

## **Zweigenhaft & Domhoff's "The Ironies of Diversity"**

"The movements that led to diversity in the power elite have succeeded to some extent, especially for women and minorities from privileged social backgrounds, but there has been no effect on the way the power elite functions or on the class structure itself."

The successful assimilation of women and minorities is explained by four processes:

1. Identity management: Newcomers to the power elite must demonstrate they think and act like "straight Christian males."

2. The importance of class: Women and minorities in the power elite tend to come from business and professional backgrounds.

3. The importance of education: "The women and minorities who make it to the power elite are typically better educated than the white males who are already part of it." They also tend to have degrees from elite schools, which confer membership in elite networks.

4. The importance of color: Having dark skin is an impediment to joining the power elite. Blacks and darker-skinned Latinos are exceptions to the general trend that class is becoming more important than ethnicity. The existence of an "oppositional culture" that devalues education contributes to this problem, especially for black males.

"The impetus for greater diversity, as we have stressed, did not come from within the power elite but was the result of external pressures. Generally speaking, members of the power elite reluctantly accepted diversification as a goal for themselves only because they had little choice."

Some ironies of diversity:

- Affirmative action was created by white elite males (in response to urban unrest) but is now defended by liberals and minorities.
- The addition of diversity to the power elite has strengthened it by giving it "buffers, ambassadors, tokens, and legitimacy."
- Women and minorities who join the elite have values and perspectives similar to the white males who were there already. Diversification has not necessarily resulted in new perspectives "in the boardroom."
- "The age-old American commitment to individualism, reinforced at every turn by members of the power elite, won out over the commitment to greater equality of income and wealth" that had been a rationale for the social movements that promoted it.