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Review of Sakamoto et al. (2026)

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This article argues that there is considerable ethnic heterogeneity in “privilege” outcomes within the American white population - and suggests the same is true within all racial groups. It demonstrates this by regressing four socioeconomic outcome variables on ethnicity, race and a range of demographic control variables.

It begins with a strong literature review which summarizes what it terms the “critical demography paradigm”. This encompasses the critical race theory approach to inequality, with its focus on race as the key organizing concept for explaining stratification.

Results show that socioeconomic differences within the white group between certain ancestry groups are as great, or greater, than those between white and black Americans.

Certain “newer” groups like Turkestanis and Rom, as well as “older” groups such as Cajuns, Amish, Appalachians, unhyphenated whites and Americans, are considerably poorer than the white average (and poorer than the American average).

The paper goes on to show that control variables (age, region, education, disability status, veteran status, metro area type) explain far more of the variation in socioeconomic outcomes than race or ethnicity. Indeed, race explains only 5% of the variation in socioeconomic outcomes among Americans.

The article could be improved in the following ways:

- 1) The paper concludes somewhat abruptly: the conclusion should make reference to the earlier discussion of “critical demography”. That is, the author(s) should make the case that their findings refute critical race theory’s contention (often unstated) that race is the most important variable in explaining American stratification and privilege. It is also worth saying that evidence for this might be drawn from keyword searches of academic article titles, in which mentions of race and racism (and whiteness/white supremacy) have soared since the late 1960s and especially the 2010s (see work of David Rozado on article abstracts).

2) The term “critical demography paradigm” strikes me as somewhat new and underexplored. Alba, in his most recent book the Great Demographic Illusion, argues that critical race theory is the dominant paradigm in the American sociology of race and ethnicity. If you do not wish to use this concept, explain why “critical demography” is better, as it strikes me as more opaque, less rooted in an intellectual tradition, and less informative.

3) At least one regression table should show coefficients for the control variables - as this is important in explanatory terms for the outcome of interest. Is education or rural-urban doing most of the explanatory work here? This would also be worth commentary in the article itself.

4) What is the theoretical reason for intra-white ethnic difference after applying controls? Segmented assimilation needs further unpacking. It seems to me that one conclusion is that the values a group emphasizes (regarding education or religion) is central to this story. Or are you suggesting that intra-white ethnic prejudice could be at work? The underachievers include both “new” groups that might attract discrimination (such as Uzbeks and Turkestan Uyghurs) or “old” groups that may lag behind for cultural reasons (Appalachian, Cajun, Amish). Finally, it is possible that upper- and lower-status white groups are ethnic options that people may select into or out of with upward or downward mobility (Waters, 1990), or ideology/partisanship (Aghadjanian, 2022). Those with less education may be less informed about their ancestry, and thus tick boxes such as Appalachian, American, white or North American - or these may be more conservative. Either way, some theorization of the ethnic difference from the white ethnic model is worth a mention. Beyond this, what do your findings tell us about what might explain race differences in income or “privilege”? Draw these implications out more.

5) Dependent variables are all around income. Perhaps employment status and education could be modeled as well as DVs?

6) p6 - explain class first, before you talk about “class variables” as explaining socioeconomic outcomes (as some may think this is circular)

7) Finally, the article contains a few grammatical errors which need to be corrected, i.e.

3 - “refers the low income”

11- clumsy wording: “is likely often too broad”

21 - use “North Americans”, “Turkestanis” for consistency

24 - “are still remain”