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Fwd: [EXT]EEPA - Decision on Manuscript ID EEPA-22-SIP-4256.R2

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To: OZAN JAQUETTE <ozanj@ucla.edu>

Wed, Aug 2, 2023 at 5:37 PM

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From: EEPA <onbehalf@manuscriptcentral.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 2, 2023 5:26 PM
To: EEPAeditors@aera.net <EEPAeditors@aera.net>
Subject: [EXT]EEPA - Decision on Manuscript ID EEPA-22-SIP-4256.R2

External Email

02-Aug-2023

Dear Author:

A provisional decision has been made based on reviews for your manuscript entitled "A sociological analysis of structural racism in student list products" which you submitted to EEPA. Reviewers have recommended publication, but also have suggested minor revisions.

I invite you to respond to the reviewers' comments, included at the bottom of this letter, and revise your manuscript. Final acceptance of your paper is conditional on satisfactory reviews of your revised manuscript.

My feedback will appear to be especially lengthy but I hope you will see that it is really a few smaller pieces that might not be caught in copyediting and three bigger points that are relatively minor. I want to stress the importance of addressing these points for our final decision on the manuscript. While I do not highlight each point made by the reviewers, I would ask the authors to revise this paper with an eye to their suggestions (especially the reviewers questions about the discussion section and assertions about state lists ensuring that all students would be equally targeted).

BIGGER POINTS

A key concern is that the paper is too long. Please look at the submission guidelines for EEPA which require 45 pages of text including tables, figures, and footnotes/endnotes. I understand that you wanted a bit more space to be responsive to my, and the reviewer's, extensive suggestions. As of right now I count 39 pages of text (not including title or abstract) and 12 pages of table and figures for a total of 51. I did go through the included tables and figures and I would strongly suggest that figures 1, 2, 4, 8, and 13 be moved to the appendix (I selected these due to the great explanation of the figures in the text). That will cut nearly 5 pages from the paper. I also believe the conceptual framework section can be tightened a bit. For example, while I agree with the reviewers about the confusion with "standardized selection devices," the paper never really engages with these points in the analysis nor does it really return to this point in the discussion section. I wonder whether the discussion of discretionary versus standardized actually needs to be included in the paper. By removing that, I think the front part of the paper will focus more strongly on the way the inputs are racialized (and would also provide more space to address the point I mention below). The first two paragraphs of the results could also likely be trimmed. I'm not wedded to any one suggestion, just that this paper get much closer to the page requirements for EEPA which can be fairly easily done by selectively shifting figures that are adequately described in the text and tightening language a bit (and if the selection devices piece remains, the paper needs to address the concerns brought up by the reviewers).

Part of the reason that this paper needs a bit more space is that I'm also going to echo the call from reviewer 2 that a bit more attention needs to be given to critical policy analysis in the front matter of the

paper. I think that the first full paragraph on page 4 (last of the intro) could be expanded to engage with what critical ed policy is, how this work fits within that, and why it matters. Basically, a nice meaty conversation about how this work contributes on that front would be a great grounding and connector to the other articles in this special issue. Then, it would be useful for the authors to see if there are any ways to connect to critical work in the newly revised conceptual framework.

As well, I agree with reviewer 1 that a very short overview of the 14 institutions that were included would be helpful in the appendix, as originally requested in my previous letter. This is not so much about Carnegie Classification as it is about things like general size of the undergraduate student body, region of the country, etc. This information could go into the appendix (to take care of space concerns) but feels vital to ensure that proper implications can be drawn from the current study.

SMALLER POINTS

I appreciate the authors taking such care with the geographic portions of the paper relating to HSLs. I think the only thing that is needed is a single line as a footnote in the paper that mentions that the data is not representative at the metro area for Figures 11 and 13 and so should not be thought of as representative of the area.

Please also choose a different phrase than “post affirmative action” which is found in the discussion section. While the SFFA decisions most definitely make a real change, we are not past the point of using race in admissions practices and I wouldn’t want this paper to imply something inaccurate. Along a similar nitpicky note, it’s probably not true that GPA is a non-racialized filter. It might be better to say less-racialized? Given the explanations in the paper it’s not clear that this is not racialized at all.

There are also a few typos (e.g., “stidents” for “students” on the first page) that it would be useful to clean up. I’ll also note that at several points an extra e.g., is included after a semi-colon when citing references in the text. Please review this for APA given that copyediting will likely remove that e.g. given that typically that would come at the front of the list (and it is assumed that the parenthetical includes a single list of citations). Oh and on page 21, there’s a 23,503 that needs to be rounded. Footnote 12 is missing punctuation. Finally, please review the entire manuscript for any causal implications that are not suited to the weight of the evidence. For example, on page 32, the sentence “...we can explore the effects of utilizing filters” probably needs to change to “...we can explore the potential effects of utilizing filters” or page 36 where the paper notes “student list products positively affect college access” yet all the references in the paper would suggest the research cited was correlational (so there’s a positive correlation or relationship but not an affect). Also need to mention (footnote is fine) that the research/ma/doctoral distinction is from Carnegie basic classification (and use the proper terms from them on first use so other scholars can understand how to replicate this work).

We would like to receive your revised manuscript within three weeks if possible.

Thank you for considering EEPA for your work, and I look forward to receiving your revision.

Sincerely,
Dominique J. Baker
Guest Co-Editor, Special Issue on Critical Policy Analysis

Geoffrey Borman
Editor, EEPA
EEPAeditors@aera.net

Reviewers' Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 2

Comments to the Author

The authors carefully and thoughtfully addressed reviewer concerns. I think the revised conceptual framework and literature review have really strengthened the points the authors are making throughout the piece. I have a couple of suggestions the authors may consider:

Bringing in more of a critical framework – some of the critical perspective that made this piece so interesting seems to be lost in the revision. I understand the need to simplify the framework, but is there a way to more closely link sociology of race to critical studies? When I think about the special issue, I see the critical policy research as the key piece holding all the pieces together, but critical policy research isn't mentioned until the end of this revised version.

Pages 12-13: discusses how student list products are discretionary rather than standardized selection devices, but the metrics that colleges use to select lists are standardized (test scores, GPA, zip code) rather than discretionary – enrollment managers may have discretion over what thresholds they set, but the metrics themselves are standardized (just like admissions based on GPA and test score would be standardized) – I think this actually ties into the argument that continues on page 13 about structural racism better than thinking about these as discretionary; if you want to call them discretionary, one thing you could discuss in more detail is how filters intersect with local patterns of segregation by talking about how these patterns vary across localities and thus become more subjective when people aren't aware of these patterns

One small point in the discussion: the authors write that “Therefore, the public option would have no need for search filters that help colleges micro-target the “right” students.” – I think selective colleges are always going to want to target their searches to particular groups of students, even with a public option

Reviewer: 1

Comments to the Author

I appreciate the work the authors have put into making substantial revisions to this manuscript. I think the result represents a notable improvement to the earlier submission. Several issues I earlier had are now much clearer. I think in particular it has been helpful (to me) to highlight how selective colleges may have the luxury of at least trying to be inclusive in their search criteria—for example, deliberately targeting first-gen students—but that less selective colleges face enrollment/budget pressures that may preclude such good intentions. I think I still disagree with some points the authors chose not to respond to (e.g., the comparison group issue), but I appreciate the arguments they raise in their response and the complexity of resolving some of the issues I raised earlier. I also want to thank the authors for this work in general—I can't remember the last time I thought as deeply about a manuscript because I do appreciate its argument and want the final work to be as strong as possible.

I do remain unsure of the extent to which this manuscript needs to be empirical. I suppose I see the demonstration nature of the work, but the analysis here isn't as complex as the Norris work (which gets into regression adjustments that don't happen here—nor need to) and the argument and existing literature are sufficient to make the points the authors want to make (we know about racial gaps in test scores, and segregation between zip codes so these on their own are exclusionary; no combination of exclusionary categories will produce anything that is less exclusionary). I suppose I find the examples based on real asks the most compelling (e.g., “women in STEM”). I wonder if showing how even a search for something as innocuous as “first-gen” students would also be exclusionary simply by relying on students interacting with the College Board in some way. Ultimately, that's the big challenge here—who uses College Board products—and what bolsters what I think is the most compelling recommendation in the discussion, that we need state-supported lists that draw from state data systems.

I am also not fully sure I understand the argument about credit access and regulation. Here the manuscript refers to Norris and how racist inputs resulted in differential access to credit. In the Norris case, however, the racism in the system was preventing minoritized groups from accessing credit that we would otherwise want them to have (like a loan to buy a house). We obviously want students to access loans to pay for college if they have access to college, but it's not clear they aren't getting access to those loans if they do—there's no need for the loan if they don't go to college, and it's clearly bad that a student list might keep a student out of college, it's not because they are being excluded from student loans. The manuscript also nods to the harms of student debt, which seems to take the argument in a direction I can't quite follow (one could see an argument that racist student lists are doing minoritized students a favor by preventing them from accessing student debt they may struggle to repay). It's all a muddle to me.

However, the authors get there—I'm more persuaded by the "dear colleague" letter discussion in the concluding sections—they clearly are advocating for more federal regulation. A reader might benefit from some specifics about what this regulation would look like. Would regulation prevent the use of racist inputs? What would consequences be? Loss of Title IV eligibility (this is quite the nuclear option that doesn't appear to do much in other attempts at accountability)?

In the revised conceptual framework, I may not fully understand the distinction between discretionary and standardized selection. The example of public university admission based on ACT and GPA is used to illustrate a standardized selection device, but this process sounds very similar to the determination of list criteria (based on ACT and GPA...), which is described instead as discretionary. Doesn't someone make choices about which criteria to use and at what level for public university admissions in the same way they do for which list of students to purchase?

There are clearly privacy concerns for the institutions involved in the sample, but it would be good to know roughly what type of universities ultimately contributed to the final database. It's clear there was a high non-response rate so some commentary on the representativeness of the sample would be helpful.

As I mentioned above, I like the recommendation to create state lists. The primary benefit of these lists appears to be that inclusion does not rely on a student interacting with a College Board product. I do think the thinking here could be pushed a bit more. For example, even if a student is on a list without interacting with a College Board product, they probably will need to eventually or SAT scores will need to be fully optional, so how can colleges help this happen. We still seem a little far from tests being universally optional, and this policy comes with its own consequences for admissions priorities... I also don't understand why a complete list of students would preclude a college from filtering to target the "right" students after they receive it. There are still costs to marketing, so I don't know if it's safe to assume that a college will market to every contact they receive from a state list. It seems like a few more details could come from Author XXXXf, which I can't claim to have read.

Smaller points:

- The sentence "Following the creation..." on p.2 feels out of place in its paragraph.
- The phrase "vis-a-vis" is used a lot, which stands out particularly when it occurs multiple times on the same page.
- on p. 31, the sentence "Although, we do not see the same disparities" does not appear to be complete.
- I am having a hard time parsing the sentence "Prior scholarship finds that..." on p. 19. I think maybe a word is missing? Or a comma?
- On p 21, is the sentence "Additionally, purchases the explicitly target..." making the point that even searches that target underrepresented students will systematically exclude students that don't appear in the search database at all (i.e., don't interact with College Board products, or have opted out of Search)? Or is there more going on here with the "high test scores" language? Does "communities" here refer to neighborhoods or populations? More clarification may help here. I also think it might be worth making this point explicit by working through the exercise like you do with the "women in STEM" search.
- Table 1 could be more elegant if it omitted summarizing both sides of a dichotomous category.
- What are the two different colors in Figure 6 indicating?
- Is Figure 14 mistitled? I don't know that I see the geographic element in there.

Reviewer: 3

Comments to the Author

In my previous comments to the authors, I recommended that the authors situate their paper in a broader literature relative to racial inequality in college access. I appreciate the addition of the first paragraph of the paper, which improves the framing and provides a rationale for why the analyses conducted are needed. Likewise, the more expansive literature on recruitment helps to situate the function of student lists in enrollment management.

I also appreciate the revised conceptual framework. It is much easier to understand and the improved organization and focus help the reader to better interpret the findings. One minor suggestion is to improve the transition into the sub-section on racialized inputs. Research from Norris seems to be critical to one of the paper's arguments on racialized inputs. Consider starting with the definition or the broader point that Norris makes (line 50) as opposed to starting with the sentence about Moody city government credit rating algorithm (line 47).

As for the implications for policy, I would like to see the authors add more about affirmative action than the

quick reference on p. 42. Especially now that SCOTUS has ruled on the use of race in college admissions, I believe there is an even stronger argument for the need to evaluate the use of student list purchases. Further, beyond implications for federal and state policy, what are the implications for enrollment management policy and practice for institutions themselves? The authors need to make a stronger connection to key components of their conceptual framework, particularly the role of administrator discretion and how lists are utilized. This can be addressed in the implications section of the manuscript.

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