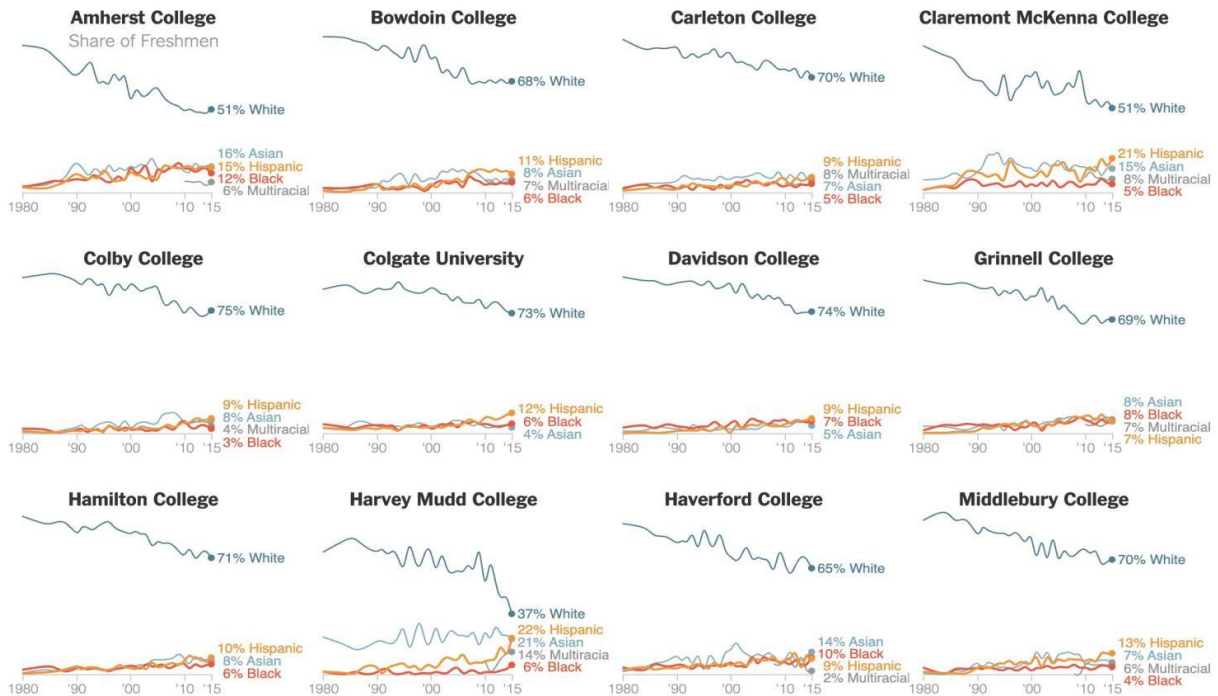


Figure 4 Students Percentage in Some of the Famous Liberal Arts Colleges in the US

2.2 Reasons behind the phenomenon

Some argue that Asians have higher average wages than other races, and that Asians can give better

educational resources to their children than other races. [10] However, the higher average salary does not prove that Asians possess more educational resources than other groups. According to US News, Asian students

made up only 6% of the composition in private elementary and secondary schools in 2017, compared to 11% of Hispanic students and 9% of Black students.[11] The numbers in the survey clearly show that people cannot ignore the motivation of Asian students when they achieve academic success.

Einstein said that the formulation of a problem is often far more essential than its solution. However, when people talk about a problem that they have not solved, they must take one more step toward finding a solution. Otherwise, the rights of some people will be violated day by day until there is a solution. Universities talk about being so-called color-blind during the process of examining applications from students. However, the fact is that the education system did not make any progress. To be specific, whenever students are fulfilling the profile in the Common App section, they will notice they still need to tell universities their race and nationality. In addition, people may notice that there is no option showing "prefer not to say" or something like that. Hence, how could those universities' administrators and admissions offices say that they are color-blind? Furthermore, according to a report from the New York Times, readers can see the change in the percentages of different racial groups in each university. According to the statistical graphs in the report, it is evident that readers can see the change in the percentage of Asian students in universities has been increasing in recent years. However, it is also unconvinced that the percentage of each racial group has almost no numerical change. To be specific, people may notice that the white American population in each university, except the universities of California, always keeps their white American population around the same, which is 50 percent. In the same sense, people may also notice that Asian students make up more than 25% of the total. Furthermore, such a phenomenon is exacerbated in liberal arts colleges, where there is a strong educational ability in liberal arts subjects. [12] Therefore, the simplest solution to the racial problem in university applications is to remove the question that makes the applicants show their racial identity. In this way, we may be able to address the issue of equality in schools for those who do not make the in-person interview a requirement. There should be another method to apply to universities that make the interview with applicants a hard requirement. To begin with, readers need to realize that the primary purpose of an interview between admissions offices and applicants is to give applicants an opportunity to show their sections that they do not have a chance to show while writing essays that answer the questions that the college asks them. [13] As a result, why don't universities give applicants the opportunity to write about things they're proud of but didn't show in their essays? Specifically, the offices could allow applicants to freely write a self-introduction on several pages after

submitting the answers to the specific questions that the offices ask.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the paper concludes that the disparity is ghastly enough to exist in the progress of the admissions examinations for Harvard University. Such a conclusion may also apply to the decisions of other admission offices of famous universities. Therefore, the Civil Rights Movement in the US is still far away from obtaining victory, where everyone could live in actual equality. It is still necessary for the American people to make more effort to solve these social problems.

Besides, it is necessary for people to realize the existence of racial inequality in the application process for college. However, as the paper says in the last paragraphs, people should not only talk about the problem and feel sorrow. Instead of that, people must have the confidence and courage to solve these problems with some practical solutions. In addition, it is one of our duties to inform the readers of this paper about the deficiencies. First of all, the author quotes some sentences from an interview with an Asian American mother who has two children, but the number of interviewers is definitely not high enough. As a result, it is necessary for me to spend more time doing more interviews with people who have different backgrounds. Besides, to make my argument more compelling by using case studies, the paper should quote more Supreme Court judgments about cases involving the thirteenth amendment. In addition, the author only focuses on the inequality situation of Asian Americans but forgets to mention the situation of other racial minority groups, such as Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and African Americans. In the following research, the author planned to do more research and report that talks about the situation of gaining equality for other minorities and tries to give my own suggestion and solution after analyzing the facts in some cases and people's daily lives.

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