Asian American Discrimination in Ivy League Admissions

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Abstract
Asian-American students have often felt discriminated against when applying to the Ivy Leagues, American’s most elite institutes of higher education. The purpose of this research paper is to determine, whether Asian-American students have become victims of their own social and academic success when it comes to applying to these prestigious universities. Asian-Americans have long been described as the model minority, and it is following this myth, which has lead Ivy League universities to use affirmative action in the admissions process to set anti-Asian racial quotas. A similar system of anti-Asian admissions quotas has also been found to exist in the California university system, a state which has the highest Asian-American population. This analyze was achieved by using the research of several authors who specialize in both Asian-American and college level discrimination, along with supporting admissions data, and other important information regarding Asian-American job placement in big business, law, and government. The conclusion that can be draw from all this research is that Asian-Americans are subjugated to racial quotas in Ivy League admissions, due to their overwhelming academic successes. These effects are felt far beyond college admissions, because the eight universities that make up the Ivy Leagues are some of the most influential academic organizations in the world. This small collection of universities hold the keys to power in American business, law, or politics. By hindering access to the gates of power to these well qualified students, the academic admissions councilors are excluding Asian-Americans from becoming future Fortune 500 CEOs, Wall Street attorneys, or state representatives and senators.
There has been much debate in the past two decades by sociologists and economists, about whether Asian Americans are experiencing discrimination in the admission process for America’s most elite universities, such as Harvard and Princeton. It is well established that Asian-Americans have achieved much socioeconomic, educational, and professional success compared to other minority groups in the United States. But is this prior success now working against the future Asian-American competitive college applicants? In this paper, I analyze the racial discrimination of Asian-Americans in the admissions process for the Ivy League universities. I debunked the Model Minority Myth and show how racial discrimination at the higher education level is used as a barrier to limit Asian-Americans from holding elite political, legal, and business executive positions.

The Rise in Asian Immigration to the United States

The Asian-American population is growing rapidly in the United States. According to the Pew Research Center, only 19 percent of new immigrants to the United States were Asian in 2000. That number has drastically expanded in the last decade. In 2010, thirty-six percent of all new immigrants to the United States were Asians. In 2013, the number of immigrants coming from China and India to the United States became greater than those migrating from Mexico for the first time in twenty first century. This all began in 1965 when President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Immigration and Nationality Act. This new law dismantled the previous system that favored Caucasians of European heritage over other races and ethnic minorities in the United States. This eventually led to a large scale migration to America from many different Asian countries.

Debunking the Model Minority Myth

Asians have long been described as the model minority. They have overcome much racial discrimination, especially in the nineteenth century, to become prosperous, value the
importance of education, and remain socially tranquil. Asian-Americans are often viewed as successful by other non-Asians in their lucrative careers and educational success. They have gained a significant hold in professions such as engineering, medicine, and computer sciences. “However, these stereotyped views mask significant unemployment and poverty rates amongst numerous Asian-American groups, especially Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Bangladeshi, Laotian, and Hmong Americans.” 1 This further proves that the idea of Asians being the model minority is just a myth. This minority model was not created by Asian-Americans through generations of hard work and success, but rather by white politicians during the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The author William Petersen tackles this issue in his 1966 book, “Success Story, Japanese – American Style.” Petersen writes, “In the mid-1960s, largely in response to African-American and Mexican-American protests against discrimination, white scholars, political leaders, and journalists developed the model minority myth in order to allege that all Americans of color could achieve the American dream – and not by protesting discrimination in the stores and streets as African-Americans and Mexican-Americans were doing, but by working as “hard and quietly” as Japanese and Chinese Americans supposedly did. This model image was created not by Asian Americans but by influential whites for their public ideological use.” Regardless of their success, many Asian-Americans are seen as forever foreigners. An isolated group not yet fully assimilated into white culture and society. The Myth of the Model Minority has created an invisible cloak masking the continued issues of racial discrimination that Asian Americans face on a daily basis. The stereotypes placed on Asian-Americans, by whites and other minority groups, sometimes contrast drastically with the socioeconomic hardships many Asians are experiencing in the United States.

Asian-Americans have adapted well to the dominant culture of White America, using what social scientists call the traditional assimilation theory. “All recognized to some degree that Asian American identities are not see positively, or as fully American, but most whites. This reality has caused some to give up on ever being considered an American.” The American Dream is defined as one’s ability to achieve social mobility through hard work. But the question remains of whether the American Dream still a reality for Asian-Americans or if they have become victims of their own success. This is known as the Asian-American Achievement Paradox.

Education and Human Capital

The former Noble Winning Economist Gary Becker achieved great notoriety and prestige in the field of economics for his “economic approach to human behavior” and his “human capital model.” Human capital is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “the skills the labor force possesses and is regarded as a resource or asset.” Claudia Goldin, a Professor of Economics at Harvard University states in a publication for the National Bureau of Economic Research, “Human Capital encompasses the notion that there are investments in people (e.g., education, training, and health) and that these investments increase an individual’s productivity.” This is important because Asian-Americans belong to communities that support the necessity for education throughout an individual’s life. Education, especially at the early childhood level, is the ultimate form of human capital. Asian-Americans have created “ethnic capital” by their cultures emphasis on the important of education for one’s continued success.

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2 Chou and Feargin, the Myth of the Model Minority: Asian American Facing Racism, 126.
3 Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou, the Asian American Achievement Paradox (New York City: Russell Sage Foundation, 2015).
Education and human capital are the keys to unlocking the American Dream. Asian-Americans, more than any other ethnic group, associate an individual’s ability to achieve success as a direct correlation to their willingness to work hard. “But on average Asian-Americans are unusually well educated, prosperous, married, satisfied with their lot and willing to believe in the American dream: 69 percent of Asians, compared with 58 percent of the general public, think that “most people who want to get ahead can make it if they are willing to work hard.” 4 In addition, Asian parents also place great pressure on their children to succeed in school which drives the ethnic human capital model to the next generation.

Ivy League Prestige

The Ivy League is a term used to describe a group of eight elite colleges and universities in the United States that famous for their age, history, and academic prestige. The Ivy League consists of Brown University, Columbia University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, Cornell University, and Yale University. No matter what race or socioeconomic background a student comes from, it is becoming more difficult every year to gain acceptance to one of these elite academic institutions. The Ivy League sets the standard for academic excellence for higher education all over the world. For the incoming Class of 2018, the combined eight Ivy League’s admissions accepted only 22,624 of the 253,472 applicants. 5 That means that the Ivy League had an admission rate of just 8.9256 percent for all students who applied. In 2014, Harvard accepted 2,023 students out of 34,295 applicants for an acceptance rate of 5.9 percent. Yale had similar statistics, granting 1,935 offers out of 30,932 applications. That is a slightly


higher acceptance rate than Harvard at 6.3 percent. Finally, Princeton accepted 1,939 applicants out of 26,641 applications with an acceptance rate of 7.3 percent. 

**Asian-American Admissions Discrimination**

Many Asian-Americans students get accepted to the best universities in the country through a combination of parental pressure, hard work, and determination. But some feel that not as many Asian-Americans are accepted at elite universities as their stellar high school academic performance would seem to merit. This has led many Asian-Americans to believe that the Ivy Leagues have place numerical limits on the number of Asians they will accept. In May of 2015, a joint complaint was made to the Department of Education by a group 64 Asian American organizations against Harvard, claiming racial discrimination in the admission process. In previous years, similar law suits and complaints have been made against Harvard, Princeton, and the University of North Carolina.

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights has recently concluded investigations into two discrimination complaints filed against Princeton University. The two students who filed the complaint, alleged that they were denied admission to Princeton because of their race and national origin. They suggested that Asian-American students are put at a disadvantage by affirmative action policies at elite institutions. The Office for Civil Rights countered these claims, stating that it would be extremely difficult for any student to gain admissions to Princeton regardless of their ethnic background. Princeton provided the Office for Civil Rights with specific examples of Asian-American students who had been accepted with lower academic criteria. These students distinguished themselves through community service, athletics, and overcoming an impoverished background. The Asian-

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7 Prinster, Rebecca. *Insight into Diversity,* 2014
American Coalition for Education strongly criticized the finding of the Office for Civil Right, calling their findings “non-convincing.” The group called into question the department’s depth of research on the matter.

It is obvious that getting accepted to an Ivy League school is extremely difficult, but it is becoming apparent that it is more difficult for well qualified Asian-American applicants to gain acceptance compared to other minority groups. Controversy has been growing whether the Ivy Leagues have been placing racial quotas aimed at reducing the influx of Asian-Americans into these prestigious universities. The critics support their claims by pointing out that Asian-American admission rates have been lower than those of whites, even though Asian-American’s soaring academic achievement, as measured by standardized test scores and high school grade point averages, appears to be equal to or better than those of whites. With Asian-American admission rates decreasing at some Ivy League universities, some have raised the question of whether admissions officer have placed numerical limits on the number of Asian-Americans they want admitted.

Thomas Espenshade is a professor of Sociology at Princeton University. He, and his collaborator Alexandria Walton Radford, published their book, *No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal* in 2009. This book examines how race and social class impact a student’s application, admissions, enrollment, and student life on campus. In the book, Espenshade and Radford analyzed the application histories of the eight prestigious Ivy League universities in 1997. This was the last year that these universities released their admissions information. This data is a bit dated but is still provides the best information publicly available. After examining the admissions data the authors concluded that Asian Americans need 140 points higher than whites on the SAT (on the old 1,600-point scale) to be admitted to an elite private university, but in contrast African-Americans need 310 points lower on the SAT to be admitted to the
same university. Their data also reveals that Asian applicants have a 67 percent lower odds of admissions than white applications even with comparable standardized test scores. On the debate about Asian-American admissions discrimination, Espenshade’s book is perhaps the most cited and well researched evidence published. In the end, the authors do not make any final conclusions about whether Asian-American’s are being discriminated against by Ivy League admissions. They simply conclude through their research that Asian-Americans still need high standard test scores than white to gain admission into elite institutions. This does not take into account other parts of a holistic admissions process, such as athletic ability, legacy status, strength of application essays, or letters of recommendation.

After the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights dismissed all discrimination complaints against Princeton, current university president Christopher Eisgruber responded, “I am very pleased that the OCR has concluded this investigation not only with a finding that Princeton did not discriminate on the basis of race or national origin, but that the university’s holistic review of applicants in pursuit of its compelling interest in diversity meets the standards set by the Supreme Court.” Princeton University, just like the other seven Ivy League schools, considers race as part of a greater holistic admissions process which is completely legal. Holistic is defined by Merriam – Webster Dictionary as “relating to or concerned with complete systems rather than with individual parts.”

Researching accusations of anti-Asian bias in admission decisions is difficult because the Ivy League universities do not provide any admissions data to support their denials of discrimination. They even refuse to release recent admissions facts in order to refute the old information which clearly suggests that Asian-Americans have to score much higher on the SAT than their white counterparts in order to gain acceptance. Admission officers continue to deny acts of racial discrimination without providing any data to support their claim. Now why is this important?
The Holistic Admissions Process

Ivy League universities are no longer looking for just impressive high school grade point averages and standardize test schools. In the competitive college admission process, elite universities are now taking a holistic approach to the admission process. Universities are looking for the most complete and well-rounded student possible. This means not only stellar grades, but also community service, extra circular involvement, and athletics. When applying to a prestigious school, such as the Ivy Leagues, applicants are looking for any advantage they can get to make their application stand out. It seem fair to believe that these universities would want the best-rounded and involved students entering their schools every year. Although this not always going to be the case. A holistic admission process, while great in theory, opens the door for wide subjective discrimination on the part of the admissions officers. Ivy League universities are no longer accepting students on straight forward data, such as grade point averages and SAT scores. Instead they are considering other criteria, which allows admissions to implement policies specifically aimed at slowing down the influx of well qualified Asian-American students into these colleges. Potential applicants have to hope that the admissions officers for these elite universities will use the holistic process for the purpose of good. The Ivy League universities produce some of the most powerful politicians, business men, and future world leaders. Denying potential well qualified applicants the chance to enter these gates of power because of their racial background, could have huge implications for our country’s future.

It is important to examine a brief history of how the Ivy League universities have used holistic admissions criteria in the past for the purpose of racial bias. Until the 1920s, students took a college admission test and those who performed extremely well on this test could be admitted to such prestigious colleges such as Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. The students’
admissions was almost entirely biased on this academic criteria. Subsequently many Jewish men were able to gain acceptance to Ivy League universities. In the early twentieth century there was a sharp increase in anti-Semitic sentiment, both in Europe as well as in the United States. The Ivy League universities switch from a purely academic admission criteria to the current holistic admissions process, in an attempt to keep out Jewish students for the powerful and all white intuitions. By excluding Jewish students from acceptance into the Ivy Leagues, the powers at be could also keep Jews from holding powerful seats of government and limit Jewish influence in the United States. It was not until after the Second World War that these sort of anti-Semitic barriers were dropped against Jewish Americans, as Jews gain a foot hold into American politics. Consequently the number of Jewish American students began to rise again at the elite universities. It would be premature to call Asian Americans the “new Jews” in an attempt to compare racial discrimination at the Ivy League level. It does prove how using a holistic admissions process can allow for subjective criteria, which can open up the potential for negative consequences.

Racial discrimination in the Ivy Leagues, similar to that faced by Jewish American in the early twentieth century, is not the only issue facing Asian-Americans. The Asian-American Achievement Paradox and affirmative action certainly seem to be the new problem. Affirmative Action has many opponents in the United States. Many argue that Asian-American students have fallen victim to affirmative action, just like whites. Affirmative Action is meant to benefit minority groups who have been discriminated against in the past. Now Asian-Americans, the most successful minority group, are being denied admissions to the best American universities when other less qualified minority groups, such as African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans, are being admitted. In the Ivy League admissions process there is only a limited allotted places for people who are just high level achievers, such as Asian-Americans. Top universities tend to admit African-Americans
and Hispanics with lower scores, because of their long history of disadvantage, then the politically well-connected, and finally the children of wealthy people who are the most likely to donate to the university in the future. The Ivy League universities will always find places for the most privileged members of society, because their finances heavily depend on the generosity of the rich.

The California University System and Asian-American Quotas

The Ivy Leagues are not the only place where admissions discrimination can be found for Asian-Americans. In 1996, the state of California banned the consideration of race and ethnicity in the admissions process for all public universities. After this political decision, the number of Asian-American students at California state schools began to increase at an alarming rate. Many universities began accepting fewer numbers of Asian students, even well qualified ones. Immediately, Asian-Americans began leveling accusations of imposing racial quotas, similar to what has been found at Ivy League universities. Asian-American student organizations accused California universities, such as the University of California at Berkeley, University of California Los Angeles, and Stanford of placing limits on admissions numbers. Following these protests, several investigations took place at the state level. The universities admitted that there was a problem but never admitted to any wrongdoing.

The West Coast is typically viewed as an accepting place for Asian-Americans compared to other regions due to its high Asian population. But many white students feel threatened by the increased number of high performing Asian students at California universities. White students have given these universities derogatory nicknames such as calling the University of California at Irvine “the University of Chinese Immigrants,” while
the UCLA has been nicknamed “the University of Caucasians Lost among Asians.” 8 This is just a simple example of the growing hostility facing Asian-Americans at many university campuses. The white students on the West Coast are not responding positively to the continued academic achievement of their young Asian counterparts.

The University of California at Berkeley is considered the most prestigious and selective public university in California. Since Berkeley is a state university so all their admissions data is freely available to the public. The percent of Asian students attending Berkeley has exploded from 25 percent in 1989 to 45 percent in 2010. 9 The Asian population in California as a whole has also continued to increase during this 20 year time period, but this growth in population has not been reflected in the admissions numbers at California universities. Ron Unz is businessman, political activist, and Harvard alumnus who is the publisher of The American Conservative a bi-monthly political journal. Using statistics from the Census Current Population Survey, he examined the number of college age Asians and their enrollment trends at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena compared to the Ivy Leagues. Cal Tech has a very strict race neutral admissions policy. It is the one of the few universities in California or the Ivy Leagues, which has kept pace with the dramatic growth in the Asian population living in California. Asians presence at the Ivy Leagues has remained flat or continued to decrease compared to Cal Tech. This trend has been similarly found at other schools in the University of California system. Ron Unz concludes that there should be a much larger number of Asians represented at the Ivy Leagues and in the University of California system, especially with their growing population. According to the National Centre for Education Statistics, Asian-Americans made up 41 percent of the University of

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9 University of California: Office of the President, 2010.
California at Berkley’s enrollments and 44 percent at the California Institute of Technology in 2014.

**The Bamboo Ceiling**

It has been well established that Asian-Americans perform extraordinarily well in school and university. They have high average incomes compared to other minority groups, and even their white counterparts. Although Asians enter the professional workforce, they are under-represented in top management positions. The term “Bamboo Ceiling” refers to this glass ceiling for executive positions in American companies that Asian-Americans work under. The term was first coined by Jane Hyun in her 2006 book, *Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling: Career Strategies for Asians*. Asians have a lot of success in the lower and middle levels of companies, but are less represented in the upper echelons. Richard Zweigenhaft is a professor of psychology at Guilford College, a small liberal arts college in North Carolina. He compiled a study of Asian-American Fortune 500 CEOs and found that in 2000 there were only 8 male and 4 female CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Fourteen years later in 2014, the number of male CEOs had only risen to 10 and the number of female rose to 24. Similar statistics can be found elsewhere in the professional workplace.

A large profession where there is low representation of Asian-Americans is in the practice and study of law. The law is perhaps the least diverse profession in the nation. According to the most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are 1,043,000 lawyers in the United States, 4.1 percent (or 42,763) of whom are Asian. The most recent information from the Law Student Admissions Council shows an increase in Asian Pacific Islander entrants from 2000 to 2009. In 2010, among the 200 American Bar Association-accredited schools, 3,987 first-year law students were Asian or Pacific Islander. David Lat is a Filipino American, a graduate of Yale Law School, and the founder of the widely popular legal blog
Above the Law. “This is perhaps something [the importance of networking] that the Asian-American community could be better at. Many of us are taught growing up that professional success is all about the quality of your work.” Before creating Above the Law, David Lat was a federal prosecutor before moving on to work for a large law firm based in New York City. Asian-Americans know the business side of law, but there is growing concern that they are limited in the hierarchy of major American law firms, by the bamboo ceiling.

Buck Gee, Janet Wong and Denise Peck are all Asian-American executives who put together research from companies such as Google, Intel, Hewlett Packard, Linked In, and Yahoo for a report published by Ascend, an Asian-American organization, found that 27 percent of professionals, 19 percent of managers and 14 percent of executives were Asian-American. 10 “Japanese and other Asian Americans periodically report a glass ceiling in corporations or exclusion from business networks. About 5 percent of the population, Asian-Americans are far less than 1 percent of the members of the boards of Fortune 500 firms; one tabulation revealed that just one Asian American headed up a Fortune 500 firm not founded by an Asian American.” 11 The bamboo ceiling is very real barrier facing Asian-Americans working in the competitive structure of American corporate business.

There are several factors that have led to the development of the bamboo ceiling. The problem is not that Asians have shown a lack of managerial skills or aspirations. On the contrary, Asians have made continual advancement in middle management positions in the past 20 years. In Silicon Valley, Asians comprised 12 percent of the high-tech workforce in 1990, but that number has risen to well over 50 percent. 12 In that same year, Asians were only 8 percent of the managerial workforce, but now the number of Asians represented in

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10 Buck Gee, Stanford Graduate School of Business, “Advanced Leadership Programs for Asian-American Executives.”
management positions has exceeded 30 percent. There are several factors that hinder access to the executive leadership levels for Asian-Americans. The first, and perhaps greatest factor, is conflicting cultures in a professional setting. Eastern corporate culture is diametrically opposite to that of Western corporate culture. Asians typically are averse to risk, preferring to keep their heads down rather than speaking up or confronting issues in the workplace. This aversion to conflict avoidance and risk-taking can severely hinder career advancement up the corporate ladder. Asians typically have a cultural deference to authority. This could be taken as weakness or a lack of ambition in the cutthroat environment of the American corporate world. Finally, Asians tend to be politically naïve in their understanding of how organizational business decisions are made. In the fast-moving corporate culture of modern American business, there are unwritten rules required to gain promotions and advance. “White executives periodically assert that in their firms Asian-Americans are best as technical workers and not as executives. Given this stereotyped view, Asian-Americans are often hired as engineers, computer experts, and technicians, but no matter what their qualifications are they are rarely considered for management.” These undeveloped leadership skills are one of the biggest factors hinder access to executive leadership levels.

There is no doubt that the bamboo ceiling is real. Its roots stem from the previous success of Asian-Americans. There is some truth in the stereotype of the smart, hard-working Asian which has led to creation of this idea of the model minority. This has created an implicit bias that Asian-Americans are well qualified but lack the assertiveness, vision, and interpersonal skills needed to be successful leaders in business. Many Asian-American believe that advancement into higher management is rewarded purely for work achievement.

Although achievement is certainly important, it is not necessary sufficient for promotion. Buck Gee, a former executive with a Fortune 100 technology company who was mentioned earlier, is now an executive adviser to Ascent, a pan-Asian professional organization. In an interview with the New York Times, Gee said, “As part of corporate leadership teams evaluating promotions, I would look beyond achievement for evidence to suggest executive potential, including personal initiative, conflict management or willingness to express an unpopular view.” The stereotype of the quiet, but talented Asian professional has led to the widespread assumption that he would be ill-suited for a business leadership position.

Recognizing the existence of the bamboo ceiling for Asian-American professions is the first step to addressing the roots of the issue. Using a data-based approach several Bay Area companies have taken measures to concuring the bamboo ceiling. The number of Asian-American executives in Fortune 500 companies, based in the Bay Area, continues to lag behind their growing presence in the professional workforce and overall population. Asian-Americans now comprise 23 percent of the Bay Area’s population, but in contrast they only represent 8% of the board members and 12 percent of the region’s top executives. ¹⁵ On the surface, Asian Americans seem to be very successful in the technology industry. “They make up 34 percent of Google’s staff, 41 percent of Facebook’s, 57 percent at Yahoo, 60 percent at Linked In; they now make up more than half the workers in the Bay Area tech scene. In the broader economy, they are the highest-educated and fastest growing minority group in the United States with unemployment sitting at the lowest among all ethnic groups.” ¹⁶ Although Asian-Americans make up half the employees in the technology industry, they only make up 11 percent of startup senior executive, 6 percent of those are CEOs, 10 percent of venture capitalist partners, and 8 percent of board members. Finally,

¹⁵ Buck Gee, Stanford Graduate School of Business, “Advanced Leadership Programs for Asian-American Executives.”
Asian-Americans are half as likely to rise to the top as their white counterparts. The numbers become even starker, when examining the rest of the United States, since the Asian-American population is so heavy concentrated on the West Coast. The grim truth is that competing for management positions is a dead end path for many young motivated Asian-Americans entering the technology industry. The general stereotype in Silicon Valley, the cradle for California’s booming technology industry, is that Asian-Americans are great technologists but lack the people skills to make effective managers and leaders.

The solution many companies and Asian-American businessmen are taking is investing in leadership programs and professional training specifically for Asian-American executives. The most well-known of these Asian-American leadership program is called the Stanford’s Advanced Leadership Program for Asian-American Executives. This program was the first of its kind to address the gap in effective training for high-achieving Asian-American executives. The purpose, says co-founder Buck Gee, is to provide companies with an “immediate solution” to tackle the lack of Asian Americans in leadership roles.” 17 The program charges a staggering $12,000 in tuition for an all-inclusive six-day session at Stanford’s elite Graduate School of Business. This prestigious leadership course is run by some of the business industries most successful Asian-American leaders. They describe how they have overcome many obstacles in their rise to the top. Their online brochure states, “Learn how to lead cross-functional teams to compete for tomorrow’s global assignments. Develop personal strategies for building power and influence. Recognize Asian and Western cultural biases and competencies. And find out how to get more of what you want. At Stanford, the learning happens everywhere – both inside and outside the classroom.” 18 It

18 Buck Gee, Stanford Graduate School of Business, “Advanced Leadership Programs for Asian-American Executives.”
seems that Asian-American leadership programs, like the one at Stanford, are the way of the future in order for Asian-American professionals to finally break through the bamboo ceiling.

**Asian-American Representation in Politics**

Asian-Americans are also under represented in American politics, at the local, state, and Federal level. “Exoticized and celebrated for docility, Asian Americans have relatively little political clout and as yet are less involved in the United States political process.” 19 Over the past 30 years, that trend is slowly changing. Asian-Americans have been increasingly participated in both the Democrat and Republican parties, says Don Nakanishi, director of Asian-American Studies Center at the University of California, Los Angeles. This shift in Asian political involvement can be explained by several factors, such as population growth, opportunities opened by civil rights movements, and the election of other racial minorities. Overall just 5.8 percent of the US population is Asian. An equally small percentage of Asian-Americans are represented in Congress. In 2012, only 12 out of 535 members of Congress, or 2 percent, claim Asian heritage, 2 in the Senate and 10 in the House of Representatives. According to the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies in Washington, 30 Asian-American candidates launched congressional bids in 2012, compared with just 10 in 2010, and 8 in 2008.

Examining the most current United States Congress will reveal the most up to date information on Asian-American representation in federal politics. In the 114th Congress elected in 2015, records indicate that 14 members are of Asian, South Asian, or Pacific Islander Ancestry. That is 2.6 percent of the total membership, which is 1 more than the 113th Congress in 2014. Thirteen of them serve in the House, and 1 serves in the Senate. 12 members are registered as Democrats and 1 Republican. These numbers include one House...  

Member who is also of African American ancestry and another of Hispanic ancestry. These Members are counted in both ethnic categories. Of those Members serving in the House, 2 are Delegates. Seven of the Asian Pacific American Members are female, six of those serving in the House and one in the Senate. 20

The growing political activism of the last few decades is a direct reflection of increased success in other professional fields, like medicine, engineering, and academia. Judy Chu was the first Chinese American woman elected to Congress. She is a two-term Democratic Representative of California and the chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. She said, ”Asian-Americans have historically faced difficulty in running because political networks for Asian-Americans are still developing. Moreover, the relatively small number of Asian-Americans in elected office had in the past made it harder for newcomers to complete.” Asian-American are currently still developing a political infrastructure. When an Asian-American runs for Congress, the voters no long look at them as a foreigner but as a participating American who can contribute to this country. Tammy Duckworth has been the US Representative for Illinois since 2013. Born in Thailand she was the first Asian-American women elected to Congress from the state of Illinois. She said, “Asian-Americans from Midwestern areas, like her represent constituencies, have traditionally been shut out.” Duckworth went on to say, “Places like here have never had Asian-Americans elected to office, not even to state office, or even an alderman. There’s a good chuck of the population that’s not getting all of its concerns represented.” This under representation of the Asian-American populous in the United States, is one of the many unintentional consequences from the lack of Asian-American political representation at all governmental levels.

But what correlation does Asian-American political representation have to do with the higher education admissions of Americans most elite universities? “Throughout US history, government offices at all levels have been structured so as to keep them mostly white, especially at or near the top. Thus, white government officials have the power to reproduce again and again old structures of racial inequality, including those central to United States’ schools and colleges. White students benefit from attending schools and colleges typically provided by these officials with more educational resources. Then they generally score higher on standardized college entrance tests that cater to them, then move onto more advantaged universities, and later enter the workforce where they typically have good networks to better jobs. Whites have been educationally, economically, and politically advantaged for all of US history.” Since Asian-Americans have been traditionally unrepresented in US political positions, they can’t craft legislation benefitting Asians or other minorities to dismantle the old white system in the United States. There has already been a comparison made earlier in this paper, between Jewish American discrimination in the Ivy Leagues in the early twentieth century and the current discrimination faced by Asian-American in the Ivy Leagues. Jerome Karabel is a professor of Sociology at the University of California at Berkeley, and a former Harvard alumnus. He wrote the 2006 book, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton*. Professor Karabel’s study of Jews and the Ivy League shows, it was only when Jews had gained political power that the Ivy Leagues stopped discriminating against them. So for Asian-Americans, it is crucial for them as a minority group to gain political power in order to eliminate racial discrimination in the Ivy Leagues.

**The Gate Keepers of Power in the United States**

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The Ivy League universities are America’s most elite academic institutions. They hold considerable power in determining, who becomes the most influential members of society for the fields of government, law, and big business. Historically these eight prestigious universities have been the gatekeepers of wealth, power, and knowledge in the United States. Through their extremely low acceptance rates and high tuition costs, the Ivy Leagues signal to the world, just how exclusive the membership is into their club of privilege. Graduates from the Ivy Leagues will be selected for high paying jobs, powerful leadership positions, and influential seats of government. Asian-Americans believe they are being held to a different academic standard than whites, or even other ethnic minorities. Since the Ivy League universities do not release their admissions data, this debate will never fully be concluded. In this research paper, I have debunked the Model Minority Myth and proven how affirmative action and the Asian Achievement Paradox have worked against Asian-Americans when it comes to applying to America’s most elite universities. Racial discrimination in Ivy League admissions has limited the amount of Asian-Americans entering these universities every year. The Ivy League’s racial quotas in admissions, as well as the pre-existing bamboo ceiling, will forever keep Asian-Americans from climbing to the top of the corporate latter, unless they can address the gap in effective training for high achieving Asian-Americans through professional training and development.
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