Journal of Policy Analysis and Management

Decision Letter (JPAM-2025-13688)

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Subject: Journal of Policy Analysis and Management - Decision on Manuscript ID JPAM-2025-13688 [email ref: DL-SW-3-a]

Body: 23-Aug-2025

Dear Dr. Hussain Hadah:

I am writing with respect to your submission Manuscript ID JPAM-2025-13688, entitled "The Effect of Racial and Ethnic Attitudes on Asian Identity in the U.S." We have now heard from two well qualified experts on your paper, and it has also been reviewed by Erdal Tekin, the editor-in-chief of JPAM, and me. Based on these evaluations, a decision of 'Major Revision' has been issued for the manuscript.

I am attaching the referee reports below. The reviews are thorough, and addressing the concerns they raise will require substantial effort.

Revising the manuscript to a level suitable for JPAM will be a significant undertaking. However, because the question you pursue is of interest, we are offering you the opportunity to revise. Please respond to each referee's comments in detail. Where a concern cannot reasonably be addressed, you should provide a clear and convincing explanation.

If you decide to undertake the revision, please prepare a memo explaining how you have responded to the concerns raised here and in the referee reports to accompany your manuscript resubmission. When submitting your revised manuscript, you will be able to respond to the comments made by the reviewer(s) in the space provided. You can use this space to document any changes you make to the original manuscript. In order to expedite the processing of the revised manuscript, please be as specific as possible in your response to the reviewer(s).

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To facilitate timely publication of manuscripts submitted to the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, your revised manuscript should be uploaded within a year of this decision. Given the extent of the revisions being requested, I am unable to offer you a guarantee at this point that the paper will be published if it is revised and resubmitted. We thank you for the opportunity to review your work.

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Sincerely,

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Should you be interested, Wiley Editing Services offers expert help with manuscript, language, and format editing, along with other article preparation services. You can learn more about this service option at www.wileyauthors.com/eeo/preparation. You can also check out Wiley's collection of free article preparation resources for general guidance about writing and preparing your manuscript at www.wileyauthors.com/eeo/prepresources.

Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 1

Comments to the Author
I'd like to thank the editors for the opportunity to review "The Effect of Racial and Ethnic Attitudes on Asian Identity in the U.S." The manuscript tests the effects of aggregate regional bias at the state level on the self-identification of Asian Americans. It finds that those who live in more biased states are less likely to identify as Asian and that these effects are particularly pronounced among second and third-generation immigrants. I believe that the manuscript tackles a very important question and has significant promise. However, I also believe it needs significant work before publication.

Beginning with the paper's theoretical account of racial bias and its potential impact on racial identity, I appreciate the author's use of formal theory to present a logical and rational model explaining why bias may affect racial identity. However, I feel the author misses an important literature on racial identity and assimilation that focuses on the behavioral aspects of race and racial identity. While they do briefly touch on some of this literature, I suggest that revisions have a greater focus on the behavioral literature on racial identity and assimilation in addition to the formal model. A good work that I could suggest on this topic is Telles and Ortiz's Generations of Exclusion.

As for the methods, I have a few concerns that I hope the author can address in future drafts. One concern that looms over the paper for me is that the 'objective' measure of Asian background may not be as objective as it seems. For instance, it is unclear that, say, the children or grandchildren of people who were born to non-asian parents in Asia, for example, on an American military base, would be classified as Asian. I don't think this is a huge concern for the analysis, but it needs to at least be addressed.

Second, I am concerned that using the state as the unit of analysis for regional bias may be problematic. Perhaps the bias of the community that one grows up in would be better measured at the city or zip-code level. For instance, those who live in Austin, Texas may have a very different experience with bias than those who live in rural west Texas. If the authors could provide even a supplemental analysis in which they analyze this at local level, this would help significantly to alleviate these concerns.

Additionally, while I understand why children are of particular interest, I would also like to see what the results look like for Asian adults. Is this phenomenon of calculating one's identity concentrated among children? Do they come to identify more with their Asian roots as they reach adolescence and adulthood? Are the same calculations being made by adults? These are important questions that including the sample of adults could be useful to help answer.

Lastly and importantly, it is also unclear to me why the author uses measures of animus towards African Americans from the ANES in their bias index, especially when measures of animus towards Asian Americans are available on the very same study. Here I think the author either needs to make a case for the bias they are interested in being more broad than just bias toward Asian-Americans or they need to reestimate their measures of bias.

While I do think significant work needs to be done to strengthen both the theory and methods of this paper, I think it is an important piece that has strong theoretical foundations, a defensible empirical test of its theory and impactful findings. I hope the author is able to address these concerns and publish this paper in the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management.

Reviewer: 2

Comments to the Author
This paper examines the factors that influence whether individuals born in Asian countries or whose parents or grandparents were born in Asia self-identify as Asian. The question of how individuals self-report their race or ethnicity is important. As the author(s) discuss, this can be important for our

understanding of racial gaps. In Brazil, it is widely understood that "money whitens," and earlier research suggests that more successful individuals of Hispanic origin are less likely to report themselves as Hispanic, generating an upward bias in the Hispanic/non-Hispanic wage gap.

Major Comments

The paper reports that roughly 96% of individuals who were born in Asia or who have two Asian parents report being Asian. Before analyzing this group, it would be essential to understand the 4% who do not. Do they report being of a single racial group not elsewhere classified (e.g., Indian or Chinese), in which case we might reasonably either exclude them since we do not know what they reported or assume that they chose a subcategory of Asian? Is there any way to determine what proportion might be expats born in Asia (primarily in Hong Kong or Singapore)?

Leaving aside these issues, it is problematic to use a linear probability model when the probability is near 0 or 1. Given the range of bias shown in some of the figures, a coefficient of -.05 suggests that the predicted probability of reporting to be Asian is likely to exceed 1 for a nontrivial number of observations. At the very least, the author should show that the results are robust to using probit and logit. I am more inclined to the view that trying to explain the small proportion of individuals with two Asian parents who do not self-identify as Asian is not likely to be productive.

The interesting part of the paper concerns individuals of mixed ancestry, most of whom do not identify as Asian. But, the only Asian/not only Asian dichotomy is problematic. What proportion of the "not only Asian" reports being Asian and something else? In general, we want to know whether explanatory variables shift mixed-race individuals from reporting themselves as Asian only to something else only, or to biracial.

The paper either doesn't report basic summary statistics about the distribution of bias, or I missed it. The effect of a one-standard-deviation increase in anti-Asian bias on the probability of reporting only Asian appears to be modest.

It is surprising that the paper does not look more carefully at other potential explanatory factors, such as income. This is particularly important because the paper is motivated by the potential bias in measures of Asian/non-Asian disparities. However, unless reporting Asian identity is directly or indirectly related to the outcomes for which we want to measure disparities, to a first approximation, there is no bias in the disparities estimates. For example, if reporting a non-Asian identity is uncorrelated with income, the estimated income of Asians is unbiased. The problem only arises if high-income Asians are more (or less) likely to report themselves as non-Asian.

Similarly, any effect of anti-Asian bias on reporting is only important if it affects Asians differentially based on their incomes (or other variables we examine for disparities). Thus, it is somewhat surprising that anti-Asian bias is not interacted with other variables, although I expect that the data are not up to the task.

Minor comments

The argument that parents and children provide similar reports about the child's race is not compelling. Presumably, most children mimic their parents' views and only develop an independent self-concept late in childhood or in adulthood. That doesn't make the parent's report or the child's report uninteresting; it just affects the interpretation.

My memory, perhaps incorrect, is that Akerlof and Kranton primarily discuss identity in terms of prescribed, not proscribed, behaviors. Of course, the requirement to act in a certain way may also be interpreted as a requirement not to act in some other way, but the former is more in line with the presentation in the original paper.

On page 23, I find the statement "While my aim is not to establish a causal effect of bias on self-reported Asian identity, I intend to illustrate a correlation between anti-Asian bias and self-reported identity" extremely odd. Presumably, the goal is to show that the level of bias causes some Asians to switch between an Asian and non-Asian identity. If not, why is the paper interesting? The following sentence maintains that the existence of a correlation suggests possible bias in other measures, but as discussed above, this is only important if anti-Asian bias interacts with characteristics we are comparing between Asians and others.

The world would be a better place if economists stopped including the final paragraph of the introduction, which we all skip anyway. The body of the introduction should be a sufficient guide without a paragraph telling us that the conceptual framework is in a section called conceptual framework.

Summary

There is a potentially interesting paper here, but the current version is quite far from that paper. I expect that the paper should focus almost entirely on "Asians" of mixed ancestry. It should begin by showing how those individuals report their race and not simply use an Asian only/everything else dichotomy. It should then explore more fully what determines the choice among the possible responses, rather than just examining the effect of anti-Asian bias. If possible, it should examine whether anti-Asian bias affects "Asians" with different characteristics (education, income, gender) differently.

It should then return to motivating discussion of bias in the measure of disparities to give us a sense of how important endogenous identity is for our estimates.

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