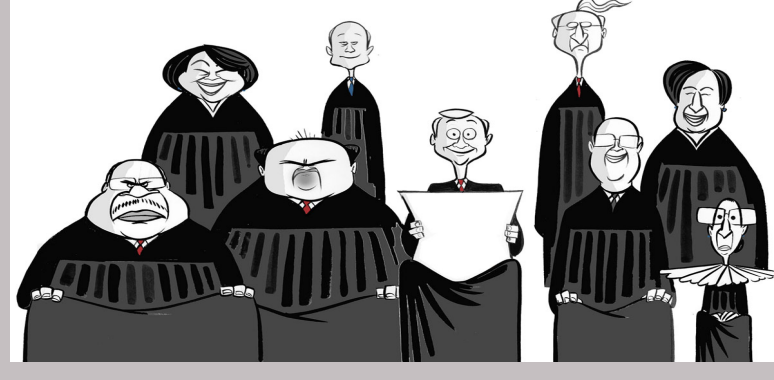


# The Relationship Between the American Public and Demographics on the Supreme Court: An Investigation of “The Harvard-Yale-ification of the Supreme Court.”



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## ABSTRACT

There are currently only two law schools represented on the Supreme Court: Harvard and Yale. This research looks to examine this recent narrowing of educational and professional backgrounds on the Supreme Court of the United States of America. Specifically, this paper looks to examine the influence the public has on Supreme Court nominations and the intricacies of public opinion surrounding potential judicial nominees. This is done by drawing from both literature reviewing the influences on Supreme Court nominations and through conducting a public opinion survey on related topics. Through analyzing this prior research and the survey results together it becomes clear that while it is problematic that there are only two law schools represented on the Supreme Court, the public has mixed views on this relative narrowing in diversity.

“In the history of the court,” says John Schwartz in his analysis of this phenomenon for the *New York Times*, “half of the 110 justices were undergraduates, graduates or law students in the Ivy League; since 1950, the percentage is 70. From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, every president who has seated a justice has picked at least one Ivy graduate.”

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

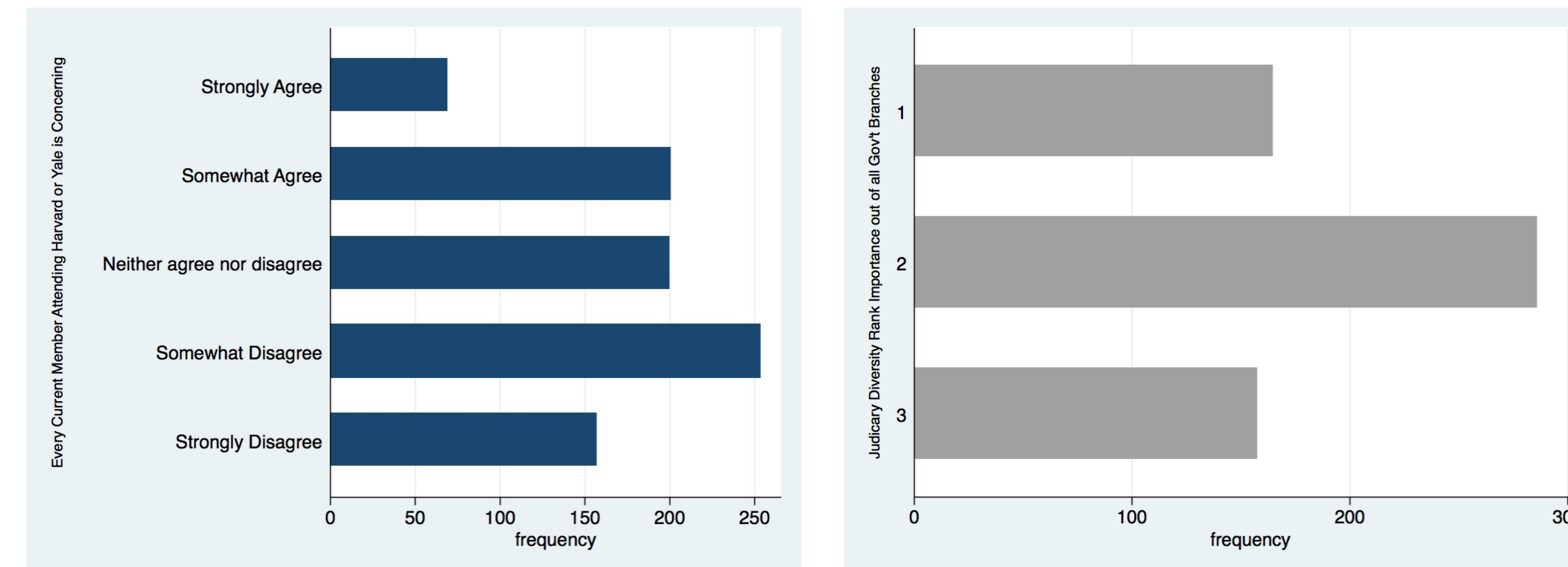
- How does the public evaluate candidates based on their educational and professional backgrounds?
- Does a Harvard or Yale law degree actually bolster a nominee’s chances at passing the Senate?
- How does the public think about diversity generally on the Supreme Court?
- Does it concern the public that there is a lack of professional and educational diversity on the court?

## METHODS

- Mturk Survey conducted in February 2017
- 950 responses
- 3 sections
  - Straight forward questions
  - List experiments
  - Profile experiments
- List Experiment
  - *Test statement: “A justice who went to a law school such as Harvard or Yale is better prepared to serve on the Supreme Court than a justice who went to law school elsewhere.”*
  - *Test Statement: A President should take into consideration the current demographics on the Court (i.e. race, gender, etc.) when picking a new Supreme Court nominee.”*
- Profile Experiment
  - No law school
  - Upenn
  - Harvard

## RESULTS

### Straight Forward Questions

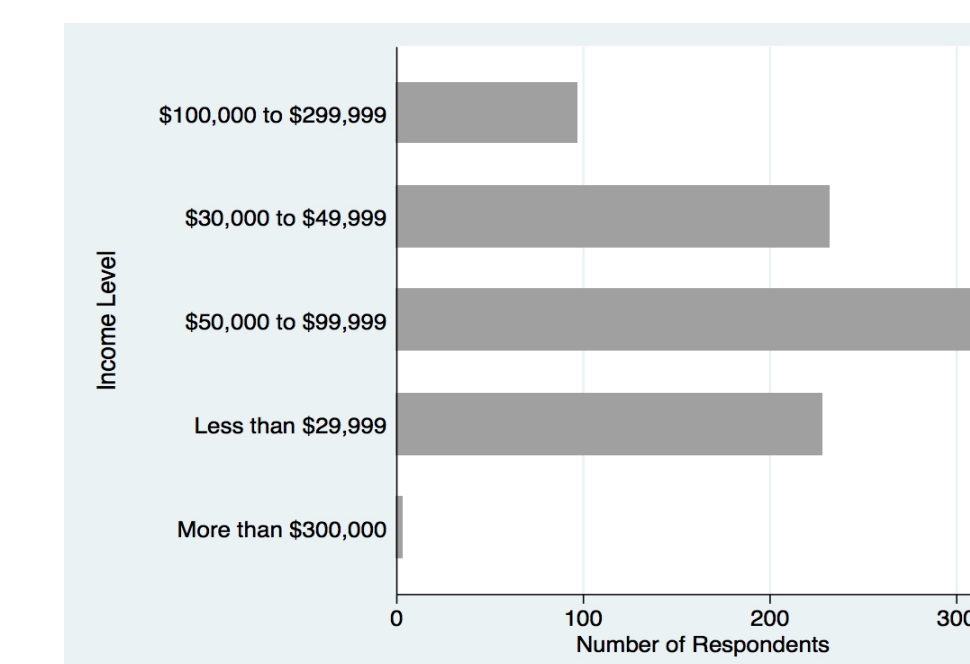


#	Diversity on Supreme Court	Count
1	Diversity of Gender	495
2	Diversity of Race	461
3	Professional Diversity (different prior careers)	107
4	Educational Diversity (variety of undergraduate and graduate schools)	86
5	Diversity of Religion	81
6	Diversity of Age	110
7	Economic/wealth Diversity (justices come from different economic backgrounds)	214
8	I don't worry about these issues on the Court	102
9	Other	14
	Total	881

### List Experiments

*A justice who went to a law school such as Harvard or Yale is better prepared to serve on the Supreme Court than a justice who went to law school elsewhere.”*

List 1, \$100,000+ income bracket	Mean Coef.	t	P>t	95% Conf.	Interval
(1)	.4075056	2.71	0.007	.1120025	.7030088



*Test Statement: A President should take into consideration the current demographics on the Court (i.e. race, gender, etc.) when picking a new Supreme Court nominee.”*

Mean Difference for List 2	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% Conf.	Interval
(1)	.3683637	.0538307	6.84	0.000	.2625683	.474159

## RESULTS

### Profile Experiments

Went to Upenn, agrees with you on most issues compared to no law school designated	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	[95% Conf.	Interval]
	.096154	.0493182	1.95	0.053	-.0013888	.1936968

M1= the mean endorsement score of the candidate where the law school designated is none

M2= the mean endorsement score of the candidate where Upenn is designated as the law school.  
Agrees with you on most issues

Mean	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	[95% Conf.	Interval]
(1)	.110278	.0467943	2.36	0.020	.0178118	.2027442

M1= the mean endorsement score of the candidate where the law school designated is Harvard

M2= the mean endorsement score of the candidate where Upenn is designated as the law school.  
Disagrees with you on most issues

## FURTHER RESEARCH

- How do Americans view diversity?

