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Enduring Privilege

Schooling and elite formation in the United States

Abstract: Drawing on two studies of American elite schools, the author explores the ways in which both private and publicly funded elite schools engage in contemporary class-making and remaking through teaching students particular lessons about themselves, others, and world around them that cultivate privilege as a collective identity. In this exploration, the author moves beyond commodified conceptions of privilege to provide a more useful framework for investigating the role that privilege plays in the production of elites. The article concludes by arguing that the processes of social reproduction seem to be well in place within elite schools despite the shifting social and economic landscapes of the United States.

Keywords: American Elite Schools; Privilege; Class-making; Hidden Curriculum; Elite Production

1. Reconfiguring Privilege

In his classic book, *The Power Elite,* C. Wright Mills (1956) stated that elite schools are "the most important agency for transmitting the traditions of the upper social classes and regulating the admission to new wealth" (pp. 64–65). Building on Mills' work, Cookson and Persell (1985), in their seminal study of elite boarding schools in the United States, demonstrated how these schools reproduced an elite class by transmitting power and privilege. They argued that a combination of "philosophies, programs, and lifestyles" (p. 4) put students through a rite of passage that stripped them of their sense of self and through which they developed loyalties of other members of the elite "[to] become soldiers for their class" (p. 124). Other studies similarly show that elite schools matter a great deal in the production and preservation of elites (e. g., Domhoff, 2006; Levine, 1980; Useem & Karabel, 1986; Zweigenhaft, 1993). Over the past decade or so, in-depth ethnographies of elite schools suggest that these institutions, boarding schools in particular, continue to serve a fundamental role in the reproduction of elite status (e. g., Chase, 2008; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2009), providing greater access to elite universities (Espenshade & Radford, 2013) that then leads to higher likelihood of power (e. g., Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 2014) and greater earnings (Witteveen & Attewell, 2017), and advantaged access to networks within the ranks of the financial, legal and managerial elite (Rivera, 2016).

During the 20th century, a diploma from an elite boarding school, especially the top ranked ones studied by Cookson and Persell (1985), mostly outweighed all other admission requirements to elite universities (Golden, 2007). Academic superiority and demon-

strated ability were not the primary requirement (Zweigenhaft, 1993). During this time, elite universities heavily relied on these secondary schools for applicants. Scholars have provided historical (e. g., Karabel, 2005), economic (e. g., Hoxby & Avery, 2012), and ethnographic (e. g., Stevens, 2007) accounts of how elite institutions of higher education have perpetuated unequal access. In 2018, things seem to have changed and these elite institutions appear to have become more accessible to students from diverse educational backgrounds, and in some ways they have. Roughly 63 percent of Harvard students, for example, hail from publicly funded high schools. Elite secondary boarding schools are no longer the direct pipeline to Harvard and other Ivy League universities that they once were.

However, despite the claim that elite universities now serve as engines of social mobility, the merit systems controlling the admissions practices in the U. S. still function, unofficially, to select the already economically advantaged. For example, the middle income of Harvard students represents the wealthiest 5 percent in the U. S. (Khan, 2011). While Harvard, other Ivy League and highly-selective universities are increasingly drawing students from secondary schools other than those that have been the dominant focus of most studies on American elite schooling, their students are simultaneously richer. The expansion of the pipelines to elite universities, however, has less to do with a change in the power and status of elite private schools, especially boarding schools – these institutions remain bastions of privilege – than the ways in which elite secondary schooling has been reconfigured and expanded in response to the shifting social and economic landscapes of the United States and to the country's enduring (and, in some ways, increased) "savage inequalities" (Kozol, 1991) in school funding that stratify school character and quality, and educational circumstances and outcomes (Nieto, 2005).

Over the past two decades, neoliberal policies behind major educational reforms promoting high-stakes testing, accountability, competitive markets, and increased education choices have expanded the role of publicly funded schools in providing elite education. However, as Gaztambide-Fernández and Maudlin (2016) argue, "To a large extent, private schools have continued the mainstay of elite schooling, providing educational alternatives for affluent families and building strong ties with elite universities" (p. 57). In fact, there has been an increased demand for the most selective and most expensive private schools in the past several years as the economic gap continues to widen. At the same time, though, more publicly funded schools, especially 'private public schools' (Perilli & Scull, 2010) in wealthy suburban and urban communities[1],

1 The funding for the majority of public schools in the United States comes from three levels: local, state, and federal, in that order. On average, the federal government adds less than ten percent to local education budgets. Funding from the federal and state governments typically make up less than half of the funding. Most funds are provided through local taxes. Schools located in wealthy communities, therefore, are provided significantly more funding than schools in impoverished communities. In fact, these schools often have similar amount of resources as private schools. Thus, why these public schools are often considered de facto private schools.

and exclusive magnet and charter schools known for being academic powerhouses, are offering the kinds of educational programs that once were only available through private education – ones that, among other things, maximize affluent students' advantages to become even more competitive in the "space of intensified struggle" (Weis, Cipollone & Jenkins, 2014, p. 216) of elite higher education.

Because elite status must be struggled over (Bourdieu, 1996), these publicly funded schools occupy a more uncertain position within the field of American elite education than those schools established in the late 19th century to serve, as Baltzell (1964) put it, "a vital factor in the creation of a national upper class, with more or less homogenous values and behavior patterns" (p. 127). However, indicators such as an increased number of students at highly-selective universities coming from elite public schools suggest, at the very least, that these publicly funded schools are becoming increasingly significant in the production of elites.

In this article, I provide an overview of two studies to highlight the ways in which both private and publicly funded elite schools engage in contemporary class-making and remaking by teaching students particular lessons about themselves, others, and world around them that cultivate privilege as a collective identity. Drawing on these studies, this article concludes by arguing that the processes of social reproduction seem to be well in place within elite schools (both independent and publicly-funded) despite the shifting social and economic landscapes of the United States. Before discussing these studies, I move beyond traditional conceptions of privilege in the next section to provide a more useful framework for exploring the role that privilege plays in the production of elites.

2. Understanding Privilege

Privilege is a contested concept and, as Koh and Kenway (2016) point out, "a slippery term often mobilised to speak to all sorts of individual and group advantage" (p. 1). Yet, scholars, mostly from the fields of cultural anthropology, social psychology, cultural sociology and multicultural education, primarily construct commodified notions of privilege. Privilege, in other words, has been understood extrinsically, as something individuals have or possess, rather than as something more intrinsic, as something that reveals who they are or who they have become in a fundamental sense. Although intrinsic aspects of privilege are acknowledged, such as the influence of advantages on people's identities, the prominent views of privilege, informed mainly by groundbreaking work that emerged nearly three decades ago (e. g., McIntosh, 1988), continue to be focused mainly on what people have rather than on who they are.

Peggy McIntosh's (1988) work on white privilege and male privilege is rightly celebrated, because she provided both a personal narrative and a theoretical framework to encourage reflection on and conversation about privilege. In her essay on what she calls the "invisible knapsack" of privilege, McIntosh argues that one way of understanding how privilege works – and how it is kept invisible – is to examine the way we think

about inequality. She claims that we typically think of inequality from the perspective of the one who suffers the consequences of the subordination or oppression, not the one who receives the benefits; hence those who receive privilege are not in our focus. As she questions this common way of thinking about inequality, McIntosh challenges individuals who have privilege to "open their invisible knapsacks," which contain all of the benefits that come to them from their social, cultural, and economic positions. She urges them to take a critical look at all the various (and often unconscious) ways they enjoy benefits and advantages that others do not.

We begin to confront privilege, according to McIntosh (1988), by becoming aware of unearned advantage and conferred dominance and by understanding how social locations (e. g., schools, workplaces, and communities) create and maintain privilege for certain groups (e. g., White, heterosexual, male, and affluent). McIntosh argues that the more aware people are of their privilege, the more they can contribute to changing themselves and the privileged locations that they occupy. Because privilege is rooted primarily in social systems, change does not happen only when individuals change; locations such as schools and workplaces that support privilege must change as well. Certain people, of course, need to change in order to do the work necessary to bring about change, but it is insufficient for individuals simply to change (see Bishop, 2002; Goodman, 2011).

McIntosh (1988) paved the way for others to examine the complex ways that privilege works through memberships (e. g., Jensen, 2016; Wise, 2005), representations (e. g., Mantsios, 2003), actions (e. g., Johnson, 2017), and language (e. g., Kleinman & Ezzell, 2003) to regenerate and re-create itself, thereby perpetuating structures of domination and subordination (e. g., Jensen, 2005; Wise, 2005). This body of work established a critical foundation for making systems of privilege visible and for revealing the ways individuals and institutions work in ways to reinforce and regenerate privilege. This body of work demonstrated the ways in which individuals from dominant groups tend to have little awareness "of their own dominant identity, of the privileges it affords them, of the oppression suffered by the corresponding disadvantaged group, and of how they perpetuate it" (Goodman, 2011, p. 22). In fact, as scholars argue (e. g., Bailey, 1998; Case, 2013), one of the functions of privilege is to structure the world in ways that conceal how privilege works, so that advantages remain invisible to those who benefit from them. These scholars have argued that individuals' lack of awareness of their advantages, what some call "the luxury of obliviousness" (Johnson, 2017), is an important part of understanding how privilege works.

Although some scholars acknowledge intrinsic aspects of privilege (e. g., Seider, 2010) – in particular the influence of privilege on people's identities – the prominent views on privilege have ultimately fallen short in providing a framework for exploring those aspects. In constructing a more useful framework, we must move beyond the conception of privilege as a commodity toward an understanding of privilege as identity (e. g., Howard, 2008, 2010). As an identity or an aspect of identity, privilege is a lens through which individuals with economic, social and cultural advantages understand themselves, others and the world around them. Their values, perspectives, assumptions,

and actions are shaped, created, re-created, and maintained through this lens of privilege. This view of privilege is more concerned with people's self-understandings than with what advantages they have. To think about privilege in this way is not to deny or diminish the importance of advantages that certain individuals and groups have over others, but it is, in fact, to underline the relationship between advantages and identity formation, and thus to understand the ways individuals actively construct and cultivate privilege.

Although identity is addressed in the study of elites and elite education by some (e. g., Keßler & Krüger, 2018; Maxwell & Aggleton, 2014), most scholars use related concepts such as identification, membership and social category (e. g., Gaztambide-Fernández, 2009). In this body of work, an implied view of identity emerges from this body of work that challenges traditional ways of thinking about identity as a distinctive and stable set of characteristics belonging to an individual or group. Instead, the common thinking is that identities develop within social and cultural groups and out of the socially and culturally marked differences and commonalities that permeate interactions within and between groups. According to this perspective, identities are marked by many categories: gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, class, religion, and ability, to name the dimensions most commonly discussed. These different categories have meaning in the material and symbolic structures that organise social and cultural groups in societies. Groups are positioned in particular ways to be at an advantage (and therefore, others at a disadvantage) in the accumulation of power and resources (Stoudt, Fox, & Fine, 2012). But larger structures in societies are constantly in flux, and therefore, identities are not fixed.

What may be meaningful at a particular moment or in a certain context may not be so meaningful at another moment or in another context. Because of this continuous placement and displacement of who people are, identities are viewed as multiple, contextual, and contingent. As Yuval-Davis (2011) argues, identities "can be more or less stable in different social contexts, more or less coherent, more or less authorized and/or contested by the self and others, depending on specific situational factors, and can reflect routinized constructions of everyday life" (p. 15). Identities, therefore, are constantly in transition through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong (Fortier, 2000; Probyn, 1996).

This view of identities as not fixed and as being constantly influenced by various contexts, structures and interactions establishes a more useful framing for exploring the intrinsic aspects of privilege. From this perspective, identities are understood as forms of *self-understanding:* "People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are" (Holland, et al., 1998, p. 3). These self-understandings are not, however, simply individual, internal, psychological qualities or subjective understandings that emerge solely from self-reflection. Identities, instead, link the personal and the social – they are constituted relationally (Wexler, 1992); they entail action and interaction in a sociocultural context (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995); they are social products that live in and through activity and practice (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998); and they are always performed and enacted (Butler 1990).

With a primary focus on the intrinsic aspects of privilege, this conception of privilege redirects attention towards the agency of privileged individuals. Even though human agency exists within the contradiction between people as social producers and as social products (Holland, et al., 1998), self-understandings are neither imposed nor stable. Individuals mediate cultural meanings and have the capacity to transform these understandings in order to interrupt the cultural processes that validate and support privilege and, therefore, oppression. With the agency to form their own self-understandings (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2013), privilege, therefore, is not something one is passively given or possesses but instead, something one actively constructs and cultivates.

3. Learning Privilege

To explore the role of elite schools' hidden curriculum in reinforcing privilege, I conducted a six-year (1997–2002) multisite ethnographic study of the lessons that students at elite schools are taught about their place in the world, their relationship with others, and who they are (Howard, 2008). The four schools in this study – three located in Midwestern and one located in Northeastern U. S. – were as different as they were similar. Their communities held different political views (e. g., conservative/liberal), different forms of social status (e. g., old money/nouveau riche), and different types of relationships with their local communities (e. g., detached/connected). One school was publicly funded and the other three were private schools. Each school had its own distinctive mission statement, customs, set of rules, requirements and policies, and ideals. They took great pride in their distinctive qualities.

And yet these school communities took similar norms for granted as natural and legitimate. These norms reflected core values – academic excellence, ambition, trust, service, and tradition – that were expressed in a variety of ways and contexts (e. g., in their ideals, missions, and standards; within and outside classrooms; in their school culture; in their curriculum) and guided ways of knowing and doing that both created high standards for their educational programs and reinforced privilege. On one hand, these values revealed their definition of "excellence." They promoted student success, trust within the community, choices, the importance of service, and the value of connecting the past to the present to give certainty of the future. The schools were places where excellence was the order of the day and students and educators were really good at being good. Of course, their abundance of resources also contributed to their excellent qualities, but all that was good at these schools did not entirely result from their affluence. The confluence of motivated, dedicated, and hardworking educators and students significantly contributed to the "goodness" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983) found at these schools. However, on the other hand, and often not as apparent to outsiders, the values by which the schools defined their excellence also encouraged win-at-all-costs attitudes, unhealthy levels of stress, deception, materialism, competition, selfishness, and greed.

Values celebrated within these elite schooling contexts promoted "unintentional" lessons that taught students: there's only one right way of knowing and doing; success

comes from being superior to others; do whatever it takes to win; fulfillment is gained by accumulating; and others outside their communities are too different from them to relate to. These five (purportedly) unintentional lessons were often in conflict with intentional ones, which aimed to teach students high moral character, integrity, respect for others, and responsible participation in the world. For example, the schools emphasized the importance of community and collaboration. At the same time, the schools placed students in a competitive race to be better than others in academics, athletics and other aspects of their schooling. Competition overshadowed more positive, productive lessons on how students should live and relate to others. Within these educational contexts, values such as cooperation and respect came second to what it takes to stand out above the rest. Therefore, contradictions existed in what the schools claimed they wanted their students to learn (e. g., teamwork, cooperation) and what they actually taught them (e. g., winning, outdoing others). In part, this conflict resulted from the myriad factors that influenced student learning such as social contexts, organizational structures, institutional rules, curriculum, community influences, norms, values, and educational and occupational aspirations. These factors often gave shape and life to the unintentional lessons, even when educators and parents declared they wanted their children/students to learn other lessons.

Frequently, these unintentional lessons ended up being the ones that were the most consequential for students' lives. The everyday nature of these unintentional lessons allowed them to remain hidden as they pervaded students' educational experiences and reinforced powerful messages to students about who they are, how they should live and relate to others, what is important in life, and what the future holds for them. The impact on students' lives was far reaching, influencing how they thought about others and how they viewed and felt about themselves. Because these lessons often were framed as "normal" and everyday, they were not usually hard to detect. In most cases, they were taught in plain sight and repetitively. The contradiction of something open being hidden not only legitimized these lessons but masked the messages embedded in those lessons.

The unintentional lessons hid in plain view the cultural possesses involved in reinforcing and regenerating privilege. These lessons sent powerful messages to students about their place in the world, who they are and should be, and their relations with those outside of their world. Unacknowledged, these lessons taught students particular forms of knowledge, values, dispositions, and beliefs. These lessons prepared students to lead their lives guided by distinctive ways of knowing and doing that established their taken-for-granted sets of ideas for how things ought to be and the frame of reference for what is considered common sense. As conduits for learning privilege and power, these lessons assisted students in constructing privilege as a central component of their identities.

4. Negotiating Privilege

In 2012, I embarked on a participatory action research (PAR) project developed to build upon my previous research in order to investigate the individual and cultural processes involved in constructing and cultivating privilege. Researchers are increasingly engaging in PAR to study *with* privileged individuals *within* institutions structured to reproduce their privilege (e. g., Stoudt, et.al., 2012). Encouraged by the potential of this collaborative approach, I teamed up with a group of privileged young people to explore the self-understandings of eight wealthy American students and the role of these understandings in generating and reinforcing their privilege (Howard, Polimeno, & Wheeler, 2014).

As a group, the students who participated in our study reflected the diversity[2] of what some scholars identify as the 'new elite' (e. g., Currid-Halkett, 2017). They were not all born into wealthy families. They were not all white – one was Asian American, one was Latino, and one was biracial (Arab American and Native American). They were not all Christian – one was culturally an atheist, one was Jewish, and one was Muslim. Reflecting the changing nature of elite education in the U. S., they did not all attend private schools – five attended public schools. Although differences existed within the group, all of them were U. S. citizens and came from families with characteristics of those whom Anyon (1981) identified as affluent professional and executive elite. Unless independently wealthy, the participants' parents were either executives or high-status professionals. The participants' families had an annual income that placed them in the top 10 percent – although most were in the top 5 percent and two were in the top 1 percent.

The students were different from each other in other ways as well. They lived and attended school in different settings, ranging from a small, homogenous suburban community in Massachusetts to a diverse city of 7 million people in Malaysia and from a large public school in Kentucky to an elite boarding school in California. Their lives were marked by distinct experiences, from living a sheltered life to traveling throughout the world, from relying on a supportive family to enduring an abusive home life. They pursued different life and career goals, from aspiring to become a professional dancer to preparing to enter the finance and business world, from wanting to make as much money as possible to intending to spend as much time as possible doing service work in poor communities. Even with the particularities of their experiences, immediate worlds, and aspirations, six common qualities of their self-understandings emerged: *confident* (understanding self as poised to overcome any obstacles); *isolated* (understanding others outside own social class group as being too different from self to relate); *certain* (understanding self with unquestionable thinking about future success); *independent* (understanding self as distinctive from others and as primarily responsible for accom-

2 The students participating in the study were selected to represent the diversity of the 'new elite' mainly in terms of race, religion, gender, and geography.

plishments); *hardworking* (understanding self as willing and capable of putting forth the effort needed for success); and *scripted* (understanding self in relation to clearly defined goals established in conjunction with cultural norms of their schools and family).

These six qualities of their common understandings of self, others, and the world around them revealed the individual and cultural processes involved in the production and maintenance of their privilege. More specifically, they negotiated their identities in ways to preserve, and possibly even advance, their advantages in life. By viewing themselves as hardworking, for example, they understood their current and future success as the natural and essential consequence of their own efforts and characteristics. They did not want to rely on their family's wealth to achieve their goals in life. They did not plan to take shortcuts, but instead work hard enough to deserve their future achievements. Although they partially acknowledged that their schooling and life advantages made it easier for them to achieve their goals than for others, they firmly upheld the meritocratic belief that anyone can achieve what they want in life. The various ideologies and particular emotions connected to this and the other qualities played important roles in the processes involved in forming and sustaining privilege. Their self-understandings were constituted in relation to and in coordination with specific ideologies and emotions. Privilege, therefore, was more than simply what they had; it was a crucial part of themselves, and their self-understandings, that they renewed, recreated, defended, and modified ideologically and affectively.

The students used various ideological operations and strategies to justify their advantages and the disadvantage of others, to minimize the influences of their advantages, and to differentiate themselves from people without their advantages while enclosing the group with whom they identified. These ideological operations and strategies, however, were not simply principles and ideas that the students knew and used in negotiating their advantages. The ways in which they used particular ideological moves revealed the medley of forces at play in constructing privilege as a central aspect of their self-understandings. Ideology played a critical role in maintaining and advancing the dynamics of power and oppression through the production of specific principles and ideas that supported unequal class relations.

Dominant ideologies circulated within their school communities often worked like a "network of templates or blueprints" (Geertz, 1973, p. 11) through which actions, experiences, and understandings of individuals were expressed and constituted. As familiar and respected systems of representations and complexes of narratives, ideologies mediated the students' self-understandings in profoundly influential and, often, unconscious ways. However, the meanings embedded in these ideologies took on different values and forms as students mediated these cultural meanings in constructing their self-understandings. Ideology and self-understandings met at the boundary between their inner and outer worlds. Their self-understandings were produced in relation to and in coordination with the ideologies in which they adopted and gave meaning.

Three affective expressions – *worthiness, integrity, and happiness* – interacted with dominant ideologies reinforced in their daily lives at school and home to uphold a necessary framing of self to feel more at ease with their privileged status, to reduce negative

feelings associated with their advantages, to provide a stabilizing force in their lives, and to give meaning and direction to their actions and plans. Although the meanings that formed and supported their self-understandings involved an amalgam of emotions, their self-understandings revealed that these three emotions were most powerfully involved in the production of privilege. This process aligned particular emotions with particular ideologies that their schools, similar to my previous study, reinforced through the lessons they were taught.

The students' capacity to understand themselves and to act on those understandings played an equally important role in the production of privilege. As such, their privilege was about agency as much as it was about advantages (see also, for example, Reay, Crozier, & James, 2011). Even though human agency exists within the contradiction between people as social producers and as social products, self-understandings are neither imposed nor stable. Individuals mediate cultural meanings and have the capacity to transform these understandings in order to interrupt the cultural processes that validate and support privilege. With the agency to form their own self-understandings, privilege, therefore, was not something students were passively given or possessed; instead, it was something they actively constructed and cultivated in ways that protected their class interests.

5. Continuing Privilege

American youth are coming of age in unsettled economic times. As economies have become global, the supply of high-paying jobs with health benefits, vacation time, and pensions in the U. S. labor market continues to dwindle, while the number of low-paying, unstable jobs with none of the aforementioned "perks" continues to grow (Lareau, 2011). Competition for the increasingly fewer "good" jobs is fierce, and it is widely argued that access to these jobs is closely tied to high levels of education and, at the very minimum, a college degree. At the same time, and perhaps consequentially, four-year colleges and universities, especially top-ranked institutions, have become more selective, with higher admissions standards; they have also become more expensive while providing less financial assistance.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, scholars increasingly claim that the shifting social and economic landscapes of the United States have brought about "an anxious affluent" and particularly produced troubled and uneasy identities of the upper class (Harris, 2007). Dominant narratives that serve to legitimize and rationalize social and economic inequalities have torn apart depictions of a complacent and comfortable upper class to emphasize the increasing insecurities of affluent Americans (e. g., Hacker, 2006). It is argued that the social and economic instabilities generated by the turbulent economic times are having a profound influence on the lives and self-understandings of young people from all social classes and are re-shaping the ways in which they, especially the affluent, imagine their lives, which are drastically differently than previous generations (e. g., Van Galen, 2007).

The elite students who participated in the two studies discussed in this article did not seem to share these uncertainties and anxieties. Without question, they knew that they would achieve what they wanted in life, would maintain their privileged positions in society, would continue to enjoy a lifestyle similar to that of their families and others in their communities, and would become successful in their eventual careers. In many respects, they had good reasons to be so certain about what lies ahead for them. Although the current social and economic landscapes are shifting, young people who come from families in the top 20 percent are likely to remain at the top. Furthermore, those at the top of the economic spectrum are becoming wealthier in recent years, as the gulf between the haves and have-nots has widened in the U. S.

Even during the financial crisis in 2008, the wealthiest Americans weathered the severest economic downturn in eighty years better than everyone else and, in fact, emerged from this crisis with an increased net worth. High stock prices, rising home values, and surging corporate profits have raised the recovery-era incomes of the most affluent Americans, while the incomes of almost everyone else are still weighed down by high unemployment and stagnant wages (Lowrey, 2013). In the U. S., class inequalities are back to levels not seen since before the Great Depression of the 1920s, with the top 10 percent of earners now making the most on record – half of all income – as the bottom 90 percent continue to see their net worth and earnings decline.

Against the backdrop of complicated class stratification generated by a shifting global economy, the explicit and hidden curriculum available to students in elite schools continues to be substantively different from what is available to the large majority of American students. The significance of these differences is how students are being prepared to assume particular social roles. In elite schooling contexts, as the two studies described in this article demonstrate, students are learning *privileged lessons* about themselves, others and the world around them to forge a particular sense of self. As such, these curricular arrangements are not just significant in terms of what and how students learn but also in how they come to understand themselves as subjects. In particular, the curriculum at elite schools plays a significant role in the production of particular elite subjectivities, providing a stabilizing force within the shifting landscape of opportunity.

The findings of these two studies are consistent with several other ones (e. g., Gaztambide-Fernández, 2009) by revealing how elite schools in the United States continue to play a significant role in the production of elites. As Cookson and Persell (2010) found in their follow-up study of the boarding schools they investigated twenty-five years earlier and reported in *Preparing for Power,* "[elite school's] constituency is basically the same as in the past, their traditions are unflinchingly consistent, the remain a pipeline to selective colleges, and the cultural lives of the schools are continuous from the past … what was true in 1985 is still true in 2010" (pp. 27–28). Even though elite schools have become more open and have been reconfigured in response to the constant economic, political, and cultural transformation of larger society, the foundations on which these schools were built remain unchanged. Through reinforcing and regenerating privilege, the core function of elite schools continues to make and remake elites.

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Zusammenfassung: Der Autor ergründet im Rückgriff auf zwei Untersuchungen amerikanischer Eliteschulen verschiedene Arten, wie private und öffentliche Eliteschulen jeweils in zeitgenössische Klassenbildung und -erneuerung eingreifen, indem sie Studierenden spezielle Lektionen über sich selbst, die Anderen und ihre Umwelt lehren, die Privilegierung als kollektive Identität fördern. In dieser Untersuchung bewegt sich der Autor jenseits von kommodifizierten Auffassungen von Privilegierung, um ein brauchbareres Bezugssystem für die Untersuchung der Rolle zu generieren, die Privilegierung in der Produktion von Eliten spielt. Der Beitrag argumentiert schließlich, dass, trotz sich verändernder sozialer und ökonomischer Verhältnisse in den Vereinigten Staaten, Prozesse sozialer Reproduktion innerhalb von Eliteschulen bestehen (bleiben).

Schlagworte: US-amerikanische Eliteschulen, Privilegien, Klassenbildung, ‚hidden curriculum', Elitenproduktion

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