

**THE ACADEMIC ELITE IN SIX SOCIAL SCIENCE DISCIPLINES:
LINKAGES AMONG TOP-RANKED GRADUATE DEPARTMENTS**

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In 1981 the National Academy of Sciences initiated an evaluation by faculty of the quality of doctoral programs in the social sciences. Changing Times listed the top ten percent of all graduate programs in the social sciences based upon a combination of two variables from the National Academy study which the magazine believed constituted the best measures of program quality. Given the subjective nature of the evaluation process which produced these ratings, and the mass media's infatuation with these rankings, this paper examines the top-rated graduate programs in six social science disciplines based upon criteria established in the Changing Times article. It was found that departments in each discipline were substantially linked to each other by hiring each other's graduates, and hence, enhancing each other's reputations.

Americans are obsessed with ranking. In an effort to establish who or what is the best we rank athletic teams, fast food items and virtually everything else. It is not surprising that this penchant for ranking has spread to academia where programs, schools, colleges, and universities constantly are evaluated to determine which are the "best." When the publication of these studies and the relative standing of the "best" schools are restricted to professional journals, they generally spark minor debates among professionals as to why a particular program was or was not included. However, when these rankings are seized upon and widely distributed by the mass media, they take on an exaggerated and undeserved air of importance. Because colleges and universities, as well as individual academic programs, currently are competing for a seemingly ever decreasing pool of highly qualified students, these rankings have become a major positive or negative factor in that competition. Consequently, the methods used for obtaining these rankings should be highly scrutinized, and their findings subjected to a rigorous review.

In the November 1983 edition of *Changing Times*, a listing of the most highly regarded doctoral programs in 32 academic disciplines was presented.

These rankings were based on a five-volume study published by the National Academy of Sciences. This study, entitled "An Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States," reviewed 2,700 Ph.D. programs in 32 disciplines from anthropology to zoology.

In the ratings reported by *Changing Times* two key measures of reputation from the National Academy of Sciences' study were combined: the first, "Faculty Quality," assessed how professors around the country rated their peers in the same discipline; the second, "Program Quality," assessed how well the faculty thought each program educated research scholars and scientists. *Changing Times* combined these two measures and derived a ranking of the top 10 percent of the programs in each discipline. For the six social science disciplines we studied, *Changing Times* listed the top ranked departments based on scores derived from the National Academy of Sciences' study. Following the assumptions of the *Changing Times* article, the schools with the highest combined scores comprised lists of social sciences' "academic elite," or allegedly, the "best" programs in the country.

Given the subjective nature of the evaluation process which produced the academy's ratings, we examined the composition of the faculties of the top ranked departments. We hypothesized that within each discipline departments would be substantially linked to each other by hiring each other's graduates, and hence, enhancing each other's reputations. We also hypothesized that among the "academic elite" there would be a high degree of academic inbreeding--the hiring of graduates from one's own program. It is our intention in the following article to examine these issues and then point out some of the consequences of the subjective ranking of social science programs and how these rankings are manipulated by academic inbreeding and elite linkages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1966, a comprehensive evaluation of graduate education by the American Council of Education was published (Cartter 1966). The Cartter report concluded that the leading departments could be identified using either an objective or a subjective approach because the two kinds of data corroborated each other (Cartter 1966, p. 5). In 1969 the American Council of Education (ACE) conducted a reputational survey of 36 graduate programs which included the social sciences. Participants were asked to rate the quality of graduate faculty and the effectiveness of doctoral programs in their discipline. Additionally, participants were asked to estimate changes in these programs, either positive or negative, over the previous five years. In terms of the perceived quality of graduate faculty, the top twenty-two institutions were then listed in rank order. In addition, the relative rankings of these same institutions based on surveys conducted in 1957 and 1964 were also given (Roose and Anderson 1970, pp. 56-57).

The National Academy of Sciences, in "An Assessment of Research--Doctorate Programs in the United States: Social and Behavioral Sciences," evaluated the quality of doctoral programs in the social sciences in 1981 (Jones and Coggeshall 1982). The assessment was based on sixteen measures, twelve of which were deemed "objective." The remaining four "subjective" measures were based on a reputational survey of faculty members.

A comparison of the results of the National Academy of Sciences' study and the 1969 ACE survey, which included previous surveys in 1957 and 1964, revealed substantial stability in the perception of faculty quality and the overall quality of graduate programs over much of the last three decades. For example, using economics, which data indicate is typical of the other social science disciplines studied, we found that from 1957 until today only one economics program, the University of Michigan's, which had been part of the elite throughout the period fell out of the elite in the 1981 survey. The University of Minnesota, ranked 10th in 1957, fell out of the top ten in 1964 (11th), but it regained its elite ranking in 1969 and 1981. The University of Pennsylvania ranked 14th in 1957 and 1964, entered the elite in 1969 and remained there in 1981. One other school, the University of Wisconsin has been in and out of the top ten over the years, although it has never been ranked lower than 13th. Other members of the 1981 top ten have shifted their relative positions within the last thirty years, but throughout this period they have retained their elite status.

Interestingly, despite other attempts to rank economics and other social science programs since 1970 (Ladd and Lipsett 1979; Boddy 1975), all have achieved more or less the same results; while each ranking system may have shifted the relative standings of the top programs in the six social science disciplines studied, with few exceptions, all have contained the same elite graduate departments. We contend that while there may be several reasons for the relative stability in the ranking of social sciences' elite, two factors seem to play particularly important roles. One is the subjective nature of all current systems of departmental ranking, and the fact that once reputations are formed they are often perpetuated, whether fairly or unfairly, regardless of current reality. The other centers on the use of reputational and other survey instruments by the elite; we contend that by hiring each other's graduates, and by producing the largest number of graduates each year in the discipline, the elite departments in the social sciences are able to play a disproportionate role in deciding which programs are worthy of high esteem and which programs are not.

FINDINGS

Using the guides to graduate departments in the social science disciplines studied, the full-time faculties of the highest ranked departments were examined. Table 1 indicates by discipline the number of programs involved.

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Table 2 lists the top-ranked programs in the six social science disciplines studied. The item of primary interest was where full-time faculty members at these institutions had received their doctoral degrees. (For economics, this information was obtained through Dissertation Abstracts and in a few cases by contacting departments, because the guide did not provide these data.)

Table 1. Numbers of Programs by Discipline

| | The Top-Ranked Programs | Number of Top-Ranked (due to ties) | Total Number of Programs |
|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| History | 8 | 10 | 102 |
| Economics | 8 | 10 | 93 |
| Sociology | 8 | 11 | 92 |
| Political Science | 8 | 10 | 83 |
| Anthropology | 10 | 12 | 70 |
| Geography | 10 | 12 | 49 |

In analyzing the faculties of social sciences' top-ranked departments, it soon became obvious that there were numerous interrelationships among departments in terms of where the faculty had received their doctoral degrees. Table 3 lists the social science disciplines and indicates the percentage of full-time faculty who received their doctoral degrees from one of the "elite" departments on the lists (which would include those who received their degree from the same department where they are currently on the faculty).

As can be seen in Table 3, all of the social science disciplines had a substantial proportion of their faculty who had received their Ph.D. degree from a member of the "academic elite." History had the highest percentage of degree holders from among the top-ranked departments (74.9%), and geography had the lowest (53.1%). Most of the disciplines had anywhere from 2/3 to 3/4 of their faculty who had graduated from one of the prestigious programs.

Table 4 addresses the issue of academic inbreeding among the top-ranked programs in the six social science disciplines. Berelson (1960) and Caplow and McGee (1965) have demonstrated that a high degree of inbreeding among elite schools is not accidental. According to both studies, if elite programs are to maintain their prestige ranking, they cannot hire a large number of Ph.D.'s from lower ranked departments, and this would include faculty from upwardly mobile "middlemen" programs whose elite credentials have yet to be established. Gross (1970), in his study of sociology departments, found that the higher the prestige of a department, the greater the proportion of home-grown graduate faculty. With some modifications, Shichor's (1970) study confirmed Gross's findings. He found the relation between departmental inbreeding and

the prestige of a department to be curvilinear, with the highest and lowest ranking departments having the highest rates of inbreeding, while mid-level departments were found to have the lowest rates. Not surprisingly, in regard to inbreeding, findings from the other social science programs we examined were almost identical to those of sociology.

Table 2. Top-Ranked Programs by Discipline

| | Hist. | Econ. | Soc. | Poli. Science | Anthro. | Geog. |
|----------------------|-------|-------|------|---------------|---------|-------|
| Yale | 1 | 5 | | 1 | 6 | |
| Berkeley | 2 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Princeton | 3 | 4 | | | | |
| Harvard | 4 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 8 | |
| U. of Michigan | 5 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | |
| Stanford | 5 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 5 | |
| Columbia | 6 | | 8 | | | |
| Johns Hopkins | 7 | | | | | |
| U. of Chicago | 7 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| U. of Wisconsin | 8 | 7 | 1 | 6 | | 2 |
| MIT | | 1 | | 4 | | |
| U. of Minnesota | | 6 | | 7 | | 1 |
| U. of Pennsylvania | | 7 | | | 3 | |
| U. of North Carolina | | 4 | | | | |
| U. of Washington | | | 7 | | | 8 |
| U. of Indiana | | | 8 | | | |
| UCLA | | | 8 | | 7 | 6 |
| U. of Rochester | | | | 8 | | |
| U. of Arizona | | | | | 4 | |
| Northwestern | | | | | 9 | |
| U. of New Mexico | | | | | 10 | |
| U. of Texas | | | | | 10 | |
| Penn State U. | | | | | | 2 |
| Ohio State U. | | | | | | 5 |
| Clark U. | | | | | | 7 |
| Syracuse U. | | | | | | 9 |
| U. of Iowa | | | | | | 10 |
| U. of Illinois | | | | | | 10 |

Table 3. Percentage of Faculty From Schools Ranked Among the Academic Elite by Discipline

| | % | N |
|-------------------|------|-----|
| History | 74.9 | 447 |
| Economics | 74.8 | 369 |
| Sociology | 71.1 | 277 |
| Political Science | 69.1 | 333 |
| Anthropology | 67.9 | 302 |
| Geography | 53.1 | 192 |

Table 4. Percentage of Elite Faculty Employed by Alma Mater by Discipline

| | % | N |
|-------------------|------|-----|
| History | 21.5 | 447 |
| Political Science | 19.8 | 333 |
| Economics | 19.0 | 369 |
| Anthropology | 15.2 | 302 |
| Sociology | 13.4 | 277 |
| Geography | 12.0 | 192 |

As can be seen, history had the largest percentage of their own graduates on their full-time faculties (21.5%). Geography had the smallest percentage of their elite faculty on the faculties at their alma maters (12.0%).

Table 5 indicates the number of Ph.D.'s produced from the most highly ranked universities who were represented on the full-time faculty of one of the elite departments in the social sciences. Harvard had 333 of its graduates in faculty positions in one of the elite social science departments. Chicago, Yale, and Berkeley followed with 185, 141, and 138, respectively. These seven most highly ranked universities produced 1,061 faculty members in the elite departments, or 55.3% of the social science elite.

Table 5. Number and Source of Ph.D.'s For Faculty of Academic Elite Departments in the Social Sciences

| Source | Number |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Harvard University | 333 |
| University of Chicago | 185 |
| Yale University | 141 |
| University of California, Berkeley | 138 |
| University of Michigan, Ann Arbor | 112 |
| University of Wisconsin, Madison | 86 |
| Stanford University | 66 |

DISCUSSION

Graduate departments in the social sciences (or in any discipline) must rely to a large extent upon their reputations to attract highly qualified faculty and graduate students to participate in their programs. Moreover, most students who complete the Ph.D. and enter the academic job market recognize that the reputation of the institution from which they graduated is a critical factor in their employability (Bair, Thompson, and Hickey 1986).

In his study of sociology graduate departments, Helmer (1974, p. 50) found a strong correlation between the prestige of the department where individuals receive a Ph.D. and the prestige of the department where they secure their first and later jobs. Whereas a variety of factors enter into the screening process for faculty selection, it would be naive to argue that the subjective evaluation of the candidate's degree-granting institution is not an important part of the decision process (Bair, Thompson, and Hickey 1986).

The social science graduate programs which were top-ranked in the 1981 National Academy of Sciences study are undoubtedly strong programs. We certainly do not wish to argue that they are not. However, our data suggest that a number of subjective factors influence any procedure in which academic departments are ranked. Primarily, we contend that a rather small group of institutions tend consciously or unconsciously to enhance each other's reputations by hiring each other's graduates over a period of time. It should be recalled that the study cited by *Changing Times* used two measures of reputation in order to establish their list of the "best" graduate departments: how professors rated their peers in the same discipline, and how well the faculty thought each program educated research scholars and scientists. In looking at these criteria, it can be seen that they are vitally linked; when elite faculty are asked to rate their peers at other schools they are, to a large extent, rating their former professors and/or students (Bair, Thompson, and

Hickey 1986). In other words, there are a total of 1920 full-time faculty in the social sciences elite, and 1345 of them (70.0%) have graduated from these distinguished programs. Clearly it is in their best interest to rank their alma maters highly.

Our findings show minor differences in the relative amount of inbreeding or in the practice of hiring each other's graduates in all social science disciplines studied. However, geography clearly stands out as allowing greater social mobility than do the other disciplines. Whereas the other social science disciplines were comprised of between 67.9 percent and 74.9 percent of elite graduates, geography included only 53.1 percent. Geography's inbreeding was also somewhat lower than the others; we found that most social science disciplines tolerated or encouraged the practice of hiring graduates of their own alma maters; by contrast, we found geography at the bottom of the group, with only 12 percent of all geographers hired by the institutions they attended while pursuing their doctoral degrees.

While many factors may be responsible for geography's low rate of inbreeding and its practice of hiring fewer elite graduates than other social science disciplines, one factor seems to stand out. Even a cursory inspection of the historic development of the six social science disciplines shows that in one important respect geography is unique. Whereas Ivy League schools recognized the other five social sciences and gave them disciplinary autonomy, they did not do so in the case of geography. Schools like Harvard and Yale were thus unable to play a role in deciding which institutions joined the elite, and in geography this seems to have tempered the development of a more rigid system of stratification. To our thinking, this factor helps explain why such institutions as Clark University, University of Iowa and Pennsylvania State University have been able to gain entry to geography's elite while they have not been able to do so in any of the other social science disciplines.

The remarkable stability in the ranking of elite programs over the last few decades suggests that not only do elite faculty rate their own programs highly, but large numbers of faculty from less prestigious programs also rank those elite programs as "the best." Several factors may explain this phenomenon. On the one hand, our data suggest that the consistently high rankings of elite programs are due, in part, to the large numbers of graduates elite programs put into the disciplines each year. While they place some graduates in other elite schools, most descend into mid-level schools or less renowned institutions where they continue to subjectively rank their alma maters as the very best. The high number of elite school graduates at all levels also seems to enable them to play a disproportionate role in shaping opinion within the disciplines (Bair, Thompson, and Hickey 1986).

There is another way of explaining the relative stability in the ranking of elite programs over time. Obviously, there are not enough faculty from elite schools at middle and lower level programs for them to maintain the high status ranging of their alma maters without some support from their non-elite

colleagues. Tradition may be a partial explanation for the non-elite's acceptance of their inferior status. Elite schools have been accorded high esteem for decades, and these traditions typically have gone unchallenged. A more likely explanation, however, is that the non-elite in a classic example of *false consciousness* (Marx and Engels 1967) have adopted their elite peer's definition that the latter's programs and their faculties are indeed superior to their own. Buttressed by only a few subjective government surveys and contact with a handful of individuals from elite programs, the non-elite have not only accepted, but even promoted the notion that elite graduate programs are deserving of high esteem, whereas others including their own, are not (Bair, Thompson, and Hickey 1986).

Ultimately, it should be asked, "are the highest ranked programs indeed the best Ph.D. programs in the social sciences, or do they comprise an 'Academic Elite' who have the largest number of faculty members in the discipline and a vested interest in perpetuating the present ranking system?" Our data suggest the latter. Two final comments seem in order. First, we contend that because of their subjectivity, current ranking systems are a detriment to the disciplines. They may impede professional mobility, reward status over achievement and result in programs (area studies, for example) of lesser renown being bypassed, although they may merit as high or higher recognition than those of the elite. Second, it is our belief that all current ranking systems contain serious distortions and misrepresentations. Because they have the potential of doing as much harm as good, we recommend that as they are presently constituted all systems of departmental ranking be routinely ignored (Bair, Thompson, and Hickey 1986).

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**FEMALE GANG DELINQUENCY:
A SEARCH FOR "ACCEPTABLY DEVIANT BEHAVIOR"**

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This paper explores the forms of female gang delinquency through an analysis of ambiguous deviance norms operating within the gang structure. Caught within competing behavioral norms, female gang members are forced to "fine tune" their deviant behavior in order to make it "acceptable" to their unique position as females within a delinquent gang. The resulting behavior is a "typical" form of female delinquency which is deviant enough for gang membership but not so deviant as to be seen as a contradiction to female character expectations. The explanatory framework and coinciding specific forms of "acceptable deviance" are examined in light of the sexual promiscuity, drug use, aggressive or violent behavior, and motherhood of female gang members.

The historic commitment to the assumption that deviance is a typically male phenomenon has had a great impact on the theoretical and empirical framework from which the gang phenomenon has been studied. In general, Carol Smart (1976) has indicated that a "sexist ideology" operates within both contemporary and historic criminological theory; thus our understanding of female deviance has been biased by current gender stereotypes. Because of these assumptions about gender-typed behavior, little research exists on the role females (and more specifically, female deviant behaviors) play within gang networks. The research that does exist primarily focuses on the female role in relation to males, where males play the dominantly deviant role, and females act to support male deviance (i.e. transporting weapons, providing alibis, acting as spies and lures, and providing sex for male gang members (Campbell 1984, p. 14).

While such research is informative, it does little to aid our understanding of the dynamics motivating female gang members toward certain types of behavior. Why does female gang delinquency tend to be "male supportive" and of "lower intensity" than male gang delinquency? Does the gang structure have any impact on the female member's chosen forms of deviance? While current descriptions of "typical female gang delinquency" can be partly explored through Smart's theoretical sexist ideology and the related "self fulfilling prophesy" in the arrest behavior of police, there seems to be still another dynamic involved--a dynamic which is operating on the level of the individual female gang member's perception and rooted in the gang structure itself.