The Half-Opened Door: Researching Admissions Discrimination at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton[1]

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TRADITIONAL HISTORIES OF HIGHER education have presented either a centennial-pictorial overview of a particular institution's glorious achievements (often the author's alma mater) or a narrative account of its presidential administrations. There have, of course, been notable exceptions that transcend even the latter format, but most institutional histories suffer from the same defects.[2] They portray the college or university in a generally complimentary light and interpret its history from the perspective of the president, whose papers were generally among the first to be collected and organized for research by college archives. But a president's papers do not indicate fully the attitudes of those who disagreed with his leadership. Although the president has usually been the central figure, the roles of faculty, students, trustees, and alumni should also be examined, especially in times of change, crisis, or progress. For a complete picture, a wide range of university records must be consulted, together with such external sources of opinion on the institution's activities as magazine and newspaper reports. It is to be hoped that in time every college and university will have a written history that shows the interaction of different individuals and groups in the formation and implementation of policy.

In researching *The Half-Opened Door,* I endeavored to find out and then explain in a historical narrative how universities operated behind the scenes in selecting their clientele, a number of whom would become tomorrow's leaders. While admissions policy is only one area of a university's history, the selection of students is crucial to its overall purpose.

[1]For a list and a discussion of my sources, see Marcia Graham Synnott, *The Half-Opened Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900–1970* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), pp. 233–34, 289–90.

[2]A superior institutional history and one that helped guide my own research is George W. Pierson, *Yale: College and University, 1871–1937,* 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, 1955).

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Selection of Research Topic

In 1970, when I was choosing a dissertation topic, the time seemed opportune to explore the "underside" of Ivy League college history. Admissions policy was a neglected area of research in higher education that merited scholarly examination. It had always been more difficult to get into prestigious private colleges and universities than into most state colleges and universities. The academic standards of the private institutions were usually higher; and Ivy League colleges were also known to give some weight to whether an applicant had alumni connections, athletic ability, and the financial resources to pay his own way. Some discrimination in admissions seemed to be inevitable. The question was, how much? After World War II, public opinion had more or less disapproved of restrictive quotas *against* specific racial, religious, or ethnic groups, and by the 1970s there was a growing debate on whether there should be "benign quotas," "goals," or "target numbers" for the admission of blacks and other racial minorities. Thus the use of quotas in college admissions promised to be a fruitful field for historical research.

Because it would have been too formidable a project to try to research admissions policies at all eight Ivy League schools, I decided to limit my analysis to Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, called the "Big Three" since the years when they dominated the first all-American football teams. Not only were they among the nation's oldest colleges, but they have also ranked, respectively, first, second, and third in producing proportionately more leaders than any of the others. Morever, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton have been the trendsetters in terms of educational innovations (undergraduate tutorials) and social policies (residential house systems). My task would be to determine how their admissions policies operated. Did a certain class and type of student choose these institutions? Or did Harvard, Yale, and Princeton consciously seek to recruit students with particular intellectual and socio-economic qualifications?[3]

Research Methodology

Before going to a university archives, the researcher should send to the curator a letter describing his or her project. Not only did the curators consider this to be a courtesy, but an advance letter gave them the time to identify the collections or record groups that might contain pertinent correspondence and other documents. My initial plan was to find out what kinds of records were open and whether they contained sufficient information to justify a dissertation on admissions policies. At Yale, which I visited first, the chief research archivist suggested I look at the records of the college dean, Frederick S. Jones, which contained a good deal of information on the "Jewish Question" during the 1920s. An examination of the dean's records convinced me that I had seen the "tip of the iceberg." Indeed, my subsequent research in other official papers at Yale, as well as those at Harvard and Princeton, proved that during the 1920s and 1930s the "Big Three" and such other private institutions as Columbia University, Dartmouth College, and New York University discriminated against applicants on the basis of their nativity and religion. These institutions were reacting against what they saw to be an invasion of their campuses by the sons of immigrants. Too many Irish

[3]George W. Pierson, *The Education of American Leaders: Comparative Contributions of U.S. Colleges and Universities* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), pp. xix-xxi, 240-51.

Catholic and Jewish students threatened to change the tone of campus life from the relaxed, gentlemanly acquisition of learning, in conjunction with the strenuous pursuit of extracurricular activities, to a relentless competitive scramble for academic honors and prizes. As for blacks and other racial minorities, a handful were tolerated as long as they remained inconspicuous; too many blacks, it was feared, might change the "complexion" of the campus. To protect their traditional clientele—socially acceptable white Anglo-Saxon Protestants—Harvard, Yale, and Princeton imposed quotas on Jews and perhaps on Catholics, while discouraging the application of blacks. (Harvard and Yale admitted a small number of blacks most years, but not until June 1947 did a black student, having entered under the Naval V-12 program, receive an A.B. degree from Princeton.[4])

When I began my research, my understanding of the way a university actually functioned was limited, so it took me some time to determine which records, in addition to those of the president and deans, would be most valuable. Although curators, associate curators, and research archivists were helpful in pointing out possible sources, some of the records either had been destroyed or were still in the offices in which they originated and hence unavailable for research. I realized that I would have to read as extensively as possible in every major group of university records that was open or might possibly be opened during the years in which I did most of my research (1970–75). A significant part of my time was spent in winnowing data on discriminatory admissions policies from the abundant chaff of routine correspondence. My goal was to incorporate this evidence, which for certain years was fragmentary, into a descriptive history of the adoption and implementation of restrictive admissions policies, especially the Jewish quota, at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.

In the early months of my research, I also attempted a statistical analysis of the educational achievements and occupational successes of Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant students at Yale, drawing upon the histories of selected classes from their senior year albums through their twenty-fifth reunion books. In the period from the 1910s to the 1930s, Yale class histories, more frequently than those of Harvard or Princeton, recorded their members' religion, place of birth, and sometimes even parents' birthplaces. Although I collected a significant amount of data and then ran a cross-tabulation on Catholic, Jewish, and foreign-born students in the Yale College class of 1912, I did not pursue this study, because I realized that, for it to be successful, I would have to collect larger quantities of data and acquire advanced skills in comparative statistical analysis. However, historians of student achievement at Ivy League universities may well find it rewarding to cull the biographical sketches of students in the class books, in conjunction with an examination of

[4]Records of the Dean of the College, Frederick Scheetz Jones, Yale University Archives (YUA), 6 boxes. Subject file Students—Nationalities, Negro, clipping, *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 48, no. 5 (October 24, 1947), p. 4, Princeton University Archives (PUA). See also Heywood Broun and George Britt, *Christians Only: A Study in Prejudice* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1931), which showed that quotas had been imposed at many universities in the late 1920s. The authors' evidence consisted largely of letters from Jewish students and of three surveys, one conducted by a Jewish intercollegiate student organization in 1927 and two undertaken in the spring of 1930, the first by the *Jewish Daily Bulletin* and the second by A.J. Rongy, a Jewish doctor in New York City. A more recent book that complements my own by documenting the Jewish quota at Columbia University is Harold S. Wechsler, *The Qualified Student: A History of Selective College Admission in America* (New York: John Wiley, 1977).

deans' and freshman office records.[5]

Problems of Access to University Records

Once a researcher has determined that a university archives has sufficient records to justify a particular research topic, his or her next step must be to find out the conditions of access at that institution. In the early 1970s, universities still seemed to be in the process of developing precise and uniform guidelines for access to and use of their 20th-century records. Private universities, but also some public ones, usually exercised a certain amount of discretion in handling requests for access to their official records, especially those of recent origin. "Recent" might mean those created since 1960, since World War II, or since 1900.

Prior to World War II, for example, most American universities, particularly private ones, did not want any outsider to investigate too closely the criteria they used in selecting students. Their attitudes began to change as public opinion no long condoned discrimination, previously taken for granted, against the nation's ethnic, racial, and religious minorities. It was becoming increasingly evident to Americans that the United States could not allow discrimination at home while representing itself abroad as the leader of the "free world." Four important reports attacking discrimination in higher education were issued from December 1947 to July 1949 by President Truman's Commission on Higher Education, the New York State Commission on the Need for a State University, the Connecticut State Inter-Racial Commission, and the American Council on Education. In response, most northern colleges and universities soon deleted the questions, added to their application forms in the 1920s, pertaining to nationality, race, and religion. Princeton, for example, dropped its question on the applicant's religious preference in 1950.[6]

Throughout the 1950s, however, most institutions remained extremely close-mouthed about past policies and practices. The crusade led by Senator Joseph McCarthy against Communist subversion encouraged neither freedom of speech on campus nor the voluntary opening up of confidential university records. But the student activism of the 1960s—anti-war protests, as well as demonstrations by black students for Afro-American Studies programs and the increased recruitment of black students and faculty—forced colleges and universities to change their methods

[5]I chose to study the Yale College class of 1912 because the class secretary had deposited in the archives the "statistical blanks" filled out by members during their senior year. As of 1971, 1912 was the only class to have deposited these questionnaires, which are more detailed than the biographical sketches published in the *History of the Class of 1912, Yale College,* vol. 1. The photographs in the *History* indicate race, while the "Yale College 1912 Statistical Blanks" reveal information on each member's place of birth, religion, and jobs or scholarships held during college. Yale admission forms did not ask for the applicant's race and religion, although they did want the father's full name and birthplace and the mother's maiden name (a question on the mother's birthplace was added in 1934). See letter from Robert N. Corwin to James R. Angell, January 7, 1930, and letter from Alan Valentine to Angell, January 9, 1934, Records of the President, James R. Angell, Box 2, file Board of Admissions, YUA.

[6]Francis J. Brown, Floyd W. Reeves, and Richard A. Anliot, eds., *Discriminations in Higher Education: A Report of the Midwest Educators Conference in Chicago, Illinois, November 3–4, 1950,* sponsored by the Midwest Committee on Discriminations in Higher Education and the Committee on Discriminations in Higher Education of the American Council on Education, American Council on Education Studies, series 1—Reports of Committees and Conferences, vol. 15, no. 50 (August 1951), pp. 6–22, 35–39; R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, *A History of Education in American Culture* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953), pp. 522–23; and Alfred W. DeJonge '50, "Godolphin Favors Non-Discrimination," *Daily Princetonian,* May 8, 1947, in subject file Admin. offices, Admissions, PUA.

of communication. Either they had to clamp down harder on these debates and demands or they had to become more receptive and accessible. The degree to which each institution opened up was determined by a combination of factors: presidential leadership, trustee and alumni attitudes, faculty outspokenness, and student activism. In terms of my project, Yale and Princeton seemed more receptive than Harvard, which was still smarting from the student takeover of University Hall in 1969. Of the three, however, the Harvard University Archives, the oldest college or university archives in the United States, would prove to have the richest resources.

When I began my research in 1970, I found that, except for published reports, few 20th-century records were automatically open to examination. Both Harvard and Yale required a researcher to describe his or her topic on a printed form and indicate the records that he or she wished to see. On the "Harvard College Library Application for the Examination of Manuscripts," the researcher's signature constituted acceptance of certain conditions: agreement not to publish the contents of manuscripts without first applying in writing for and receiving permission from the Harvard University Archives; responsibility for obtaining permission to publish from the owner of the copyright or his heirs or assigns; holding "harmless the University, its officers, employees and agents" for any violations of common law copyright or literary property; and agreement that any photocopies of manuscripts would be used for research only and would be returned upon completion of the project. Yale's application form imposed similar conditions, but in less detail. At the time I did research at Princeton, the archives staff asked that I state my request in writing to the university librarian.[7]

Once the researcher's application was approved, records that had no special restrictions could be used. But three kinds of limitations impeded access to certain university records: time restrictions; the requirement that prior official or donor permission be obtained to examine, to photocopy, to quote in a dissertation, and to quote in a published work; and the confidentiality of student and alumni files.

Time restrictions varied among the universities. Harvard had the longest restriction on presidential papers: as a general rule they were closed for 50 years from the date of each document. (Files that were alphabetically, rather than chronologically, arranged were in effect closed until 50 years after the president left office.) The researcher could apply, with the assistance of the curator, to the secretary to the corporation for a partial lifting of a time restriction. If the secretary considered the researcher to be a serious scholar and agreed that the topic required access to restricted files, he might waive, to a limited extent, the 50 year rule on presidential papers. My dissertation topic was "A Social History of Admissions Policies at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900-1930," and the secretary to the Harvard corporation evidently felt that my request to see the papers of President A. Lawrence Lowell dating from 1909 to 1930 was reasonable. It was a discretionary decision; Harvard University held both the physical and literary property rights to letters written by Lowell, who was

[7] "Harvard College Library Application for the Examination of Manuscripts," Harvard University Archives (HUA). Yale University Library, "Rules Governing the Use of Manuscripts," with forms requesting permission to examine manuscript material and authorization to publish manuscript material in the Yale Library Collections. In my letter to Princeton, I agreed not to cite individual trustees or faculty members by name in my dissertation without first obtaining the university librarian's approval.

deceased.

Before I could see any of Lowell's papers, I had to pare down considerably my original list of requested folders to 100. I was given permission to examine 95 folders, but not the folders from Lowell's last three years as president, 1930-33. After I began rewriting my dissertation for publication, I resubmitted my request for access to selected folders from the last three years of Lowell's presidency because I wanted to extend my analysis from 1930 beyond World War II. This limited request was granted, but I was denied access to the papers of President James Bryant Conant (in office from 1933 to 1953), which would not be opened until between 1983 and 2003.[8] Before quoting extensively from the Lowell papers in my dissertation, I had to submit the quotations that I intended to use to the secretary to the corporation for his approval. I had to repeat this when I sought his permission to quote from the Lowell papers in my book, *The Half-Opened Door.*

Although I had expected it to be difficult to obtain permission to quote from the letters that deans, faculty members, and overseers had written to President Lowell or to his predecessor, Charles William Eliot (in office from 1869 to 1909), this proved not to be the case. There was some delay in hearing from a few of the heirs of the correspondents, but all of them gave me the permission that I requested. I sent copies of their letters to the curator as evidence that I had the proper permission. Yale did not require a researcher to obtain family permission to quote from the correspondence of former officials. Yale considers an official's records deposited in the archives (as distinct from purely personal papers) to be the literary property of the university rather than of the individual; permission to quote in a publication therefore could be obtained directly from Yale. On separate permission forms, I listed the letters, memoranda, and official statistical tables that I wanted to quote or cite; I then submitted the forms to the chief research archivist, who secured authorization to publish from the Yale University librarian.

Like Harvard, Yale had time restrictions on its presidential papers, though for only 20 years. Given the scope of my project, the staff of Manuscripts and Archives suggested that I obtain the overall approval of the secretary of the corporation, who gave me blanket permission to examine any university records that were more than 20 years old. Because I was allowed to see virtually everything that I requested, I decided to show a draft of my chapters about Yale to the curator for his evaluation of my use of university records. He suggested only one change: that I omit a student's name to protect his privacy. Although it was permissible to cite the achievements of students as reported in biographies of subsequently famous graduates, class histories, the campus newspaper, or the alumni magazine, it would be a violation of privacy to discuss any official comments made or action taken in regard to particular individuals. The librarian of Princeton University made a similar request after reviewing my chapters on that institution. These were the only two changes that I was asked to make in my manuscript. In both cases my point could be made without identifying the student in question and I willingly complied with the requests.

[8]Marcia Graham Synnott, "A Social History of Admissions Policies at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900–1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1974). I have a collection of correspondence pertaining to my research and including letters from archival and administrative officers at the three universities to me or to each other. I would be glad to show any of this material to any interested person.

At Princeton, minutes of the Board of Trustees and minutes of the faculty were restricted because both met in closed session, but the university librarian granted me permission to examine and quote from them.

In addition to time restrictions on the papers of certain university presidents and administrators, the researcher must also contend with the fact that all student and alumni records are considered to be confidential in regard to admission, disciplinary action, financial status, counseling and health, and other material of a personal nature. In 1971 I applied to the secretary to the Harvard corporation for permission to examine the original application forms that were filed in student folders, in order to conduct a statistical analysis of students' economic, religious, ethnic/racial, and social backgrounds. Because Harvard, the most ethnically diverse of the three universities, had added revealing questions to its application form in the fall of 1922, it would have been illuminating to collect ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic data for selected classes during the years of Harvard's Jewish quota (from 1926 to the late 1940s). Among the information Harvard sought from applicants were the following: "Race and Color," "Religious Preference," "Maiden Name of Mother," "Birthplace of Father," and a response to the question "What change, if any, has been made since birth in your own name or that of your father? (Explain fully)." If the applicant had declined to indicate his religious preference, the high school principal was asked, on the applicant's "Personal Record and Certificate of Honorable Dismissal," to indicate whether it was "Protestant," "Roman Catholic," "Hebrew," or "Unknown." The secretary denied my request for access to application forms on the grounds that examination of the forms would violate the confidentiality of student records. I could apply directly, however, to each alumnus for his "express consent" to study his application form. The task of securing hundreds of alumni permissions was so formidable that I abandoned any attempt to use the application forms as the basis of a comparative statistical analysis of student backgrounds.[9]

The year that I completed my dissertation, the U.S. Congress enacted the Family Education and Privacy Act of 1974, known as the "Buckley/Pell Amendment." According to interpretations of the act, universities may permit controlled use of student records for various aggregate studies. Section 438 provides that an educational agency or institution must develop criteria governing the disclosure of information from student educational records, with the prior, written consent of a parent of a student or of the student required for disclosures of "personally identifiable information" to anyone but those with "legitimate educational interests" in the information. "Personally identifiable information" may be disclosed to those engaged in certain types of strictly con-

[9]Princeton University, "University Regulations" (1973), pp. 50-53. "Application for Admission" to Harvard College and "Personal Record and Certificate of Honorable Dismissal," Dean of Harvard College—Correspondence (Yeomans & Greenough, 1916–27), #16 Sub-committee on Sifting of Candidates for Admission, 1922–23, HUA. During the past twenty years or so, because of their interest in minority recruitment, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton have run detailed statistical profiles of entering classes. While the records of 17th- and 18th-century students have been used in biographical compilations, those of the past 200 years have, with a few exceptions, remained closed. See Clifford Kenyon Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates; Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College . . . with Bibliographical and Other Notes,* vol. 1, 1642–58 and subsequent volumes (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1873 *et seq.*); Shipton, *Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College in the Classes 1756–1760 with Bibliographical and Other Notes,* Sibley's Harvard Graduates, vol. 14 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1968); and James McLachlan, *Princetonians, 1748–1768: A Biographical Dictionary* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

trolled studies: to officials auditing, evaluating, and determining compliance with various federally-funded programs and to organizations conducting educational studies pertaining to the effectiveness of predictive tests, student financial aid, and instructional programs. These studies may not identify individual students, however, and the data collected are to be destroyed upon completion of the studies. Educational agencies or institutions may publish "personally identifiable" data in their student directories without prior written parental or student consent only if they have given public notice of the categories to be included and have allowed parents and students sufficient time to restrict or prohibit the inclusion of such information. Because directories may list the name, address, date and place of birth, academic major, extracurricular activities, and awards and degrees of each student, they can serve as a rich resource for research on the student bodies of various universities.[10]

Problems of Using University Records

In 1970-71, the Yale University Archives, in Sterling Memorial Library, was the most conveniently located and spacious in terms of accommodating researchers. Harvard's then rather cramped archives was in a room on the top floor of Widener Library; in 1976, it was relocated in the new Nathan Marsh Pusey Library. Princeton's archives, which had been in a corner of one floor of the Firestone Library, was subsequently moved into the new Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library. All three archives had insufficient staff for their considerable backlogs of unprocessed collections. In terms of finding aids, Harvard had the most detailed inventories of presidential papers, which listed folders alphabetically by descriptive title in chronological periods. Although there was neither an index nor an inventory to the deans' papers, they were quite usable because they were boxed alphabetically by folder title. Moreover, they provided an alternative source of information to the Conant papers for the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s. Deans' records could be opened to researchers after about 20 years with the permission of the incumbent dean, which I easily obtained. I also learned that, in addition to the university archives, a researcher should look into the holdings of the professional schools. For example, the five files on the Sifting Committee, 1922-24, in the papers of Felix Frankfurter in the Harvard Law School Library clearly indicate the opposition to the quota of leading Jewish citizens and alumni.[11]

The finding aids for presidential files at Yale were useful for the records of Charles Seymour (1937-50), but were rather limited for James R. Angell (1921-37). The records of Arthur Twining Hadley (1899-1921) were not adequately indexed or inventoried. His outgoing correspondence, in letter books, had an alphabetical list of recipients, while the incoming letters were arranged only by alphabetical letter within chronological periods. Without at least an arrangement or index by

[10]For the application and interpretation of the "Buckley/Pell Amendment" (Family Education and Privacy Act of 1974), see Title 45—Public Welfare, Subtitle A—Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, General Administration, Part 99—Privacy Rights of Parents and Students, Final Rule on Education Records, *Federal Register,* 41:118, Thursday, June 17, 1976 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), pp. 24667, 24669-71, 24673-74, 24662-75. The sponsors were Senators James Buckley of New York and Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island.

[11]After completing my book, I learned that the Harvard Business School had the papers of a prominent Jewish businessman who had worked behind the scenes in 1922-23 to defeat Lowell's first attempt to impose a quota.

recognizable topics, the Hadley incoming correspondence would deter all but the most avid researcher. The files of Dean Frederick S. Jones were arranged alphabetically and listed by descriptive folder title, yet the records of the freshman office had been boxed without system and were incompletely labeled. They were important for my research because they contained files on former students, copies of minutes of the Board of Admissions, and documents pertaining to Yale's adoption of policies limiting both Jewish students and the total undergraduate enrollment.

In the early 1970s, Princeton's archives was in a transitional stage, with a new staff. Moreover, Princeton's holdings of presidential records were decidedly scanty in comparison with Harvard's and Yale's holdings. The archives now has one box of files from Woodrow Wilson's presidency and the library's Rare Books and Special Collections department has some Wilson correspondence, but the bulk of his papers is in the Library of Congress. Princeton did not insist that its former presidents preserve their official papers, and John Grier Hibben, Wilson's successor, reportedly spent the evenings of his last months in office burning his files, perhaps justifying Ray Stannard Baker's description of him as a "self-effacing administrator."[12] The next president, Harold Willis Dodds, still had possession of his papers as of the 1970s.

My research on Princeton was limited principally to the administrations of Wilson and Hibben, spanning the years 1902-32.[13] To document the educational and social policies that Wilson initiated at Princeton would have required many months of research at the Library of Congress and other repositories, but the editors of the project preparing Wilson's correspondence and papers for publication allowed me to read the typescripts of papers that were later published as volumes 15 through 20 of *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson.* The seven volumes (14-20) covering Wilson's presidency of Princeton were virtually a unique resource for studying the educational changes and controversies at one major American university during the first decade of the twentieth century.[14]

For information on the Hibben administration, I had to rely on the annual *President's Reports,* which provided an official narrative history of the university's accomplishments but did not indicate how policy was made. For an inside view of Princeton during the 1920s, I turned to the papers of H. Alexander Smith in the library's Rare Books and Special Collections department. Hibben had appointed Smith executive secretary of the university to relieve himself of the burden of administrative duties. The Smith papers, together with the minutes of the Committee on Admission and excellent files of topically arranged newspaper clippings, enabled me to piece together the story of the triumph of "selective admissions" over social democracy at Princeton. The university's Jewish quota was imposed during the Hibben administration at about the same time that Lowell spear-

[12]Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters,* 8 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, 1927-39), vol. 2, *Princeton, 1890-1910* (1927), p. 356.

[13]William S. Dix to Marcia Synnott, February 16, 1971; and Harold W. Dodds to Marcia Synnott, April 10, 1971. See also footnote 7.

[14]Princeton University Press granted me permission to quote from *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* volumes 5 (1968); 6 (1969); 10 (1971); 14 (1972); 15 (1973); 16 (1973); 17 (1974); 18 (1974); 19 (1975); and 20 (1975).

headed the drive to limit Jewish students at Harvard.[15]

Exploration of various university records at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton taught me that a researcher cannot expect equally convenient guides to all collections, although additional and updated finding aids were being compiled periodically. A researcher had to read methodically through all the pertinent accessible collections because few cross-references existed to related files. In time, I compiled a list of names and topics to look for in each collection.

Research Value of University Records

For the most part, the official papers of the presidents are the central resource for correspondence and memoranda about proposed and adopted policy changes. In the administrations of Charles W. Eliot and A. Lawrence Lowell at Harvard and of Woodrow Wilson at Princeton, policy changes were initiated in the president's office. Because Harvard presidents who retired in the Boston area tended to become the rallying point for alumni and faculty dissatisfied with current presidential policies, I also had to look at Eliot's papers from the period after 1909, when he left office. His correspondence from 1922 to 1924 revealed considerable opposition to Lowell's proposed Jewish quota. Yale presidents were less powerful, being considered only "the first among equals" and neither presiding at faculty meetings nor directly initiating legislation. It was the Yale faculty, especially those who were also alumni of the college, who wanted a quota on Jews. Although neither President Hadley nor President Angell should be judged anti-Semitic, they were unable to change alumni and faculty sentiment.[16]

While the presidents kept informed about student activities and issues, they were, of course, less well acquainted, especially as enrollments grew after both World Wars, with the students than were either the college deans or the admissions directors. The records of college deans contain a wide range of letters and memoranda on students' backgrounds and financial needs, on disciplinary matters, and on fraternities and other extracurricular organizations. Deans made it a point of pride to know virtually every student by name, and their principal roles were to handle students and to lead the faculty. The deans of the undergraduate colleges, as one would expect, were closely involved in any discussion about limiting the admission of Jewish students and in the assignment of Catholic, Jewish, or black students to campus housing. The records of the dean of Yale College, the chairman of the board of admissions, and the registrar contain the most detailed discussions of the alleged "need" for a quota on Jewish students and an indication of the support such a measure had among alumni, faculty, and fellows of the corporation. For example, in the fall of 1922, the dean and the registrar compiled a list of Jewish students admitted

[15]H. Alexander Smith was a member of Princeton's "Special Committee to consider and report a method to be pursued in limitation of the number of undergraduates." Robert M. Hutchins to Steven Buenning, December 17, 1970, quoted in Buenning, "John Grier Hibben: A Biographical Study (1919–1932)" (Senior thesis in history, Princeton University, 1971), pp. 60–61. Robert M. Hutchins granted me permission to quote from this letter. See also President A. Lawrence Lowell to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University, June 2, 1922, *Records, Faculty of Arts and Sciences,* XI (1918), p. 236 (Office of the Secretary, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University).

[16]Charles W. Eliot to James R. Angell, August 26, 1924, Charles W. Eliot Papers, Second Chronological Correspondence File, 1909–26, Box 390: 1924, A–C; and Eliot to C. H. Grandgent, February 1, 1923, Box 389: 1923, A–L, HUA. See also Robert N. Corwin to Frederick S. Jones, May 3, 1922, Records of the Dean of the College, Frederick S. Jones, Box 5, file Jews, YUA.

to the classes of 1911 through 1926 (during which period the percentage rose from 6.7 to 10.8 percent). Such data were particularly helpful to my research, since I was unable to locate annual admissions statistics. Copies of minutes of meetings of the Board of Admissions, as well as several correspondence files and a few tables on the number of Jews admitted, are in other records: those of the president and of the freshman office.[17]

The files of Harvard deans were equally valuable in piecing together the story of the Jewish quota. In June 1922, the dean of Harvard College was appointed to the Committee on Methods of Sifting Candidates for Admission; he chaired the Sub-Committee Appointed to Collect Statistics. With the assistance of statisticians from the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, this subcommittee compiled a revealing (unpublished) volume of tables on Jewish students at Harvard, which affected the position taken by the Committee on Methods in its final printed report of April 1923. The subcommittee and the statisticians delved into a wide variety of sources (some of which I was unable to examine, either because of confidentiality or because they no longer existed) for classes entering from 1900 through 1922: admission forms, parentage cards filled out at registration, academic rank lists, bursar's office files, disciplinary records, and senior class albums. They examined virtually all phases of the Jewish student's college experience. The percentage of Jews and non-Jews were tabulated for each of the following: high school and preparatory school graduates; transfer students; degree recipients, both with and without honors; ranking scholars and academically unsatisfactory students; disciplinary cases; participants in athletics and other extracurricular activities; commuters; recipients of financial aid; social club and fraternity membership; and undergraduate fields of concentration. The vocational preferences of Jewish graduates and the numbers of those attending Harvard's graduate and professional schools were also given. While Jews had constituted 7 percent of the 511 freshmen in 1900, their percentage climbed to 21.5 (150 out of 698 freshmen) by 1922. Because Jews were usually excluded from athletic teams of the major sports, debating societies, editorial boards, and musical clubs, they formed their own cultural organizations. Jews ranked well above average in scholarship and joined in extracurricular activities to the extent that their classmates permitted. The Committee on Methods found that Jews contributed significantly to the academic quality and partially to the extracurricular life of the university community, and its published report urged, contrary to President Lowell's expectations, that Harvard "maintain its traditional policy of freedom from discrimination on grounds of race or religion" in admissions.[18]

But Harvard, like Yale and Princeton, felt uncomfortable with a rising Jewish

[17]Pierson, *Yale: College and University, 1871–1937,* vol. 1, *Yale College: An Educational History, 1871–1921,* chap. 9, "Tyrannosaurus Superbus," pp. 155–63; and vol. 2, *Yale: The University College, 1921–1937,* pp. 172–76. See especially [Frederick S. Jones's] 11-page memorandum or report consisting of statistical tables and conclusions drawn therefrom [ca. September–October 1922], Records of the Dean of the College, Frederick S. Jones, Box 5, file Jews, YUA.

[18]"Statistical Report of the Statisticians to the Subcommittee Appointed to Collect Statistics: Dean Chester N. Greenough, Chairman, Dean Wallace B. Donham, Dean Henry W. Holmes," 100 pp.; and "Report of The Committee Appointed 'To Consider And Report To The Governing Boards Principles And Methods For More Effective Sifting Of Candidates For Admission To The University,' " April 11, 1923, 6 pp., A. Lawrence Lowell Papers, 1922–1925, #387 Admission to Harvard College: Report of Committee on Methods of Sifting Candidates, HUA.

enrollment. Supported by both the tacit and vocal consent of alumni and undergraduates, all three universities began to apply selective methods aimed at excluding Jews: they began to require photographs on admission forms, to pose specific questions on the applicant's race and religion, to require personal interviews, and placed a corresponding quota on scholarship aid. In 1923, Yale limited freshman class enrollment to 850 in the hope that such a measure would make it easier to select the "most desirable" students from among the total number of applicants. Then, beginning with the class of 1928, Yale tried to stabilize its Jewish representation at about 10-12 percent. In the same year, 1924, Princeton cut the number of its Jewish students in half, to about 3 percent of its total, roughly the same percentage as in the national population. Although Lowell's initial attempt had been thwarted in 1922, in 1926 he succeeded in imposing his will: overcoming considerable faculty opposition, the Lowell administration began to reduce Harvard's Jewish enrollment, as of the class of 1930, from almost 27 percent to between 10 and 15 percent. I found explicit documentation of Harvard's quota policy at Yale, in a report submitted to President Angell in December 1926 by the dean of Yale College, who had visited Cambridge and talked with the chairman of Harvard's Committee on Admission. Statistics on the assignment of upperclassmen to the Harvard residential houses during the 1930s show that Jewish students were subjected to another quota: their representation in any one house was kept in proportion to their percentage in the class as a whole.[19]

Other records also provide documentation of discriminatory attitudes and practices. Minutes of meetings of the faculty and of the trustees contain abbreviated reports of discussions of policy changes; one has to look at both official and personal correspondence for interpretations of the important roll call votes and resolutions. My search for letters describing the reactions of leading Jewish alumni to Lowell's quota policy led me back to Yale, to the papers of Harvard alumnus Walter Lippmann. And of course alumni and campus publications, files of newspaper clippings, and scrapbooks contain information on college life and the institution's major controversies. The varied sources found in archives, whether open or restricted, published or unpublished, were more valuable to my study than personal interviews: as of 1970, it was difficult to find university personnel who could comment accurately upon the admissions policies implemented 40 to 50 years earlier.

[19] "Selection of Candidates for Admission to the Freshman Class under the Provision for the Limitation of Numbers," March 16, 1923, and "Admission to the Freshman Class," March 23, 1923, Com. on Limitation of Numbers 1922, Freshman Office Records-EX-1926-1927 (3), Student Folders Van Camp-Budd; Robert N. Corwin to James R. Angell, January 3, 1933, enclosing table dated October 19, 1932, "showing our Jewish population for the last ten years," Box 2, file Board of Admissions, and [Dean Clarence W. Mendell], report on "Harvard," stamped "Dec. 8—Rec'd," box Mar-Clarence W. Mendell, file Clarence W. Mendell, Records of the President, James R. Angell, YUA.

See Radcliffe Heermance, Office of the Supervisor [in 1925, Dean] of Freshmen, "Preliminary Analysis of Freshman Class," in September 1921-29, Trustees' Papers, and *The Freshman Herald,* 1930-49, PUA.

See Dean's Office to President Lowell, October 25 and November 9, 1925, six tables dated November 23 or 24, 1925, and Lowell to Henry James, November 3 and 6, 1925, A. Lawrence Lowell Papers, 1925-1928, #184 Limitation of Numbers, HUA. See "Distribution of Probable Freshman Applicants for Houses According to Rank List, Race, Type of School Represented," in Dean of Harvard College Correspondence File, 1933-57 (and some earlier), box on Houses (Parietal Rules—Tutorial), Houses (Adams—Winthrop) folders on Statistics, 1932-42; from box on House Plan—Houses (to 1938), folders on Houses, 1933-38; and from box on Houses 1939-52, folder on Houses 1938-40, HUA.

Conclusions

From my experience of many months of research over a five-year period, I found that persistence paid off, in regard to both obtaining permission and finding the files of greatest value for my study. I also acquired research skills: by understanding the roles that administrators, faculty, and trustees played in university governance, I learned to judge which files probably contained the essential material and how to trace the same individuals and topics through several related collections. Successful research in university archives depended ultimately upon learning how each institution operated. These skills have proved useful in subsequent research on higher education in the United States.

The Half-Opened Door ends with a discussion of the changes in admissions policies that Harvard, Yale, and Princeton adopted after World War II. Because most of the official records dealing with the exciting developments of the 1950s–70s were closed by time restrictions when I was doing my research, I had to rely on secondary sources, especially on current periodicals. Various articles suggested that these three elite, private universities had effected remarkable changes in student recruitment. Not only did they quietly drop their discriminatory practices against Jews and other ethnic and racial minorities, but, as the pool of applicants expanded, first with the veterans and later with the postwar "baby boom," they raised their academic standards for admission and enlarged scholarship aid programs. During the next two decades, as the three universities sought students who would rank intellectually in the top 5 to 10 percent of all American undergraduates, Jewish student representation at Harvard increased to about 25 percent, at Yale to about 30 percent, and at Princeton to about 20 percent. In the 1960s, the three also began serious recruitment of blacks (and in 1969 Yale and Princeton lowered the sex barrier and admitted women undergraduates). By the 1970s, they supported some use of "benign quotas" or admissions "goals" to help blacks and other racial minorities overcome their continuing underrepresentation in higher education. Thus, during the past 50 to 60 years, quotas have been employed as a selective mechanism to discriminate both *against* and *on behalf of* different groups of students. This recent chapter in the history of quotas must still be written. Eventually, when the official records of the last three decades are opened, they will offer an exciting opportunity to scholars researching post-World War II admissions policies and student recruitment at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.[20]

[20]Gene R. Hawes, "The Colleges of America's Upper Class," *Saturday Review Magazine,* November 16, 1963, pp. 68–71; Seymour Martin Lipset and David Riesman, *Education and Politics at Harvard, Two Essays Prepared for The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), pp. 179–80, 220, 307–08; and Penny Hollander Feldman, "Recruiting an Elite: Admission to Harvard College" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1975), "Table 5.5, Admissions Rates of Applicants in Preferred Categories," p. 111. Orde Coombs, "Making It At Yale: The Necessity of Excellence," *Change, the Magazine of Higher Learning* 5:5 (June 1973), chart, "Black Candidates for Admission to Yale," pp. 52, 49–54; Mark Singer, "God and Mentsch at Yale," *Moment* 1:2 (July–August 1975), pp. 27–31; and Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf, " 'Jewish Experience Is Vividly Present at Yale,' " *Yale Alumni Monthly* 36:4 (January 1973), pp. [14]–15. "A Survey of Princeton Freshmen," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 71:17 (February 23, 1971), pp. 6–9; Paul Sigmund, "Princeton in Crisis and Change," *Change* 5:2 (March 1973), pp. 35, 36, 38; and George E. Tomberlin, Jr., "Trends in Princeton Admissions" (Senior thesis in sociology, Princeton University, 1971), pp. 119, 127–28, 136–52, 159–60.