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April 16, 2014

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## Why Your Brilliant Child Didn't Get Into The Ivies

Posted: 04/ 3/2012 10:20 am

Last Thursday, decisions from top colleges were delivered electronically to stressed-out high school seniors. By early evening, more than 90% of those who had applied to the eight Ivy League schools plus their partners-in-prestige, Stanford and MIT, had received a gently worded "Good luck elsewhere." Or, even worse, "waitlist status," which means sending a deposit check to a fourth choice institution, procuring a letter of recommendation from Nelson Mandela and spending the summer in limbo.

These new Ivy rejects are far from slackers. They're incredible kids with impressive resumes -- 2,350+ SATs, straight As in their 16 APs, debate champions, flute soloists and MVPs. Parents who have been dreaming of an Ivy education for their kids since conception are scratching their heads, trying to figure out what went wrong.

So, why didn't your child get in?

**1. She's a girl.** Fact: Female applicants are, plain and simple, better students. (I'm not sexist -- check the statistics!) And girls are more apt to take ownership of the "process." They require less adult help, making their applications seem more authentic... and heightening the competition.

**2. Your child is a BWRK (bright, well-rounded kid).** These days, colleges want a well-rounded class instead. Lopsided kids are beloved... Renaissance children? Not so much. It's a lot easier for an admissions officer to convince the rest of the committee to admit a trapeze artist than a yearbook editor.

**3. Your child's application stinks of privilege.** You had the best of intentions when you sent your son or daughter to Oxford last July to read the classics. But guess what? The colleges, who eventually are happy to accept your \$200,000, aren't thrilled about \$11,000 summer programs, even the life-changing ones. Outward Bound now looks dubious as well -- it used to be about achieving clarity through eating bark, but now could be a euphemism for "troubled teen." And forget those service opportunities in Central America -- the whole isthmus is now frowned upon.

**4. A lame essay.** Admissions officers are sick of reading essays about the challenges of building a latrine in Guatemala (see above) or how "I found the people of (insert name of developing country) to be exactly the same as in my home town of Greenwich, CT."

**5. Not enough leadership.** Although team players are in demand in the real world, colleges seek those with a Machiavellian spirit. Colleges are also fans of "rigor," but they are averse to "robots" who studied so hard that they're now boring and obedient.

**6. Not enough research experience.** If I were a college professor, the last thing I would want is a messy, smelly high school student hanging around my lab. But the kids who get to do this win out.

**7. The whole process is random and arbitrary.** The admissions people, who say they consider each applicant "holistically" and pay no attention to who needs financial aid, are actually sitting in a room eating pizza and throwing darts. So find solace in the fact that they've rejected your brilliant child for no good reason at all.

What now? Send in your deposit to a great non-Ivy (there are many) and never look back. And if your own alma mater dissed your kid, you can take out your anger by burning your sweatshirts and tearing the license plate holder off your car.

Or if you want more insight, leave a comment or send me a tweet. On Tuesday evening at 7 pm I'll be on a panel at the Strand in New York City with the directors of admissions of Columbia and NYU, as well as college counselors from Fieldston and Nightingale. I promise to ask them your questions and convince them to reveal everything.

**Follow J.D. Rothman on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/neurotic\\_parent](http://www.twitter.com/neurotic_parent)**

