

Diversity in the United States Power Elite

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In his classic sociological analysis The Power Elite, published in 1956, sociologist C. Wright Mills depicted a group of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant men who ran the corporate, political and military elites in the United States. This article looks at this power elite 40 years later to consider the extent to which diversity has occurred. Each of these three institutions (the corporate, the political, and the military) is examined to see if Jews, women, African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and homosexuals have penetrated into the highest circles. The patterns that appear across all categories of newcomers are discussed, as is the extent to which the arrival of some newcomers has led to changes in the behavior of the power elite.

Dans son analyse sociologique classique, The Power Elite, publiée en 1956, le sociologue C. Wright Mills décrivait un groupe d'hommes blancs anglo-saxons protestants qui dirigeaient les élites politique, militaire et celle des entreprises aux États-Unis. L'auteur examine cette élite du pouvoir quarante ans après pour voir dans quelle mesure la diversité s'est installée. Chacune des trois institutions (les entreprises, le politique et le militaire) est examinée pour voir si les juifs, les femmes, les Afro-américains, les Latinos, les Américains asiatiques et les homosexuels ont pénétré dans les cercles les plus élevés. Les profils qui apparaissent dans toutes les catégories de nouveaux venus sont analysés de même que la mesure dans laquelle l'arrivée de certains nouveaux venus apporte des changements dans le comportement de l'élite du pouvoir.

At the most superficial glance—let's say, based on the faces that appear on one's television screen—it might seem that there is now complete diversity in the United States power elite. One sees Colin Powell, an African-American man, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest position in the country's military establishment, serving as the Secretary of State in George W. Bush's administration. Madeleine Albright,

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Secretary of State in the Clinton administration, is not only a woman (which she has always known) but is of Jewish heritage (which she only discovered a few years ago). Roberto Goizueta, the former chief executive officer of Coca Cola, was a Cuban immigrant.

Only slightly less superficial observations have led many journalists to proclaim that the old "establishment" is dead and that today's diverse power elite is evidence that anyone can make it. The US, they proudly assert, has become the meritocracy that has long been its ideal, providing equal opportunity for all. But is this really the case?

In 1956, Oxford University Press published *The Power Elite*. This academic book, written by the iconoclastic leftist sociologist C. Wright Mills, became an overnight sensation, triggering public debate and spirited reviews across the political spectrum.¹ In it Mills argued that three institutions had come to dominate life in the US, and that the people who ran those three institutions held an inordinate amount of power. He referred to these three spheres of institutional power as the corporate elite, the political elite, and the military elite, and in combination they constituted what he called "the power elite." On the first page of *The Power Elite*, Mills wrote the following: "Some men come to occupy positions in American society from which they can look down upon, so to speak, and by their decisions mightily affect, the everyday worlds of ordinary men and women" (p. 3). As is evident, those who occupied the most powerful positions at that time were men, not women. They were also white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (or, as they have come to be called, WASPs), and Mills' careful study of their backgrounds revealed that they came from the upper third of the class structure. He did not speculate on their sexual orientation, but his silence on the matter indicates that he assumed that if any were homosexual they would try their best to prevent it from being known.

For the past 25 years, in collaboration with my friend and coauthor G. William Domhoff, a professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz, I have been studying the process by which the power elite takes in new members. We started in the late 1970s by looking at Jews who had entered the corporate elite. Had Jews really made it to the top? If so, did they remain Jewish when they got there? Was anti-semitism a thing of the past in the corporate world? Having completed a book on this topic (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1982), we turned our attention to the experiences of a group of African-American men and women who had been given scholarships to attend the most exclusive boarding schools in the US. Our study of these men and women, and the program that

enabled them to move from the ghetto to the elite, led us to conclude that things were in some ways similar, but in other ways very different, for blacks and Jews who enter what Mills called "the higher circles" (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1991).

The work I describe here, which draws on those two earlier works, was meant to examine more carefully the superficial conclusions about the power elite that I refer to above.² Forty years have passed since the publication of *The Power Elite*, and indeed in the 1990s Colin Powell, Madeleine Albright, and Roberto Goizueta were fully fledged members of the US military, political, and corporate elites. But how typical are they, and what can we learn from looking carefully at the women and minorities who have made it to the highest levels of institutional power in America? And, not less important, has the presence of women and minorities in the power elite changed the way it does business?

I begin by describing the empirical data that we have accumulated to see if Jews, women, blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans, and homosexuals have become part of the power elite. As I summarize these findings, I note some of the patterns that emerge as the different pieces are looked at collectively. Finally, I turn to some theoretical considerations.

Jews

I start with Jews, not only because they were the first group I studied 20 years ago, but because Jews represent a benchmark. They are the only group we have studied that has moved from being underrepresented in the power elite to being overrepresented. At the time Mills wrote, discrimination against Jews was widespread in the US. A decade later, when sociologist Baltzell (less iconoclastic than Mills, and certainly not a leftist) studied what he called *The Protestant Establishment* (1964), he lamented the ongoing exclusion of Jews from the most prestigious social clubs and from the executive suites in corporate America. There was, Baltzell wrote, "a crisis in moral authority ... in modern America largely because of the White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant establishment's unwillingness, or inability, to ... absorb talented and distinguished members of minority groups into its privileged ranks" (p. x). Baltzell's focus in this book was on anti-semitism, although he acknowledged that some of the same moral concerns applied to "the Negroes in America" (p. x).

By the early 1980s, when Domhoff and I wrote *Jews in the Protestant Establishment*, many Jewish men and a handful of Jewish women had

entered the corporate elite, but few had joined the political or military elites. Those who had joined the corporate elite—by which we meant, following Mills' lead, the boards of directors of the largest companies in America—tended to have travelled different pathways to get there than their gentile counterparts. They were more likely to have moved upward through the ranks of companies that had originally been founded by Jews or to have come onto the corporate boards as “outside” directors (rather than “inside” directors) because of expertise in such areas as banking, law, or various academic specialties. Moreover, those Jews who had entered the corporate elite were perceived as, and identified themselves as, “less Jewish” than other Jews. They were more likely to have married non-Jews, they were less likely to have raised their children as Jews, to be involved in the Jewish community, and to have visited Israel; and when it came to identifying themselves in biographical sources like *Who's Who in America*, they were less likely to reveal that they were Jewish. So by the early 1980s, along with the sociological shift in which Jews entered the corporate elite, there was also a social psychological shift: for Jews who entered the corporate elite, being Jewish had become a less salient part of their identity, and being part of the upper class had become a more salient part.

By the time we did the research for *Diversity in the Power Elite* (the third book in our trilogy, Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998), Jews had become overrepresented in the corporate world. Although Jews represent only 2.3% of the total population in the US, numerous studies (including our own) indicate that at least three times that number are in the corporate elite. Jews have also become overrepresented in the political elite, as evidenced by the number of Jews holding positions in Presidential cabinets and the number of Jews elected to the US Senate. To cite just one example, whereas in 1982, when our first book was published, there were only four Jews in the 100-member Senate, in 2000 there were 10. Jews can also be found in the most senior positions in the military.

One revealing indication that Jews have made it into the power elite is that in the past few years when Jews have been appointed as chief executive officers of major gentile corporations, or as the head of the Central Intelligence Agency, there has been virtually no mention in the media that the person is Jewish. Such an event was news 20 years ago, but not today.³ It has become a non-issue.

Even more revealing was the selection by Al Gore of Joseph Lieberman, the Yale-educated lawyer who has been a Senator from the state of Connecticut since 1989, as his vice presidential running mate in

the 1998 election. Lieberman is an orthodox Jew who does not work (or use electrical appliances, or ride elevators) on the Sabbath, but his religious affiliation neither prevented Gore from choosing him nor did it seem to cost Gore votes (if anything, the choice of Lieberman improved Gore's chances of winning). It is not irrelevant that Lieberman's political record as a Senator was moderate to conservative, and, although he clearly was perceived as a member of a minority group, he was not seen as a threat to the status quo.

What can we learn about the characteristics of the Jews who have entered the power elite? First, they can assimilate. If they do not identify themselves as Jewish, one might not know that they are Jewish. Moreover, it was the clear perception of some of those we interviewed that Jews who were less recognizable as Jewish were more likely to advance in gentile corporations and in the military (this has been less true in the political elite, as the case of Joseph Lieberman demonstrates). In this way, of course, Jews as a group differ from women and blacks who are obviously distinguishable in appearance from the dominant group in power. Of the groups we studied, Jews are most similar in this respect to homosexuals in that both groups can control whether the aspect of their identity that differs from the dominant group is apparent.

Second, the Jews in the power elite are very well educated. Jews are among the best-educated groups in the US. Many of those we studied had attended the most prestigious colleges and universities in the country. They had not only acquired the educational capital to allow them to provide valued expertise, but, having attended elite schools with the children of those in the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant establishment, they had also acquired valuable social capital.⁴ Third, unlike some other immigrant groups, especially those who came involuntarily, many Jewish immigrants first arrived in the US with experience as employers, or shopkeepers. That is, many of those we studied either were born into families that had been successful in the old country or into families with valuable entrepreneurial skills.

Women

The number of women on corporate boards in the 1990s slowly but steadily increased. In 1990 approximately 5% of all directors of the companies on *Fortune* magazine's annual list of the 1,000 largest corporations were women; by 2000 it was about 12%. Similarly, Bill

Clinton appointed more women to his Cabinet than any previous US President and, with Janet Reno as Attorney General and Madeleine Albright as Secretary of State, for the first time women held the more important rather than the less important Cabinet positions. George W. Bush's cabinet so far includes three women: Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior; Ann Veneman, Secretary of Agriculture; and Linda Chavez, Secretary of Labor. Along the same lines, in 1982 there were just two women in the Senate, and after the November 2000 election there were 13. In contrast, no women have made it to the highest levels of the military elite, and not many have reached the next highest levels: as of 1995 only 11 of the 929 highest ranking officers in the military were women, a mere 1.2% (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998).

These data reveal some patterns worth noting. First, as was true for the men Mills studied in the 1950s, most of the women who have risen to the highest levels of the corporate world are from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. This is also true for those who have been appointed to presidential cabinets, but less so for those elected to the Senate and the handful who have risen to relatively high levels in the military. Second, these women are very well educated, both in terms of the degrees they hold and the prestige of the institutions they attended. Third, those who succeed are convinced that they did so in part because they were able to adapt to the dominant male culture. This might have entailed learning to play golf (a popular sport among high-level businessmen), making tough decisions without appearing too tender-hearted, or even being willing to light a cigar at a corporate board meeting (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998).

Blacks

In 1964, as the civil rights movement was picking up steam in the US, two *Fortune*-level corporations invited black men to join their boards of directors. One was a nationwide chain of more than 1,000 retail stores that included many in the South that operated racially segregated lunch counters. There had been sit-ins and boycotts at some of these, and this was both embarrassing and potentially costly. Over the next eight years, spurred on by the civil rights movement and integration in many US institutions, another 11 corporations asked African-Americans to join their boards.

Our study of the first 11 African-Americans invited to join corporate boards revealed that all were men, that most came from relatively

privileged, well educated and well-connected families, that they themselves were extremely well educated, and that, with one exception, they tended to be people who were not likely to “rock the boat”. The exception was revealing. In 1971 General Motors, #1 on the *Fortune* list since its inception in 1955, was facing protests from stockholders for a variety of actions, including its holdings in South Africa and its minority hiring policies. These protests culminated in a raucous annual meeting of shareholders, during which the chairman of the board, in response to a question, made a slip of the tongue that had racist overtones. His gaffe was widely publicized in the media, and not long thereafter he invited an activist black minister, known for having led boycotts of businesses that refused to hire blacks, to join the General Motors board (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998).

By 1995 the number of blacks on *Fortune*-level boards had risen to 175, and by 1997 to 189. Although this reflects a meaningful increase in raw numbers, it was still only 2.5% in 1995 and 2.7% in 1997 of all directors on *Fortune*-level boards. Because blacks represent about 12% of the total population in the US, they remain distinctly underrepresented in the corporate elite. Moreover, they are less likely to serve as inside directors than as outside directors; this means that most have not risen through the executive ranks of the companies on whose boards they sit, but have been chosen for certain expertise or in some cases to provide what we call “buffers, ambassadors and tokens” (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998, p. 191).

There was one African-American chief executive officer of a *Fortune*-level company from 1987 through 1993, but none between 1993 and 1999. Three more became CEOs during 1999 and another in January 2001⁵. Some African-Americans, like Bill Clinton’s friend and confidante Vernon Jordan, sit on many boards and have become genuine insiders in the power elite. Despite the high visibility of Jordan and a few others, and the handful of black CEOs among the 1,000 *Fortune*-level companies, both the number of directors and the rate of increase since the boards first integrated demonstrate that blacks are still underrepresented in the corporate elite.

The same holds for the political elite. Although Clinton named more blacks to his Cabinets than any president before him (indeed, by naming five blacks, he named as many as the six previous presidents combined), none was appointed to the most important Cabinet positions (sometimes referred to as the “inner cabinet”, Cronin, 1980, p. 275). George W. Bush’s appointment of Colin Powell as Secretary of State represents a

breakthrough in this respect, although Powell is one of only two African-Americans in Bush's cabinet (the other is Rod Paige, Secretary of Education). Only two blacks have been elected to the US Senate in the 20th century. One, Edward Brooke, was defeated in 1978 when he ran for a third term representing the state of Massachusetts. The other, Carol Mosely-Braun, was elected in 1992, but was defeated when she ran for reelection in 1998. The number of blacks in the House of Representatives, a body that includes elected officials from residential districts, is higher: it climbed from 25 in 1990 (5.7%) to 37 in 1996 (8.5%) and to 39 in 1998 (9%), but declined slightly to 37 in 2000 (8.5%).

As Colin Powell's tenure as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggests, upward mobility has been greater for blacks in the military than in the corporate or political elites. From 1985 through 1995, between 3% and 4% of the highest-ranking officers were black, with the numbers higher in the army (6% to 7%) and lower in the navy, marines, and air force. Full equality has not been achieved, but the military has done better than other institutions in the US (Moskos & Sibley Butler, 1996).

Our research on blacks in the power elite suggests a few additional patterns in the accumulating picture that is emerging. First, it is quite clear that inclusion of blacks in the corporate elite came about in the first place because of the social unrest of the 1960s (Gamson, 1990). Second—though less so than for some of the other groups we studied, and more so in the corporate elite and on presidential cabinets than in the military elite and Congress—class background was still important. Most of the African-Americans first appointed to corporate boards and presidential cabinets, and many of those who currently sit on multiple boards and presidential cabinets, have come from privileged or relatively privileged backgrounds. Third, as was the case for Jews and for women, education is important, and those African-Americans who have made it to the top have been, by and large, better educated than their white counterparts. Fourth, the African-Americans who made it to the top tended to be lighter-skinned than other prominent African-Americans (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998).

Latinos and Asian Americans

As of the 1990 census, approximately 10% of the US population was Latino (by the year 2000 it was 12%), and approximately 3% was Asian American. Latino and Asian Americans are present on *Fortune*-level

boards, but for each group the figure is less than 1%. A few Latinos have been in members of Presidential cabinets over the years, and only one Asian American (Norman Yoshio Mineta, Secretary of Commerce in the Clinton administration, and Secretary of Transportation in George W. Bush's administration). Two Latinos and five Asian Americans have been Senators and slightly higher numbers have been elected to the House of Representatives. Virtually no Latinos or Asian Americans have entered the military elite.

More revealing than these numbers, which show consistent patterns of underrepresentation, are the patterns that emerged when we looked at just which Latinos and just which Asian Americans had made it into, or were near, the power elite. Both groups are heterogeneous. Latinos, also known as Hispanics, include Mexican-American immigrants, most of whom come from severe poverty, but also Cuban-Americans who fled Cuba when Castro came to power and who were quite well off in Cuba; also included are Puerto Ricans and immigrants from Spain and various Latin American countries. When we looked to see which Latinos had joined corporate boards, we found that most were Cuban Americans. To cite one revealing comparison, although Hispanics of Mexican origin outnumber those of Cuban origin by more than 15 to 1, there were more Cuban Americans than Mexican Americans on corporate boards, and on a list of the 75 richest Latinos in the US in 1996.

The Latinos who had made it into the power elite were not, as the mythology often indicates, poor immigrants who arrived with nothing. Here the case of Roberto Goizueta is particularly revealing, for when he died in October, 1997 the US media portrayed him as a poor immigrant who had made good. As former President Jimmy Carter put it, helping the media along in its imagery, "Perhaps no other corporate leader in modern times has so beautifully exemplified the American dream" (Coca Cola Chief, 1997). In reality, Goizueta was born in Havana to wealthy parents. His mother was a sugar heiress and his father an architect who owned a construction business. Goizueta had been educated in the US, first at an elite boarding school and then at Yale University. Although the Associated Press claimed that when he came to the US after Castro took power, he arrived with "little more than a suitcase," this was not the case. He had a post with Coca Cola, he owned 100 shares of Coca Cola stock, he had been educated at the finest schools money could afford, and he had been bred for power in the elite circles of pre-revolutionary Cuba.

In the case of Asian Americans, many who have made it into the power elite are from privileged backgrounds, and many are from prominent families that left China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong. More than half (61%) of the Asian American corporate directors in our study were Chinese Americans. William Mow, for example, the founder of Bugle Boy Industries, is the son of the man who was chief of Chiang Kai-shek's United Nations military committee when the Communists took over. Mow grew up in New York and received a doctorate in engineering from Purdue University. And Pei-yuan Chia, the highest ranking Asian American executive and corporate director in a world-class US corporation until his retirement in 1996, was born in Hong Kong in 1939, grew up in a banking family, received a university degree in Hong Kong, and then came to the US in 1962 and earned an MBA from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania.

Our findings on Latinos and Asian Americans led us to conclude that some of the diversity in the American corporate elite is less evidence of upward mobility than it is evidence of the geographic relocation of people whose families were part of the power elites in their original countries. There are exceptions, just as there were exceptions to the general patterns Mills observed midway through the 20th century, but they need to be seen as exceptions, not the rule.

One other important pattern emerged in our study of the Latinos. Just as skin colour was an important factor for those African-Americans who made it to the top, so too was it a factor for the Latinos. When we systematically studied the Latinos who had entered the power elite and compared them with other prominent Latinos, we found that they too were lighter-skinned. Class is important. Education is important. And for African-Americans and Latinos skin colour is important.

Gay Men and Lesbians

As might be imagined, studying gay men and lesbians in the power elite posed different methodological challenges than did studying the other groups. It is relatively easy to identify Jews in the power elite (at least until they assimilate to such a degree that it becomes unclear if they are still Jewish), and easy to identify women, African-Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. How does one know if a person is homosexual? Only if it is revealed. We assume that there always have been some homosexuals in the power elite, but that in order to maintain their

positions of power they have had to hide their sexual orientation. We had no interest in exposing the private lives of those in the power elite; rather, we wished to know if there is now sufficient tolerance in the power elite such that it openly includes homosexual men and women. For the most part the answer is No.

The situation for gay men and lesbians in the corporate world is certainly better now than it was in 1956. Many *Fortune*-level companies have employee support groups for gay and lesbian employees, and some provide health benefits for live-in partners. Still, our research leads us to conclude that the higher one moves up the corporate hierarchy, the less acceptable is it to be openly homosexual. We found only one senior executive at a major *Fortune*-level company who has been public about his homosexuality, but this was two years after he retired as vice-chair of Ford Motor Company and was serving on corporate boards. Allan Gilmour, a graduate of Harvard and the University of Michigan, and a lifelong conservative Republican, spent his career working for Ford Motor Company. In December 1996, two years after he retired from Ford, but while still sitting on the corporate boards of many *Fortune*-level corporations including Prudential Insurance, Dow Chemical, Detroit Edison, US West, and Whirlpool, Gilmour revealed his homosexuality in an interview for a gay magazine. It is noteworthy that Gilmour was not asked to leave any of the boards on which he sits ("I was told uniformly that it makes no difference"), but also that he waited until he retired from Ford to reveal his sexual orientation. In fact, while still working for Ford he did not even take telephone calls from his 34 year-old partner until a few months before he retired. As he explained in an obviously understated way, "I perceived the risk of coming out in the business world as fairly substantial" (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998, pp. 165-166).

Similarly, in the political world there is evidence of greater tolerance for homosexuals, but more so at the lower levels than at the higher levels. Homosexual men have been elected to the House of Representatives. In every case they had not openly declared their homosexuality when they were first elected, but after being arrested, "outed" or deciding on their own to come out, five have been reelected. No openly homosexual man or woman has been elected to the Senate, and none has been appointed to the Cabinet.

The military remains openly hostile to homosexuality, and despite strong support for Bill Clinton in his 1992 campaign by gay men and lesbians (who have become an increasingly well-organized and well-funded group of voters), early in his first term Clinton waffled on his

pledge that, if he was elected homosexuals would receive fair treatment in the military. The "Don't ask, don't tell" policy that he endorsed has proven to be not only hypocritical but ineffective. In fact the policy led to an increase, not a reduction, in discharges from the military for homosexuality. Needless to say, there are no openly gay men or lesbians in the military elite (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998).⁶

Conclusions

As I indicate, various patterns emerge from our study of Jews, women, blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans and homosexuals in the power elite. I identify four of these and then I turn to the question of whether the new diversity in the power elite affects the way it operates.

The first of the patterns has to do with identity management. The newcomers present themselves in a way that communicates they are not too different from the dominant majority in power. They demonstrate in a variety of ways that they will not make those already in power uncomfortable. They may call for some mild reforms, but they will not "rock the boat". Therefore, if something about their differentness stands out too much, suggesting that their real alliances (and loyalties) may not be with their new partners in the power elite, then this makes the old guard uncomfortable. As a result, it is all right to be Jewish, but not "too Jewish"; it is all right to be a female, but it helps to be able to play golf or light a cigar with the boys. It is all right to be African-American, and even a civil rights leader, but not militant. It may soon be all right to be openly homosexual, but we are confident it will be a while before it is all right to be flamboyant about it (one researcher found that many in the corporate world "don't care if someone is gay or not," but they do care "how effeminate you are" ; Woods, 1993, p. 14).

But identity management is the icing on the cake, the final step in a longer process. Another pattern that emerged in our research is that those who have brought diversity to the power elite tend to come from business and professional backgrounds, and they tend to be from relatively privileged family backgrounds. Class matters. There are some rags-to-riches stories, and there are men and women who have attained power who were born into genuine poverty, but this is much rarer than the public relations people, or the newcomers to the power elite themselves, would have us believe.

Education matters too. Newcomers to the power elite are likely to have attended prestigious colleges and universities, and many have

attained postgraduate degrees. In fact, our findings for women and African-Americans in the power elite demonstrate clearly that they are better educated than their WASP male counterparts.

Finally, in the racially charged atmosphere of the US, with its legacy of slavery, racism, and segregation,⁷ there is the issue of skin colour. As I indicate, those African-Americans and Latinos who enter the power elite are lighter-skinned than other prominent African-Americans and Latinos. This, of course, is related to class, for those of lighter skin tend to be at higher levels in the socioeconomic class system, and it is related to why there is such pressure to manage one's identity, for the newcomers know that to be accepted they must not appear to be too different from the others in power.

So there's diversity in the power elite. Does it matter?

We find no evidence of a kinder, gentler power elite in how it functions. Those in power certainly have not relinquished the influence they held in 1956, and in terms of wealth and income they are now further removed from the bulk of Americans "below them." Moreover, we find that the newcomers to the power elite make the same kind of decisions that their WASP counterparts make. Linda Wachner, one of the few women to become chief executive officer of a *Fortune*-level company, provides a revealing example. When she concluded that one of her company's holdings, the Hathaway Shirt Company, was unprofitable, she decided to close down the factory. It did not matter to her that Hathaway had been making shirts since 1837, that almost all of the factory's 500 employees were women, or even that the workers had given up a pay raise to hire consultants to teach them how to work more effectively. Hathaway was not making enough money, and Wachner deemed the average worker's \$7.50 hourly wage was too high. In 1995, however, Wachner herself received \$10 million in salary and stocks. To the women at the Hathaway Shirt Company it was not evidence of great progress that the CEO of the corporation that owned their company was a woman.

The "great progress" has been that the arrival of women and various minorities in the power elite supports liberal individualism, a set of values embedded in the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the civic culture. Their arrival in the corporate boardrooms, the halls of government, and the highest levels of the military, however, has not signalled—as was hoped by many who courageously challenged white Anglo-Saxon Protestant male homogeneity in the 1960s—greater openness throughout society. The class system in the US is no more

egalitarian: as of 1992, the top 1% had 45.6% of all financial wealth, the next 19% had 46.7%, and the bottom 80% had 7.8% (Wolff, 1996). By 1998 wealth was even more concentrated: by then the top 1% had 47.3% of all financial wealth (Wolff, 2000). The United States remains a nation that celebrates equal opportunity, but remains in reality a bastion of class privilege and conservatism.

Notes

- 1 In the mid-1970s, one writer began an article on C. Wright Mills in the following way: "It is now almost two decades since C. Wright Mills published *The Power Elite*. Few books of its kind have been more widely read or more vigorously debated; fewer yet have retained so much urgent relevancy for so long a time" (Gillam, 1975, p. 461). For a collection of the most informative reviews from a wide range of perspectives, see Domhoff and Ballard, 1968).
- 2 This most recent look is based mostly on the third book in our trilogy on the American power elite (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998)
- 3 In 1973, when Irving Shapiro was named President and Chief Executive Officer at DuPont, the *Wall Street Journal* ran the following headline: "Boss-to-be at DuPont is Immigrant's Son who Climbed Hard Way." The article stressed that Shapiro was the first Jew to become a chief executive officer at a large corporation that had not been founded by Jews. Similar appointments in recent years generally do not even acknowledge that the person is Jewish (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998).
- 4 For a discussion of Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and social capital, and the ways blacks who are educated at elite schools can use these to help their careers, see Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1991.
- 5 Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. was Chairman and CEO at TIAA-CREF from 1987 through 1993. On January 1, 1999 Franklin D. Raines became Chairman and CEO of the Federal National Mortgage Association (better known as Fannie Mae). In August 1999 Lloyd Ward became CEO at Maytag. In November 1999 A. Barry Rand became CEO at Avis. In January 2001 Kenneth Chenault became the Chairman and CEO at American Express (Wharton, 1987; Stevenson, 1998; Leonhart, 1999; Deutsch, 1999; O'Brien, 1999; Schwartz, 2001).
- 6 In an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine in December 2000, shortly before he left office, Clinton referred to his "don't ask, don't tell" policy as "this dumb-ass 'don't ask, don't tell' thing" (Kifner, 2000, A22).
- 7 Social psychologist Pettigrew (1998) writes: "many American groups have suffered discrimination in various forms. But ... the phenomenon for blacks is different, made so by their being the only group to experience the confluence of race, slavery, and segregation" (p. 24).

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