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The Miseducation of the Elite*

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ONE of the most widely accepted arguments in favor of affirmative action stems from a concern with diversifying the perspectives and voices of those who hold positions of power in society. If we accept the democratic principle that all who are affected by collective decisions should have the opportunity to influence their outcome,[1] then we ought to be concerned that representatives, who mediate such decisions in a representative democracy, should be drawn from all sectors of society. Although in the political philosophy literature much of the focus has been on elected representatives, there are many others who have a disproportionate amount of power in making their voices heard in the collective decision-making process: lawyers, lobbyists, doctors, journalists, academics, to name but a few. Historically, certain groups—racial minorities and women being central examples—have been systematically excluded from this elite. Consequently, members of marginalized groups have not only lacked political influence, but haven't been included as epistemic contributors to critical decision making.[2] In order to mitigate this exclusion, many have been rightly concerned with diversifying the elite so that it is more inclusive of the perspectives of members of historically marginalized groups. And, given the disproportionate role that highly selective colleges and universities play in constituting that elite, this has led to support for affirmative action in admissions to those educational institutions.[3]

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[1]Nadia Urbinati and Mark E. Warren, "The concept of representation in contemporary democratic theory," *Annual Review of Political Science,* 11 (2008), 387–412.

[2]Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[3]A version of this argument was used by the University of Michigan Law School in defending its use of race in admissions before the Supreme Court; see *Grutter* v. *Bollinger*, 539 US 306 (2003).

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Though this argument is compelling, it assumes that being educated in elite institutions does not undermine the capacity of members of oppressed communities to be representative of the marginalized sectors of society from which they are drawn. This is the assumption I reconsider in this article. Using social science evidence concerning the current state of higher education in the USA, I argue that an education at elite colleges and universities can often be diversity-undermining by leading to distancing, cultural mismatch, and silencing; these forces push members of marginalized communities who are educated in such institutions to become more like their privileged peers, undermining their capacity to diversify the elite. This evidence, I suggest, should lead us to a more complicated and nuanced understanding of the role that education can play in diversifying the elite.

I propose that we consider the educational experiences of the elite as a critical, yet often overlooked, factor in considering whether it is truly diverse. A student who receives an education in a socioeconomically and racially diverse mid-tier public university should be seen as contributing to diversity among the elite. I argue that doing so does not require that we sacrifice educational quality or expertise among the elite. The argument in this article does not put forward a revised legal or institutional framework for affirmative action. I argue for a revision in how we ought to conceive of diversity as a rationale in hiring and admissions. But if the argument is compelling, it could offer some guidance in how we ought to revise the current institutional and legal framework to better align with a broader notion of diversity that takes into account educational experience.[4]

I. EXCLUSION AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Diversity as a rationale in admissions and hiring is a response to the historical exclusion of members of marginalized groups from the elite. There are many ways that this exclusion continues to negatively impact members of marginalized groups, but two will be of central concern in this article. The first is that they lack descriptive representatives among the elite and, consequently, substantive influence over decisions that affect them. The second is that, in virtue of not having access to the credibility markers often associated with higher education and elite status, they are subject to various forms of epistemic injustice.

Descriptive representatives are those who in virtue of sharing some relevant features with members of a group are able to speak for some of the group's interests, concerns, or viewpoints. For example, a Latina Supreme Court justice in virtue of her ethnicity might share some experiences with other members of

[4]I do not mean to suggest that appealing to people's good intentions is sufficient to address this critical issue; institutional and legal reforms would be critical to implementing the revised notion of diversity I develop here. For example, my argument could offer support to Texas's Top Ten Percent rule. However, arguing for this claim is beyond the scope of this article. Thanks to an anonymous referee for requesting that I address this point.

the Latino community—xenophobia, structural discrimination, and so on—that enable her to better represent some of those interests than a justice who is not Latino. Skeptics of descriptive representation argue that: (1) there is no principled way of drawing the relevant groups, (2) there is no good reason to think that an individual in virtue of sharing certain qualities with members of a group is better able to represent their interests, and (3) the groups that are generally invoked in this context—women, Blacks, Latinos, and so on—are generally too diverse to genuinely share a set of interests.

In response, political philosophers and theorists have argued that: (1) we can specify groups in virtue of shared obstacles to accessing certain forms of power,[5] (2) although being a member of a group is not sufficient to be a good representative of a group, it does increase the likelihood that one will be better be able to represent its interests,[6] and (3) we can acknowledge and affirm the heterogeneity of groups while representing some set of shared concerns.[7] All of these responses are powerful, though certainly not definitive. However, it is important to recognize that, as David Plotke points out, "the opposite of representation is not participation. The opposite of representation is exclusion."[8] Therefore, for members of marginalized groups, although the aforementioned worries about descriptive representation are important, the more pressing worry is that no one might be representing their interests.

Miranda Fricker has argued that members of marginalized groups are often subject to epistemic injustice, a phenomenon in which their capacity as knowers is undermined due to prejudice and discrimination. In particular, Fricker suggests that one of the injustices that members of marginalized groups might suffer is that they are taken to be less credible or intelligible than they might otherwise be. Though Fricker often focuses on individual episodes of epistemic injustice, the account can quite readily be given a structural analysis—unequal access to certain educational institutions that are taken as imprimaturs of an "excellent education" leads to unequal access to credibility markers. As Elizabeth Anderson notes, "Injustices in the distribution of access to credibility markers undermine the epistemic standing of the disadvantage and block contributions to inquiry they could have made had they been able to participate on terms of equality with others."[9]

Lack of representation among the elite is a genuine concern for members of marginalized groups whose voices have been excluded from the decision-making

[5]Anne Phillips, *The Politics of Presence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[6]Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks represent Blacks and women represent women? A contingent 'yes'," *Journal of Politics,* 61 (1999), 628–57.

[7]Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Iris Marion Young, "Deferring group representation," *Nomos*, 39 (1997), 349–76; Linda Alcoff, "The problem of speaking for others," *Cultural Critique*, 20 (1991), 5–32.

[8]David Plotke, "Representation is democracy," *Constellations*, 4 (1997), 19–34, at p. 19.

[9]Elizabeth Anderson, "Epistemic justice as a virtue of social institutions," *Social Epistemology*, 26 (2012), 163–73.

process and whose status as knowers is undermined by lack of access to credibility markers. And if the elite is to include the perspectives of oppressed communities, opening up access to elite institutions of higher education for members of those communities is crucial. Affirmative action is often justified on these grounds, though there are also powerful meritocratic and redistributive arguments in support of it.[10]

Anderson has advanced an influential version of such an argument. She argues that elites should be responsive to the interests of all sectors of society. This requires that they: (1) be knowledgeable of what those interests are, (2) be motivated to serve and advocate on behalf of those interests, (3) have the technical expertise to advance those interests, and (4) have the ability to interact with people from different sectors of society.[11] Anderson argues that once we take this democratic requirement of responsiveness seriously, we must select membership into the elite from all sectors of society, including the least advantaged.[12] The advantaged, Anderson claims, are not in a good position to serve this representative function because they tend to segregate themselves into neighborhoods and schools with others who are also advantaged. When elites are drawn primarily from the advantaged sectors of society, they will lack (1), (2), and (4) above. Even though some of these deficits could be improved by exposing students to social science evidence concerning the interests of the least advantaged, Anderson argues that this might not be enough to adequately motivate the elites to serve those interests or to give them the epistemic access possessed by those who have had first-hand experiences of being disadvantaged.[13] We are more likely to have a genuinely representative elite if we constitute it by drawing from all sectors of society. She writes: "While there is no guarantee that each elite drawn from the ranks of the disadvantaged will be motivated to help those of their group, the availability of the motivational path of personal identification in addition to charity makes this more likely."[14] It is important to note here that, unlike elected representatives who choose to play this role and, arguably, incur an obligation in virtue of this, Anderson's argument relies on the claim that members of oppressed groups *are more likely* to represent those interests, not that they are obligated to do so.[15]

[10]My argument does not undermine these other sources of justification for affirmative action.

[11]Elizabeth Anderson, "Fair opportunity in education: a democratic equality perspective," *Ethics*, 117 (2007), 595–622.

[12]Some interpret Anderson as making the argument that we ought to admit members of oppressed groups for the benefit of those who are more privileged. Though I see some of what Anderson says as being consistent with this interpretation, I think the argument as I've laid it out here is more charitable.

[13]This argument intersects in important ways with work on epistemic injustice; see Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*.

[14]Anderson, "Fair opportunity in education," p. 611.

[15]In her book on integration, Anderson advances a racial-integration argument in favor of affirmative action, instead of a diversity-based argument. In what follows, I take myself to be challenging diversity-based arguments. See Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Though the problem of exclusion applies to many groups who have been historically marginalized—women, racial minorities, the poor—here I focus on the case of low-income, predominantly minority communities in the USA.[16] I do so because this group is, arguably, one of the least-advantaged within this country and because the social science research on their educational opportunities and experiences is quite robust. Furthermore, by focusing on this case, we can see more sharply a general problem with how the "diversity rationale" is often employed.

II. HOW ELITE UNIVERSITIES UNDERMINE DIVERSITY

Despite the widespread acknowledgment that elite educational institutions play a key role in constituting the elite, access to these colleges and universities is still largely captured by the wealthy. Economist Raj Chetty's pioneering work on upward mobility at universities across the USA shows us that a disproportionate number of students from upper-middle-class and wealthy families attend highly selective universities.[17] At the Ivy Plus colleges (those in the Ivy League plus the University of Chicago, MIT, Duke, and Stanford), there are more students from the top 1 per cent of the income distribution than from the bottom half.[18] Children whose families are in the top 1 per cent are 77 times more likely to attend an Ivy Plus school than those in the bottom quartile of the income scale.[19] This is a problem if we are concerned about representation among the elite, because these schools are "feeders" into institutions with disproportionate power and influence over decisions that affect us all, such as the Supreme Court, the *New York Times*, think tanks, and others.[20] This is why affirmative action advocates are insistent that Ivy Plus schools should admit more students from marginalized backgrounds. It is one of the few levers that we can push to make the elite more representative of society at large.

However, one of the central points of this article is that we cannot simply think of education at elite institutions as a black box into which students come and an educated elite emerges. We need to understand what happens to members of marginalized groups as they are *educated* at schools whose student bodies are predominantly made up of those who come from the wealthiest sectors of society.

[16]Even though the issues of race and class are separable, in point of fact, in the US, many low-income and working-class communities are also largely Black and Latino communities. However, much (though not all) of what I say can also be said about low-income rural white communities.

[17]Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, Emmanuel Saez, et al., "Mobility report cards: the role of colleges in intergenerational mobility" (2017), <http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/papers/coll_mrc_paper.pdf>.

[18]I don't know of comparable data for other countries, although in the UK Oxford and Cambridge also have a disproportionate number of students from the wealthiest families; see Sally Weale, Richard Adams, and Helena Bengtsson, "Oxbridge becoming less diverse as richest gain 80% of offers," *Guardian,* Oct. 19, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/19/oxbridge-becoming-less-diverse-as-richest-gain-80-of-offers>.

[19]Chetty et al., "Mobility report cards."

[20]Lauren A. Rivera, *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

A university education is not the same wherever it happens. In what follows, I rely on recent social science research on higher education to show that students from marginalized communities who are educated at elite universities are subject to powerful structural, cultural, and social forces that push them to become more and more like their wealthy peers. My argument focuses on higher education in the US, but the broader point, which has been stressed by sociologists for decades, is that the social and cultural environment within educational institutions matters greatly to how those institutions shape students.[21] This point is critical to understanding why education at institutions dominated by the most privileged sectors of society can be diversity-undermining.

A. Distancing

In the USA, there is a strong correlation between one's neighborhood and access to educational opportunities. A child born to a low-income family is much more likely to live in a neighborhood with other poor families and go to school with other poor children.[22] These schools tend to have lower graduating rates, college-attendance rates, and standardized test scores.[23] Black and Latino children are more likely to be born into low-income families and attend such schools. Consequently, for students born into marginalized communities, opportunities to enter the middle class and the elite are at a distance from the neighborhoods in which they are growing up.

Evidence suggests that literally moving away from poverty and closer to where better opportunities reside can be an effective strategy for upward mobility. Studies of voucher programs that enable poor black families to move to an integrated suburban neighborhood find that doing so significantly improves their lives in a variety of domains, including employment and education.[24] In fact, young people growing up in poor neighborhoods who strive to be upwardly mobile will often withdraw from their neighborhood, in many cases encouraged by their parents.[25] The correlation between distance and opportunity continues

[21]Pierre Bourdieu, "The forms of capital," J. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 241–58.

[22]Gary Orfield, Mark D. Bachmeier, David R. James, and Tamela Eitle, "Deepening segregation in American public schools: a special report from the Harvard project on school desegregation," *Equity and Excellence in Education,* 30, no. 2 (1997), 5–24; Gary Orfield, John Kucsera, and Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, "E pluribus … separation: deepening double segregation for more students," *Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles* (2012), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED535442.pdf>.

[23]Linda Darling-Hammond, "Unequal opportunity: race and education," *Brookings Review,* 16, no. 2 (1998), 28–32.

[24]James E. Rosenbaum, "Black pioneers—do their moves to the suburbs increase economic opportunity for mothers and children?", *Housing Policy Debate*, 2 (1991), 1179–213. It should be noted that this program was a challenge for some families because they still felt tied to their communities back home. See Xavier de Souza Briggs, Susan J. Popkin, and John Goering, *Moving to Opportunity: The Story of an American Experiment to Fight Ghetto Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[25]Kathryn Edin, Peter Rosenblatt, and Queenie Zhu, "'I do me': young black men and the struggle to resist the street," Orlando Patterson and Ethan Fosse (eds), *The Cultural Matrix: Understanding Black Youth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 229–51.

on to college. Caroline Hoxby and Sarah Turner have shown the ubiquity of a phenomenon they call "undermatching." They use this term to refer to high-achieving, low-income students who end up applying to less selective local public colleges instead of to the well-funded selective universities for which they are qualified.[26] The latter, thanks to generous scholarships and financial aid packages, would not only be cheaper, but have higher graduation rates and more student support services. And, as Chetty's research shows, the very few students from low-income communities who do make it into such schools are propelled into the highest echelons of the socioeconomic scale, an imperfect yet critical signal of the power these institutions hold as pathways into the elite.[27]

Those who succeed in entering the elite must traverse the distance between their communities and opportunity and, more often than not, stay on the other side of the divide. In the process, they change their social position in ways that make them importantly dissimilar to those with whom they grew up. Iris Marion Young suggests that a social perspective is constituted by "the way people interpret issues and events because of their structural social locations … [which] arise from group differentiations that exist in a society, collective attributions that have a cultural and practical meaning for the way people interact or the status that they have."[28] Members of oppressed groups are more likely to have epistemic access to the perspective of their community, in part by sharing a location within society's social structures.[29] But for those very few that ascend into the elite, the distance resulting from segregation erodes that perspective.

B. Cultural Mismatch

Distance is but one force that undermines the capacity of marginalized students to be representatives of their communities. Social scientists have recently shown a renewed, though cautious, interest in the ways in which culture plays a role in the entrenchment of disadvantage in oppressed communities. The caution stems from the ways in which cultural explanations of poverty have historically been misused and misrepresented in public discourse. Some have deployed them to depict poor Blacks and Latinos in ways that feed into problematic stereotypes of laziness and violence, while failing to acknowledge the diversity within those communities and the many values that are shared by the poor with those who are

[26]Caroline Hoxby and Sarah Turner, "Expanding college opportunities for high-achieving, low income students," Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research Discussion Paper 12-014 (2013), <http://www-siepr.stanford.edu/repec/sip/12-014.pdf>; Caroline M. Hoxby and Christopher Avery, "The missing 'one-offs': the hidden supply of high-achieving, low income students," Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, vol. 2013, no. 1 (2013), pp. 1–65.

[27]Chetty et al., "Mobility report cards."

[28]Young, "Deferring group representation," p. 365.

[29]It should be noted that Young argues that representation is inherently limited. I see my argument as sympathetic with this point.

better off.[30] Others have taken cultural explanations to shift blame away from structural factors such as poverty, unequal educational resources, residential segregation, and institutionalized racism to the cultural "deficiencies" of oppressed communities. But to accept that culture is one of the barriers in the path of upward mobility does not require us to deny that structural factors play a large and significant causal role, that there is cultural diversity within those communities, or that there is much that is shared across communities.

Many of these misconceptions stem from thinking of culture as a monolithic set of values that determine individual behavior.[31] Following sociologist Ann Swidler, we can instead think of culture as the different habits, repertoires, and styles that people use to interpret and frame their actions.[32] Culture provides us with shared frameworks through which we understand the world around us. Those frameworks might be shared with a variety of different groups, depending on a myriad of factors such as class, ethnicity, geographic location, age, and so on. Some might be inconsistent with each other, even within a community. And individuals can accept or reject different aspects of the frameworks available to them.

The cultural mismatch hypothesis is the claim that in the USA there is a difference between the culture prevalent in middle- and upper-middle-class, largely white, institutions—such as selective universities, corporations, and workplaces—and the culture prevalent in working-class or low-income communities. To reiterate, this is not to say that there is one monolithic culture in either the middle class or the working class, or that there is no cultural variation within each of these communities, or that any one individual subscribes to all elements of the culture in which he or she grew up. But, if the evidence is right, it does mean that there are differences in culture that can pose barriers to entry into the institutions in which opportunities to move into the elite are found.

Children born into low-income, often minority, communities are more likely to lack the "cultural capital" of the middle class.[33] These differences could

[30]Much of this came in the wake of the Moynihan Report. For a recent reassessment, see Daniel Geary, "The Moynihan Report: an annotated edition," *The Atlantic*, Sept. 14, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/the-moynihan-report-an-annotated-edition/404632/>. Also see Oscar Lewis, "The culture of poverty," *Scientific American,* 215, no. 4 (1966), 19–25.

[31]For a critique of the monolithic understanding of culture prevalent in political discussions of multiculturalism, see Anne Phillips, "What is 'culture'?," Barbara Arneil, Monique Deveaux, Rita Dhamoon, and Avigail Eisenberg (eds), *Sexual Justice/Cultural Justice: Critical Perspectives in Political Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 15–29.

[32]Ann Swidler, "Culture in action: symbols and strategies," *American Sociological Review*, 51 (1986), 273–86.

[33]The idea of cultural capital can be traced back to Bourdieu, "The forms of capital." Bourdieu's discussion focuses on cultural knowledge (e.g. about opera, French wine) that better explains cultural barriers in the French context. However, the germ of the idea of cultural capital has been reconceived by social scientists to suit the American context; see Annette Lareau and Elliot B. Weininger, "Cultural capital in educational research: a critical assessment," *Theory and Society*, 32 (2003), 567–606.

concern styles of interaction, for example, when and how to make eye contact, styles of dress, ways of speaking, and so on.[34] But some of these differences might go deeper and concern how to interact with authority figures such as teachers or doctors, how reliant one is on extended family, or how much one values competition.[35] Finally, there might be genuine disagreements concerning the relative importance of family, individual achievement, and financial success.

Psychologist Nicole Stephens and her colleagues have conducted several studies that lend support to the cultural-mismatch hypothesis.[36] They argue that first-generation college students often arrive on campus with an interdependent cultural model. According to this model, students understand the self in relationship to the needs and interests of their community. In contrast, they suggest, college students whose parents have gone to college and are middle or upper-middle class have an independent cultural model in which the self is understood as independent of others and free to act on individual preferences and interests. Many selective colleges, they argue, are organized around the independent model and, consequently, can be difficult places to navigate for students who come with an interdependent cultural model.[37]

These cultural differences appear to be malleable and affected by schooling and peer interaction.[38] Sociologist Anthony Jack studies the difference in college adjustment between low-income students who went to regular public school, the Doubly Disadvantaged, as opposed to low-income students who went to elite private schools through scholarships, the Privileged Poor.[39] His work offers a

[34]Programs that focus on preparing inner-city youth for the workplace often focus on changing some of these superficial styles of interaction; see Orlando Patterson and Jacqueline Rivers, "'Try on the outfit and just see how it works': the psychocultural responses of disconnected youth to work," Patterson and Fosse (eds), *The Cultural Matrix*, pp. 415–43.

[35]See Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[36]Nicole M. Stephens, Stephanie A. Fryberg, Hazel Rose Marcus, et al., "Unseen disadvantage: how American universities' focus on independence undermines the academic performance of first-generation college students," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 102 (2012), 1178–97.

[37]Although the difference between these two cultural models seems more complex than the distinction between independent and interdependent models (e.g., it doesn't explain the high achievement of some Asian-American students who are thought to come from an interdependent cultural background), the research does suggest that first-generation college students confront different cultural barriers from their more privileged peers.

[38]They also appear to be partially explained by the parenting styles to which children are exposed. The influential work of sociologist Annette Lareau on the parenting styles of working- and middle-class families shows important differences in how working- and middle-class children grow up. She argues that whereas middle-class children are being educated to interact with the world of middle-class institutions—in particular, authority figures—working-class children are developing socially alongside other working-class children in a less structured environment; Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods*.

[39]Anthony Abraham Jack, *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019); Anthony Abraham Jack, "Culture shock revisited: the social and cultural contingencies to class marginality," *Sociological Forum,* 29 (2014), 453–7; Anthony Abraham Jack, "(No) harm in asking: class, acquired cultural capital, and academic engagement at an elite university," *Sociology of Education,* 89 (2015), 1–19; Anthony Abraham Jack, "Crisscrossing boundaries: variation in experiences with class marginality among lower-income, Black undergraduates at an elite college," Elizabeth M. Lee and Chaise LaDousa (eds), *College Students' Experiences of Power and Marginality: Sharing Spaces and Negotiating Differences* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 91–109.

fascinating insight into the difference that one's social experience in high school can make to one's college experience. The Privileged Poor, despite sharing similar socioeconomic backgrounds with the Doubly Disadvantaged, find college less alienating and are more at ease socially. This can be explained by the acculturation they experience while at private school, but also by that which happens outside of school. The Privileged Poor report spending most of their time socializing in the largely white, middle-class neighborhoods in which their private-school friends live.[40] This cultural knowledge enhances their ability to navigate college successfully. Jack's research shows that the Privileged Poor find it easier to develop relationships with professors and report more positive interactions with administrators and faculty than the Doubly Disadvantaged. Shamus Khan's excellent ethnography of an exclusive private boarding school offers further support to the argument that much of an elite education involves learning to exhibit a type of social ease that serves that elite well in college and in corporate boardrooms.[41]

If the evidence presented so far is right, cultural mismatch is one barrier that students from disadvantaged communities face in entering and succeeding in elite colleges and universities. The evidence also suggests that, as students make their way through the sorts of educational institutions that feed into elite positions in society, they begin to understand, internalize, and become adept at negotiating the cultural norms that dominate those elite institutions.[42] In fact, Jack finds that almost half of low-income Black students at selective colleges and universities are Privileged Poor.[43] Colleges and universities are not only organized around upper-middle-class norms, they are much more likely to admit students from marginalized communities who have already been acculturated into them. As Jack notes, "colleges hedge their admissions bets: they diversify their student bodies by drawing from old sources."[44]

C. Silencing

Members of marginalized groups who are in educational institutions dominated by students from wealthier families are in a precarious position. Succeeding is critical to their ability to access opportunities that are not available to others in their community—a life that is more financially secure than that of their parents and a shot at entering the elite. Yet, success involves navigating a social environment that is very different from the one in which they grew up. As we have seen in the previous subsection, sometimes students adapt by internalizing

[40]Jack, "Crisscrossing boundaries," p. 89.
[41]Shamus Rahman Khan, *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St Paul's School* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[42]There are limits to this process, in particular when it comes to career choice; see Maya A. Beasley, *Opting Out: Losing the Potential of America's Young Black Elite* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
[43]Jack, *The Privileged Poor*, p. 10.
[44]Ibid.

some of the norms and expectations of the dominant group. This might involve a genuine change in perspective, values, and interests. But, sometimes, it might involve not drawing attention to one's background, by staying silent.

Kristie Dotson calls this kind of silencing "testimonial smothering," and she suggests it occurs when potential testimony is taken to be "unsafe" in the context of utterance, either because the content could quite literally cause harm to the speaker or her group or because the audience is unable to accurately understand the testimony the speaker is offering.[45] For students from marginalized communities, elite universities create a context in which the stakes are quite high and in which their status as knowers and contributors is very likely to be misunderstood. Consider, then, the situation of a low-income Black student in a sociology course who listens to a professor give a lecture on low-income minority neighborhoods. Based on her experience growing up in such a neighborhood, she thinks there is something amiss in the professor's characterization. Yet, in bringing this up in a class that is composed mostly of people from upper-middle-class and wealthy backgrounds, including in all likelihood the professor, the student risks drawing attention to her class and race, being misunderstood because of her audience's lack of experience in neighborhoods like hers, or being seen as a weak student who doesn't understand the course material. It would be reasonable for such a student to stay silent, but in so doing the class has been deprived of an important epistemological corrective. Of course, I do not intend to suggest that this is the student's fault, but rather to illustrate the problematic dynamics at play in elite institutions.

The conditions that lead to silencing are not confined to educational institutions, but can also be seen in workplaces or other social settings in which minorities feel that their status is potentially a hurdle to being accepted or understood. Kathryn Neckerman and her collaborators conducted research with middle-class black families which show that "middle-class blacks may use conversational ploys, assume interests or demeanor to put white acquaintances or co-workers at ease."[46] But it is precisely this kind of dynamic, though useful for minorities who wish to succeed in potentially hostile workplaces and educational institutions, which is in tension with the impetus for diverse representation.

Students from marginalized backgrounds who attend universities that feed into the elite are much more likely to be subject to diversity-undermining factors such as distancing, cultural mismatch, and silencing. One might argue that these factors rely on a static and inaccurate description of the process by which students from oppressed communities transform during college. In fact, evidence suggests that many of these students succeed by adopting a form of "cultural

[45]Kristie Dotson, "Tracking epistemic violence, tracking practices of silencing," *Hypatia,* 26 (2011), 236–57.

[46]Kathryn M. Neckerman, Prudence Carter, and Jennifer Lee, "Segmented assimilation and minority cultures of mobility," *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 22 (1999), 945–65, at p. 953.

code-switching," that is, they adapt to the cultural norms and expectations of the context they are in.[47] In their home communities, they switch how they talk, what they say, and how they interact with others, while at school or work they adapt to the ways of talking and interacting of the white middle-class.[48] By being able to participate in both worlds, code-switchers might be able to gain the benefits of upward mobility while being able to represent their communities.[49]

There are two central problems with this potentially tidy solution. The first is that it fails to acknowledge that because educational and career opportunities are to be found in spaces dominated by the more advantaged, code-switchers have to spend more time in those spaces than in their own communities. This has an effect on the students' perspective, as one of the Privileged Poor students Jack interviews explains: "You get in places and you start to feel privileged. Especially with me coming from boarding school. I've already been infected …You get spoiled. You don't even think about it. Sometimes I don't even think of myself as a low-income student."[50] Second, this model doesn't address concerns about silencing. Code-switchers navigate both cultures by adapting to the context. This is a successful strategy, in part, because they keep some of their preferences, ways of talking, and interests hidden when they are in spaces where they might feel otherwise marginalized. As Charlotte, a middle-class black woman quoted by Karyn Lacy, articulates it: "We live in this world … you have two faces. So you know how to present yourself in the white world, and you present yourself in the black world as yourself."[51] Therefore, even if code-switchers maintain some of the interests and perspectives tied to their group membership, this will not help address the worries about exclusion if they are unable to voice those perspectives outside of their communities.

There are several forces at play in elite educational institutions in the USA. The first makes students who have gone through the educational process better representatives. Students learn the necessary skills and knowledge to become experts in their professional domains. This expertise can allow them to better pursue and advocate for the interests of their community. The second makes students who have gone through the educational process potentially worse representatives. Students are in social contexts in which success often requires them to literally distance themselves from their community, to change their

[47]See Prudence Carter, *Keepin' It Real: School Success beyond Black and White* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[48]Prudence Carter, in her ethnographic research of urban Black youth, observes that "Inside the school or the office, [Cultural Straddlers] read the different cultural codes and exchange their own 'black' capital for dominant forms to signal 'intelligence' and similarity to the people in charge who might have devalued their black cultural capital. Once they return home, however, many exchanged their dominant cultural capital for the black capital and their communities' acceptance of them as culturally competent and authentically black"; Carter, *Keepin' It Real*, p. 63.

[49]Jennifer M. Morton, "Cultural code-switching: straddling the achievement gap," *Journal of Political Philosophy,* 22 (2014), 259–81.

[50]Quoted in Jack, "Culture shock revisited," p. 466.

[51]Karyn Lacy, *Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 91.

perspectives with respect to oppressive structures, and to silence their group-based interests. These forces undermine the likelihood that an elite education will enable marginalized students to diversity the perspectives of the elite.

III. CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVES

The process by which individuals join the elite can be more or less conducive to representation. As Alexander Guerrero has argued, a legislature selected by a lottery is a more democratic alternative to an elected one in part because it increases the odds of having truly representative lawmakers.[52] However, we have an interest in having educated elites, not just those in elected office but those who write for newspapers, serve in the courts, and do research in think tanks.[53] Yet, education is by its very nature in tension with representation because, unlike a lottery, it is meant to take an individual and transform him or her. The problem is that educational institutions, as we have seen, are also social institutions that often replicate unjust hierarchies and oppress the voices of minority communities. In an ideally just world, educational institutions could be transformative without being oppressive in this way. However, in the non-ideal world in which we live, the intrinsically transformative aspects of education, particularly in elite institutions, are not easily disentangled from those that are tied to the unjust background structures that permeate the campus. In this section, I will consider various responses one might offer to the challenges I have raised for elite education in the previous section. The inadequacy of these responses will provide the basis for the alternative I suggest in the following section.

A. Accept Tension as Inherent

Some might argue that it is a fool's errand to turn to higher education as a channel for increasing representation. We should focus on changing the fundamental economic and political structures that lead to inequalities in access instead. I am sympathetic to this critique. As long as we have a highly segregated and unequal K–12 educational system and profound and concentrated poverty in some communities, there is a limit to what universities and colleges can do to mitigate such deep injustice. Yet, I'm skeptical that we can change current social, economic, and political structures to be more just without the participation of the voices of oppressed communities among those who hold influence over those decisions. However, doing so requires that we shed the myopic focus on elite universities and colleges that pervades the debate on higher education.[54] Even though we

[52]Alexander A. Guerrero, "Against elections: the lottocratic alternative," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 42 (2014), 135–78.

[53]In fact, Guerrero's alternative depends on there being such expert elites to educate those who are serving in the legislature.

[54]A notable exception here is Lawrence Blum, "Affirmative action, diversity, and racial justice: reflections from a diverse, non-elite university," *Theory and Research in Education,* 14 (2016), 348–62.

can't cleanly disentangle the intrinsically transformative aspects of education from the diversity-undermining effects particular educational institutions have on students, some educational institutions do better than others. We shouldn't give up on higher education so blithely.

B. Lottery Above a Threshold

In his book, *Why Does Inequality Matter?*, Tim Scanlon suggests that admissions into elite universities should be done on the basis of a lottery above a certain threshold.[55] The thought is that this might disincentivize some of the more troubling and inegalitarian parental behavior that aims to consolidate privilege and give wealthy children an unfair advantage in college admissions. Such a policy might also go some way towards mitigating the worries I have raised. But there are two challenges that arise for this solution.

The first is that, depending on how the threshold is set, the resulting student population might still be disproportionately drawn from higher-income families. Inequalities in schooling and access to extracurricular academic resources would still lead to more children from wealthier families meeting the cut-off. And, more importantly, research shows that children from low-income families often do not even apply to highly selective colleges and universities for which they are academically qualified, preferring to attend local public schools and universities.[56] Consequently, the pool of students who meets the lottery cut-off and applies is likely to still be highly skewed towards those who come from wealthier families.[57]

A second reason to be skeptical of the lottery as a solution is that, although it would most likely be an improvement in terms of the diversity of the student body, it does not by itself guarantee that the social and cultural dynamics on campus will not continue to be diversity-undermining. Two educational institutions with similar student demographics might exhibit entirely different social dynamics: one that fosters a diversity of perspectives and one that doesn't. The internal social and educational mechanisms within a school—how students interact socially, how they interact with professors, what they're reading in class, and how discussions are conducted—all contribute to the diversity-undermining factors described in the previous section. We can imagine a highly selective university that admits students via a lottery and then develops a track for "honors" students that attracts the wealthiest students in virtue of the kind of application mechanism used to enter such a program. Alternatively, we can

[55]T. M. Scanlon, *Why Does Inequality Matter?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 70.

[56]Hoxby and Avery, "The missing 'one-offs'"; Hoxby and Turner, "Expanding college opportunities for high-achieving, low income students."

[57]As an anonymous referee helpfully points out, a difference in the admissions policy of elite colleges might change the admission behavior of highly qualified, low-income students. And if they are more likely to apply under a threshold policy than under the current one, then the pool would be more diverse. I grant that this might happen. However, a reason cited by many students who are undermatching is that they prefer to stay close to home. This should lead us to expect a significant number of high-achieving, low-income students who still do not apply to the elite institutions simply because of distance.

imagine a university in which students sit in very large lectures, but only some students are savvy enough to make use of office hours to develop relationships with the professors. In fact, these are often the mechanisms by which selective universities (and less selective ones) continue to marginalize the low-income students they do admit.[58] A lottery would go some way to mitigating some of the worries that I have raised by changing the student body, but it is important to understand that the issues raised in the previous section go deeper than student demographics.

I do not wish to deny that elite educational institutions should do more to foster demographic diversity and to change diversity-undermining cultural and social forces.[59] And given the tendency of employers to favor students from those institutions, it is important that they do so.[60] Yet, in considering the lottery above a threshold proposal, we see more clearly why the focus on the demographics of elite institutions is limited. First, the sector of higher education occupied by such institutions is quite small compared to that served by non-elite educational institutions that do much of the work of educating members of marginalized communities. Second, changes in demographics might be necessary, but are certainly not sufficient to mitigate the diversity-undermining forces that permeate educational institutions.

C. Draw Elites From Non-Elite Universities

A final proposal that gets closer to the one I will offer in the next section is to rethink where we are drawing elites from. Why not, one might ask, draw elites from community colleges and non-selective colleges? These schools are the ones attended by the vast majority of students from marginalized communities, which might mitigate some of the worries I have raised about silencing and cultural mismatch.[61] And given that highly qualified, low-income students who attend less-selective colleges and universities tend to attend ones that are close to home, this might alleviate some of the worries about distancing.[62]

The problem with this proposal is that it reintroduces a possible tension between expertise and diversity.[63] One of the insights of Anderson's argument is that, by admitting a diverse group of students to elite universities, students will

[58]Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Laura T. Hamilton, *Paying for the Party* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). Thanks to an anonymous referee for urging me to acknowledge this.

[59]See Natasha K. Warikoo, *The Diversity Bargain: And Other Dilemmas of Race, Admissions, and Meritocracy at Elite Universities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[60]See Rivera, *Pedigree*.

[61]Anthony P. Carnevale and Jeff Strohl, "Separate and unequal: how higher education reinforces the intergenerational reproduction of white racial privilege" (Georgetown Public Policy Institute, 2013), <http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/Separate&Unequal.FR.pdf>.

[62]About 1 in 4 college students lives with family at home to save money; National Center for Education Statistics, "Profile of undergraduate students: attendance, distance and remedial education, degree program and field of study, demographics, financial aid, financial literacy, employment, and military status 2015–16" (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

[63]Many thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this point.

gain the expertise that comes from being educated at institutions with considerable resources alongside students from different backgrounds. The resulting elite, both those from marginalized communities and those born to privilege, gain from having such an educational experience. And though we care about having a representative elite, we also care about having an elite that has the requisite knowledge and skills to be good lawyers, doctors, journalists, and so on. Unfortunately, there is a lot of variability in the kind of education received by students who attend college. Some for-profit colleges, for example, are now infamous for their predatory approach to attracting low-income students, whom they then fail to provide with adequate support, as reflected in their high attrition rates.[64] Furthermore, we are starting to see the same kind of socioeconomic segregation at the level of higher education as we see in K–12, with some schools enrolling a disproportionate number of low-income students.[65] This means that some students who attend non-selective colleges and universities might not get a sufficiently good education or exposure to people from different socioeconomic levels. We need a more nuanced measure to track the right convergence of educational quality and diversity-amplifying educational experience.

IV. RETHINKING ELITE EDUCATION

In the previous section, I argued that we should not simply accept that the diversity-undermining features we see in elite education are a necessary part of being an educated elite. Yet, solutions that focus on elite universities ignore the fact that many highly qualified students from marginalized sectors decide to attend local public colleges and universities and that the internal dynamics at elite universities might still be diversity-undermining even as their student body changes. But simply drawing the elite from the kind of non-selective colleges and universities that many students from marginalized communities attend raises genuine worries that we are sacrificing expertise for the sake of diversity. If we care about constituting a truly democratically responsive and epistemically diverse elite, we need to take seriously the educational experience of its members as a criterion. Simply accepting elite universities as having a monopoly on a good education is not only demeaning to the educational work done by universities and colleges that educate a majority of low-income students, but it also ignores what is to be gained from being educated in an institution that is not dominated by the wealthiest families. My suggestion is that we use the valuable evidence offered by social scientists to help us home in on those colleges and universities that offer both an excellent education and a diversity-amplifying educational environment.

For example, we might look to universities and colleges that provide a good education to a truly diverse student body by focusing on those that raise the

[64]Sandy Baum and Kathleen Payea, "Trends in for-profit postsecondary education: enrollment, prices, student aid and outcomes," *College Board*, 2 (2011), <https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/trends-2011-for-profit-postsecondary-ed-outcomes-brief.pdf>.

[65]Carnevale and Strohl, "Separate and unequal."

economic prospects of the least-advantaged students they educate. Such universities are less likely to be captured by the wealthy, while still providing an excellent undergraduate education. Raj Chetty and his collaborators have developed a college mobility report card that favorably evaluates those colleges that admit many students from the bottom of the socioeconomic scale and propels them to the very top.[66] Presumably, they do this by giving those students the skills and knowledge they need to have successful careers. Of course, moving up the socioeconomic ladder is an imperfect measure of the quality of one's education, but it does suggest that some schools do almost as well as the very elite at providing students from low-income backgrounds with a remarkably good education in a much more socioeconomically and racially diverse context.

However, it would be a mistake to simply rely on the college mobility report card to tell us which schools are doing a better job of providing a diversity-amplifying education. Although Chetty's work in this area has been groundbreaking, it has its own set of shortcomings as an evaluative tool. For example, we might be more interested in average mobility or in the average achievement of the least advantaged.[67] Furthermore, Caroline Hoxby and Sarah Turner argue that focusing on mobility from the bottom to the top leads to problematic incentives for colleges and universities that are worried about diversifying their student body. They show that it leads some schools to favor admitting students immediately below the Pell Grant cut-off, while admitting fewer students who are just above it, even though both of these students are arguably low-income. They suggest instead that we consider whether a school is drawing students equally from the various echelons that constitute its relevant pool of applicants.[68] But even if we find a better measure than the college mobility report card, the arguments I have presented should lead us to reject that as a sufficient criterion for representation. We need to know more about the internal dynamics of a school to find out whether silencing, cultural mismatch, and distancing are more or less prevalent. This would require qualitative evidence alongside the quantitative measures that Chetty, Hoxby, and Turner are focused on.

My point in relying on these social scientists' work here is simply to point out that an understanding of the dichotomy between expertise and diversity that leads us to think that the best hope for a diverse elite comes from focusing on admissions into the most elite universities is mistaken. We can rethink the idea of an "elite education" to include a concern for diversity and expertise by using the rich social science evidence on higher education to identify those institutions that provide a good education, but that are also accessible to those from the more marginalized sectors of society. An employer who is concerned with hiring with an eye to diversity, for example, might look at a degree from the University of Texas,

[66]Chetty et al., "Mobility report cards."
[67]Thanks to Luc Bovens for helping me see this point.
[68]Caroline M. Hoxby and Sarah Turner, "Measuring opportunity in US higher education," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper, Series 25479 (2019).

El Paso (one of the schools singled out by the College Mobility Report Card) as an asset on this front, rather than focusing exclusively on the demographics of the applicant.

This is not to say that gender and race do not matter when thinking about diversity. The perspectives of those who have been racialized and gendered provide a much-needed corrective to elites who haven't had experiences of racial or gender discrimination.[69] But the educational experiences of those in the elite matter as well. An elite that is educated largely in schools that have been captured by the wealthy is much more subject to the diversity-undermining factors outlined in Section III. This makes it potentially less representative and more subject to epistemic blind spots. I accept that a consequence of this argument is that a middle-class, white, male student who attends the University of Texas, El Paso, for example, has something to offer an employer concerned with diversity, despite his race, economic background, and gender. But I think this is the right conclusion to draw. Such a student will have been educated alongside the children of Latino immigrants, working-class mothers going back to school, and janitors taking night classes. He will have had an educational experience that is very unlike that of an Ivy League graduate. This is what taking a diversity-amplifying educational experience seriously would entail.

V. OBJECTIONS

My focus in this article has been on criticizing the way that the diversity rationale has led to a focus on admissions to "elite" universities. I have suggested that because of the ways in which such universities are dominated by the wealthy, even when they admit students from marginalized sectors of societies, those students are subject to diversity-undermining pressures. Yet, my argument hasn't only been critical. The status quo is exclusionary. Though some might worry that the idea of representation itself serves to legitimize an elite that continues to marginalize the powerless,[70] such a critique does not address the question of how to mitigate exclusion, given that we have a system in which elites, who tend to come from the most privileged sectors of society, hold disproportionate power. Any critique of representation has to be motivated, in part, by the suggestion of better alternatives. This article is an exercise in non-ideal theory that suggests one way of addressing this question—that we assess a diverse elite by considering the educational experiences of its members. Unfortunately, I cannot fully spell out the details of this proposal here, but I do want to consider a few objections that will help clarify its contours.

[69]Sally Haslanger, "Gender and race: (what) are they? (What) do we want them to be?", *Noûs*, 34 (2000), 31–55.

[70]Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this question. I would have to say much more than I can say here to give this critique its due.

A. Why Higher Education?

It might be argued that my argument simply pushes the issue to the workplace. After all, won't the lawyers, doctors, and journalists who emerge from universities enter a workplace in which the same diversity-undermining forces are at play?

To respond to this objection, we need to first note what a formative time college is in a young person's life. This is when young people start the process of establishing their own individual trajectory. For many professionals, college is when their interests are shaped and their career paths set. Students enter college with the expectation that they will be learning and growing in a number of ways. Yet, students are still subject to the authority of professors and administrators who hold significant power over their future. And, for students from marginalized backgrounds, this vulnerability is magnified. Many are incurring debt and making a number of other sacrifices in order to succeed at college.[71] The risk of dropping out, indebted, with no path into the middle class looms.[72] The openness and vulnerability that mark their experience of college makes the diversity-undermining dynamics during this period of a person's life more fraught.

I do not deny that these dynamics are also at work in many workplaces and professional settings. This is a serious concern for members of marginalized groups in virtually all spheres in which they are in the minority. However, a college graduate who has alternatives and good professional prospects is in a less vulnerable position than a high-school or college student. Evidence suggests that attending college can have effects on a student's subsequent confidence, independence from authority, and leadership.[73] Of course, if someone works for years in a workplace that isn't diverse and which has diversity-undermining social and cultural dynamics (or one that is very diverse and has diversity-amplifying social and cultural dynamics), this will have an effect on their social position and knowledge. But this only serves to bolster the argument; focusing on demographics exclusively, without paying adequate attention to whether someone has had formative experiences in diversity-amplifying contexts, misunderstands what representation requires. This argument also offers us a reason to criticize the practice of elite universities which draw a disproportionate number of the low-income Black students they admit from exclusive private schools. These

[71]Sara Goldrick-Rab, *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[72]It is well established that the unemployment rate for low-income students without a college degree is much higher than for those with a college degree; see Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainement, 2016" (2016), <https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm>. College completion is one of the major issues confronting higher education in the US, in particular for low-income students; see William G. Bowen and Michael S. McPherson, *Lesson Plan: An Agenda for Change in American Higher Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[73]Matthew J. Mayhew, Ernest T. Pascarella, Nicholas A. Bowman, et al., *How College Affects Students: 21st-Century Evidence that Higher Education Works*, vol. 3 (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

universities are not adequately valuing the diversity-amplifying potential of the educational experiences students they admit bring to campus.

B. Leveling Down

Some might worry that my argument requires that we level down the expertise of the elite.[74] Debra Satz has argued, in the context of K–12 education, that aiming for equality might require us to level down on educational goods which, as a society, we should want to encourage. She suggests that this is a reason to focus on educational adequacy rather than equality. My proposal could be taken as a suggestion that we admit less-qualified applicants into the elite. An employer who takes my criterion on board would look more favorably on a comparable candidate from Cal State Los Angeles than on one who went to Princeton. Now, of course, a student who went to Princeton has access to many educational resources—well-resourced labs, famous professors, and excellent libraries—that someone who attends Cal State Los Angeles does not. But there are other elements of their educational experience that are lacking—precisely those that have to do with knowledge of the interests and perspectives of the more marginalized sectors of society. Consequently, from the perspective of the diversity criterion, they are *more* qualified in critical ways than the Princeton applicant.

My argument concerns diversity that aims to mitigate lack of democratic representation and epistemic injustice. I am not arguing that this consideration trumps other concerns that an employer might have in making a decision about whom to hire. What I'm suggesting is that employers, and others who are taking diversity into account, consider an applicant's educational experiences as a relevant factor not only in terms of its contribution to their expertise in some narrow professional domain, but also in terms of how diversity-amplifying it has been.

C. Overvaluing Diversity

It might be suggested that in so far as education is pushing students towards a common culture, this is to be celebrated rather than lamented. Having a common culture serves an important role in fostering civic society.[75] The objector might suggest that underlying my argument is an appeal to a misleading liberal neutrality on cultural diversity that essentializes the culture of groups and reinforces problematic divisions in society. Though I do believe that a commitment to liberalism should make us wary of blithely accepting appeals to the need for a homogenous culture, one need not accept this claim to see the force of my argument.

[74]Debra Satz, "Equality, adequacy, and education for citizenship," *Ethics,* 117 (2007), 623–48; Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift, "Educational equality versus educational adequacy: a critique of Anderson and Satz," *Journal of Applied Philosophy,* 26 (2009), 117–28.

[75]See Stephen Macedo, *Diversity and Distrust: Civic Education in a Multicultural Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), ch. 1.

The cultural mismatch between oppressed communities and middle-class educational institutions and workplaces is a reality that affects the ability of oppressed communities to have their voices heard among the elite. I have not assumed that this division is good. My point simply has been that educational institutions in which individual members of oppressed communities are syphoned off into the elite perpetuate this division rather than undermine it. This, I have suggested, makes the elites problematically unrepresentative. Those who insist on the need for a common culture should focus on changing the sources of this cultural mismatch—residential segregation on the basis of class and race, unequal access to quality schooling, and the lack of truly common schools at the K–12 level—rather than on defending assimilation of the few into the culture of the elite.

D. Epistemic Injustice Reconsidered

It might be argued that if members of marginalized groups join the elite through the path I have suggested—diversity-amplifying colleges and universities—then they might be subject to epistemic injustice in their workplaces.[76] That is, their knowledge might not be recognized or acknowledged as such. In fact, one might take me to have argued that some students from marginalized groups who do not attend elite universities have been subject to a form of epistemic injustice. If my argument is right, they do have knowledge that their more privileged peers lack, but which is not recognized as such.

I do not mean to suggest that, if my proposal is taken seriously, members of marginalized groups will not be subject to epistemic injustice in the workplace. Rather, I'm proposing that we need to think about the social and cultural forces at play in educational institutions that educate members of the elite as a critical factor in contributing to diversity. Of course, some might still wrongly fail to recognize the value in such educational experiences, as some fail to recognize knowledge when it comes from racial minorities or women, but that doesn't make the critique any less apt.

VI. CONCLUSION

A Supreme Court that is composed, as the current one is, entirely of Ivy League graduates is not as representative as it could be, even if it numbers among its ranks an African-American man, a Latina woman, and a Jewish woman. The suggestion at the heart of this article is that it would be even more representative if among its ranks it also had graduates from Cal State Los Angeles, the City University of New York, or Texas A&M. There is no guarantee in each case that this sort of diversity leads to more representation, as there are no guarantees that an African-American Supreme Court justice gives voice to the interests that

[76]Thanks to an anonymous referee for urging me to consider this objection.

animate the African-American community. But the diversity rationale in favor of affirmative action is most persuasive when it is about the likelihood of increasing representation among the elite. Educational experiences that are diversity-amplifying are an important part of this much needed corrective to exclusion.

Jane Mansbridge suggests that descriptive representation, in political office, is particularly important when there is a history of dominance and subordination that breeds mistrust in members of some groups. In such cases, the descriptive representative who has shared "a set of common experiences and the outward signs of having live through these experiences"[77] is better able to communicate and restore trust with members of those historically oppressed communities. Elizabeth Anderson suggests that combatting epistemic injustice involves all groups having access to legitimate markers of credibility.[78] However, when elite educational institutions have, in effect, been captured by the wealthiest sectors of society and function to syphon off the most talented away from their communities, trust is imperiled and their claim to credibility undermined.

Educational institutions are complex human organizations. Ideally, they function to develop deep knowledge and expertise. But they are also a reflection of the unjust power relationships that exist outside of their walls. This makes education a double-edged sword for members of oppressed communities. It is important to understand the role that structural factors play here. Residential segregation on the basis of class and race, lack of opportunities for middle-class jobs in low-income communities, underfunded and chronically failing school systems within those communities, and a fractured relationship with the police and other public authorities all play a role in exacerbating the gulf that students have to cross in order to access educational opportunities for advancement. Furthermore, these factors also play a role in keeping the few who are upwardly mobile on the other side once they have made it.

Educational institutions ought to be able to carry out the function of developing students' talents, knowledge, and expertise without replicating unjust power relationships. Under more just structural conditions, educational institutions could perform this function better. Under the unjust conditions we are in, some educational institutions reinforce and exacerbate those unjust power relationships, while others do better on this score. I have argued that the democratic argument for diversity in higher education should lead us to think about educational experience as a relevant diversity-amplifying factor. This will require that we give public non-elite universities their due.

[77]Mansbridge, "Should Blacks represent Blacks and women represent women?", p. 641.
[78]Anderson, "Epistemic justice as a virtue of social institutions."