The Effect of Racial and Ethnic Attitudes on Asian Identity in the U.S

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September 15, 2023

Abstract

I study the determinants of the choice to identify as Asian among those who could—those whose parents, grandparents, or selves were born in an Asian-speaking country. I find that individuals with Asian ancestry are significantly less likely to self-identify as Asian if they live in states with high levels of implicit ethnic bias. A one standard deviation increase in bias decreases self-reported Asian identity by 7 and 13 percentage points for first and second-generation Asians, respectively. These effects are more prominent among second-generation immigrants with both parents born in an Asian-speaking country than among children of inter-ethnic parents. These findings have implications for the interpretation of research on ethnic gaps in economic outcomes and the correct counting of the population.

Keywords: Economics of Minorities, Race, and Immigrants; Discrimination and Prejudice

JEL Classification: I310, J15, J71

Table 1: CPS Summary Statistics with Skin IAT Scores

Characteristic	Overall	By Generation		
	All Sample N = 318,404	**First** N=40,033	**Second** N=199,294	**Third** N=79,077
Female	0.49	0.54	0.49	0.49
Asian	0.65	0.95	0.72	0.33
Age	8.7 (5.1)	11.2 (4.5)	8.5 (5.1)	7.7 (5.0)
College Graduate: Father	0.50	0.56	0.49	0.48
College Graduate: Mother	0.48	0.55	0.47	0.48
Total Family Income (1999 dollars)	78,763 (80,171)	69,732 (72,672)	78,909 (81,395)	82,811 (80,254)

[1] The samples include children ages 17 and below who live in intact families. First-generation Asian immigrant children that were born in a Asian country. Native-born second-generation Asian immigrant children with at least one parent born in a Asian country. Finally, native-born third generation Asian immigrant children with native-born parents and at least one grand parent born in a Asian country.

[2] Data source is the 2004-2021 Current Population Survey.

Table 2: Asian Self-identification by Generation

	Self-identify as Asian	Self-identify as non-Asian	% Self-identify as Asian	% Self-identify as non-Asian
1st Gen.	38,198	1,835	0.95	0.05
2nd Gen.	143,066	56,228	0.72	0.28
Asian on:				
Both Sides	116,593	4,272	0.96	0.04
One Side	26,473	51,956	0.34	0.66
3rd Gen.	25,797	53,280	0.33	0.67
Asian on:				
Both Sides	11,204	547	0.95	0.05
One Side	6,188	19,225	0.24	0.76

[1] The samples include children ages 17 and below who live in intact families. First-generation Asian immigrant children that were born in a Asian country. Native-born second-generation Asian immigrant children with at least one parent born in a Asian country. Finally, native-born third-generation Asian immigrant children with native-born parents and at least one grandparent born in a Asian country.
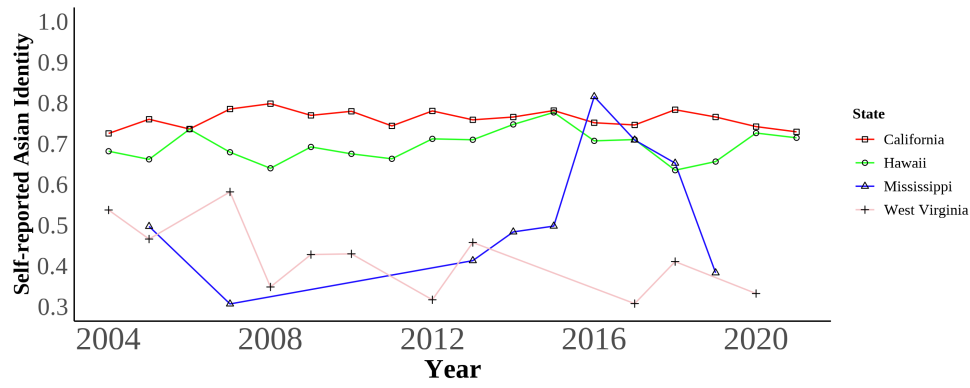
[2] Data source is the 2004-2021 Current Population Survey.

Figure 1: Bias and Self-reported Asian Identity in the Least and Most Biased Places

(a) Skin Tone Implicit Association Bias Over Time
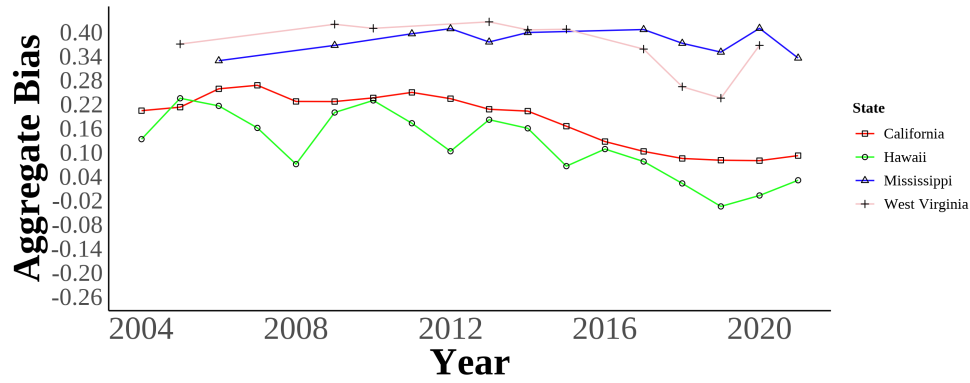
(b) Self-reported Asian Identity Over Time

These two panels show the trends in implicit bias (panel a) and self-reported Asian identity among Asian immigrants (panel b) of the least and most biased places in the data. The District of Colombia is the least biased geographical area, and North Dakota is the most biased. The bias units are in standard deviations. Self-reported Asian identity is among first, second, and third-generation Asian immigrants aged 17 and younger still living in intact families.
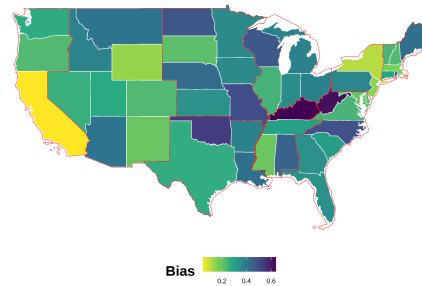
Bias data is from the 2004-2021 Harvard's Project Implicit Association Test scores. Identity data is from the 2004-2021 Current Population Survey (CPS).

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Figure 2: Maps of State-level Implicit Association Test Bias Over Time Measure with Census Division Regional Boundaries
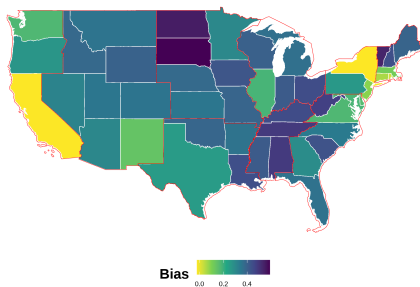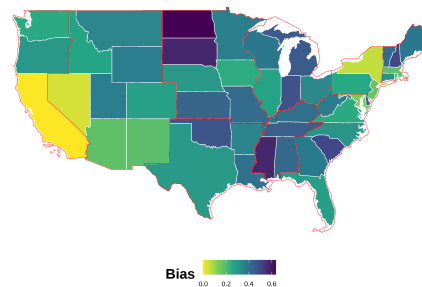
(a) State-level Bias in 2004
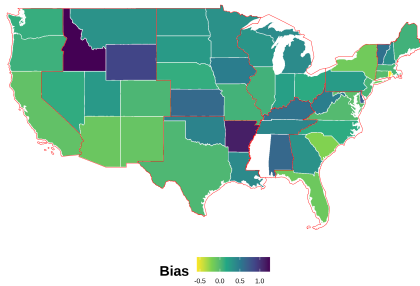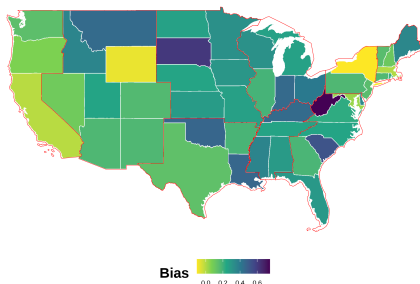
(b) State-level Bias in 2006

(c) State-level Bias in 2008

(d) State-level Bias in 2010

(e) State-level Bias in 2012

(f) State-level Bias in 2014

(g) State-level Bias in 2016

(h) State-level Bias in 2018
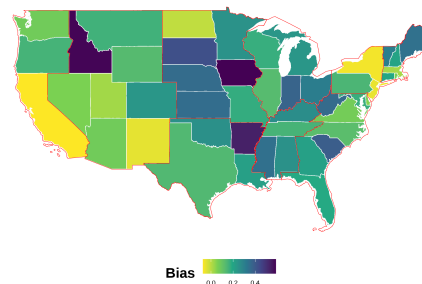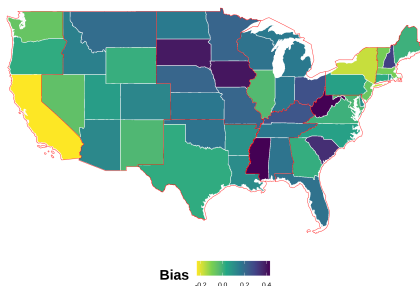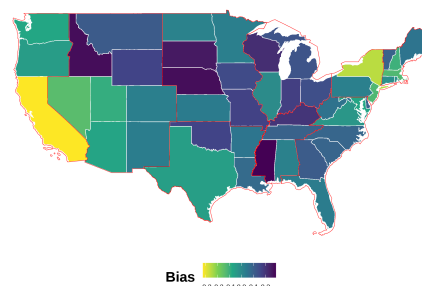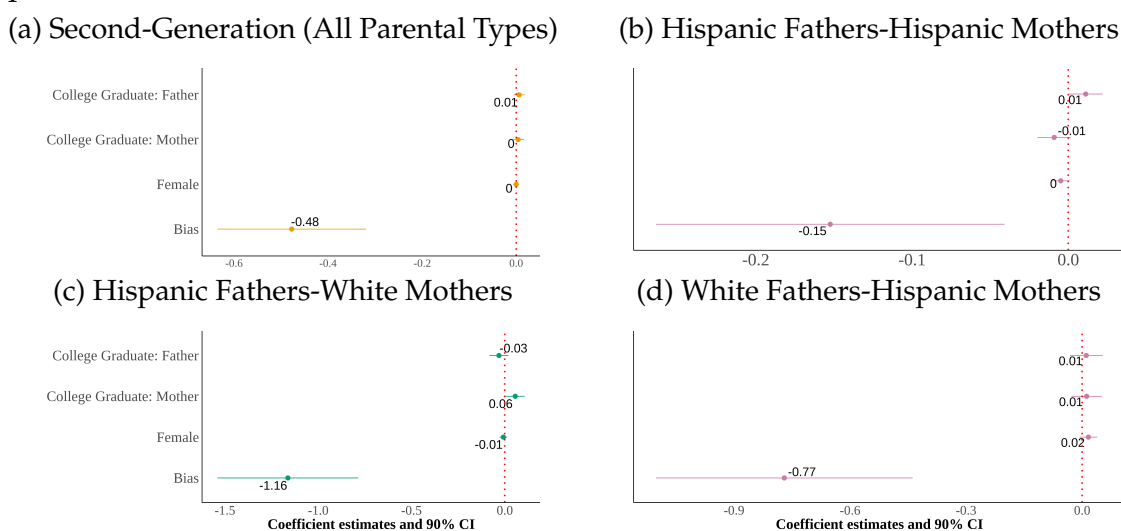

In this figure, I show the state-level implicit bias in different years in the sample. Each panel presents state-level bias during a certain year. The boundaries in red represent the different Census divisions in the United States. Notice how there is a variation across states with-in a region.

Figure 3: Relationship Between Self-Reported Asian Identity and Bias: By Generation
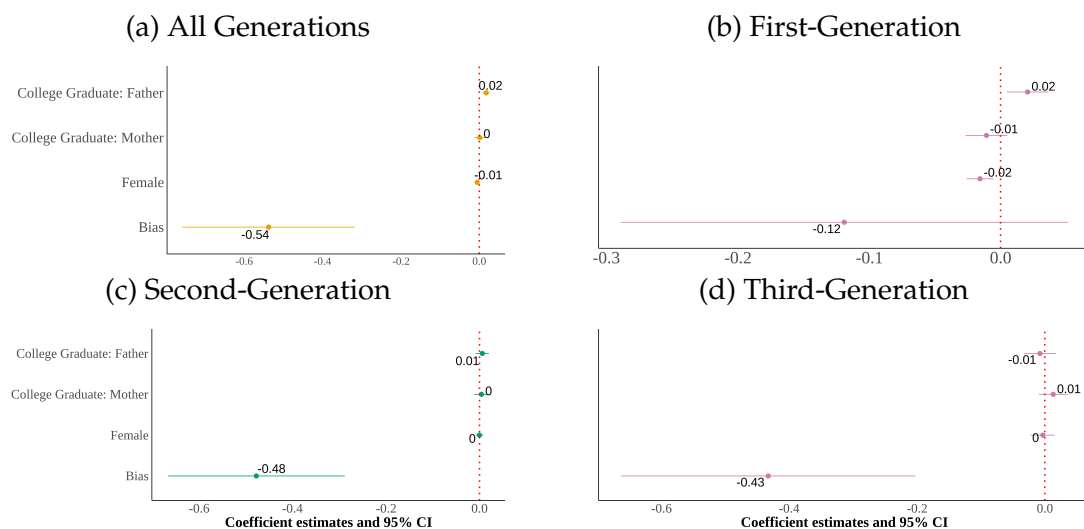
(a) All Generations

(b) First-Generation

(c) Second-Generation

(d) Third-Generation

I show four panels of estimating equation (**??**). I include region $\times$ year fixed effects with controls for sex, quartic age, and parental education. The dependent variable is self-reported Asian identity and the independent variable is state-level bias. Each panel is the results from the same regression but on different samples that are divided by generation. Standard errors are clustered on the state level. The samples include first-, second-, and third-generation Asian children ages 17 and below who live in intact families. First-generation Asian immigrants are children that were born in a Asian country. Native-born second-generation Asian immigrants are children with at least one parent born in a Asian country. Finally, native-born third-generation Asian immigrants are children with native-born parents and at least one grandparent born in a Asian country.

Figure 4: Relationship Between Self-Reported Hispanic Identity and Bias: By Parental Types

(a) Second-Generation (All Parental Types)

(b) Hispanic Fathers-Hispanic Mothers

(c) Hispanic Fathers-White Mothers

(d) White Fathers-Hispanic Mothers

I show four panels of estimating equation (**??**). I include region $\times$ year fixed effects with controls for sex, quartic age, and parental education. The dependent variable is self-reported Hispanic identity and the independent variable is state-level bias. Each panel results from the same regression but on different samples divided by parental types. Standard errors are clustered on the state level. The samples include second-generation Hispanic children ages 17 and below who live in intact families. Native-born second-generation Hispanic immigrant children with at least one parent born in a Spanish-speaking country.

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Table 3: Relationship Between Bias and Self-Reported Asian identity Among Third-Generation Asian Immigrants: By Grandparental Type

	Number of Asian Grandparents			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	One	Two	Three	Four
Bias	-0.24*	-0.60***	-2.34***	-0.24
	(0.14)	(0.17)	(0.78)	(0.20)
Female	0.00	0.00	0.01	-0.02*
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.01)
College Graduate: Mother	0.01	0.04**	0.11	-0.02
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.09)	(0.02)
College Graduate: Father	-0.03***	0.00	-0.03	0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.01)
Observations	30,052	26,255	1,324	11,751
Year × Region FE	X	X	X	X

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

[1] Each column is an estimation of equation (**??**) restricted to third-generation Asian immigrants by number of Asian grandparents with region × year fixed effects. I include controls for sex, quartic age, fraction of Asians in a state, and parental education. Standard errors are clustered on the state level.

[2] The samples include third-generation Asian children ages 17 and below who live in intact families. Native-born third-generation Asian immigrant children with at least one grandparent born in a Asian country.

[3] Data source is the 2004-2021 Current Population Survey.

Table 4: Relationship Between Bias and Interethnic Marriages

		Asian Men	Asian Women
	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Interethnic	Interethnic	Interethnic
Bias	0.11***	-0.20***	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
College Graduate: Wife	0.03***	0.03***	0.03***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
College Graduate: Husband	0.01*	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Observations	146,125	108,152	125,085
Year × Region FE	X	X	X

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

[1] This is the result to estimating (**??**) as a linear probability model.

[2] I include controls for partners' sex, age, education, and years since immigrating to the United States. Standard errors are clustered on the household level.

[3] Data source is the 2004-2020 Current Population Survey Data.

Table 5: Main Effect of Proxy on Second-Generation's Asian Self-identification

Parents Type	All	Asian-Asian	Asian-White	White-Asian
Proxy:				
Mother	0.69	0.97	0.35	0.32
Father	0.71	0.96	0.41	0.29
Self	0.84	0.96	0.36	0.4
Others	0.82	0.96	0.47	0.48

A TABLES

B FIGURES

C DATA