

The Effect of Beliefs About American Opportunity on
Immigrants' Racial Attitudes

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Abstract

This paper studies the attitudes of first-generation immigrants in the US toward Black Americans. Using original and publicly available surveys, I find that first-generation immigrants of all racial and ethnic groups display more negative attitudes toward Black Americans than do their native-born co-ethnics, which persist after controlling for demographics and partisanship. Using an original measure of optimism about the US, I find that immigrants have substantially higher levels of US optimism than native-borns. I use both mediation analysis and a survey experiment to show that differences in US Optimism are responsible for nativity-based differences in racial attitudes. These findings suggest that immigrants' negative attitudes toward Black Americans are a function of their strong belief in American opportunity and social mobility.

Immigration is by definition a gesture of faith in social mobility. It is the expression in action of a positive belief in the possibility of a better life.

John F. Kennedy

It doesn't matter anymore what shade the newcomer's skin is... There is virtually no movement up – for blacks or whites, established classes or arrivistes – that is not accompanied by race talk.

Toni Morrison

The percentage of immigrants in the US population hit 14.1% in 2021, approaching 1890's all-time high of 14.8% (Jordan and Gebeloff 2022). Today's immigrants are incorporating into a nation with record racial and ethnic diversity (Horowitz 2019). How does this increasingly important population view race in America? How does the process of immigration and incorporation shape first-generation immigrants' perceptions of racial inequality?

For many immigrants, America is a land of opportunity. However, America is also a country of deep racial inequalities, especially between white and Black Americans (Charles 2003; Munger and Seron 2017; Reskin 2012; Sears and Savalei 2006). How do immigrants reconcile these two beliefs? I argue that first-generation immigrants are deeply invested in the idea of America as a land of opportunity, substantially more so than native-borns. This investment generates considerable cognitive dissonance between their positive attitudes toward America and their perception of racial inequality in the US. To reduce this dissonance, they are more likely to derogate Black Americans and attribute racial inequality to Black Americans' perceived shortcomings instead of anti-Black discrimination.

I report three studies that test the relationship between nativity, optimism, and racial attitudes. Using a combination of publicly available and original surveys of white non-Latino, Black, Latino, and Asian American respondents, I find that first-generation immigrants of all four groups show substantially higher levels of racial resentment and more anti-Black attitudes than do their

second and third+ generation co-ethnics (Study 1). These attitudinal gaps replicate consistently for all racial/ethnic groups of immigrants across multiple questions and surveys and remain large and statistically significant even after controlling for demographics and partisanship. Immigrant attitudes toward Black Americans are uniquely negative. First-generation immigrants show neutral or positive attitudes toward Latinos, Asian Americans, and white Americans relative to native-borns.

To explain nativity-based gaps in immigrant attitudes, I develop an original measure of US and native-country optimism and use it to test the relationship between optimism and racial attitudes (Study 2). Using this measure, I find that immigrants have much more positive views of the US than of their native country and much more positive views of the US than do their native-born co-ethnics. I use mediation analysis to isolate the underlying mechanism behind nativity-based differences in racial attitudes. I find that nativity-based differences in US Optimism mediate first-generation immigrants' unusually negative attitudes toward Black Americans. I further find that optimism about the US also explains differences in racial attitudes among first-generation immigrants - immigrants who migrated later in life (and who were likely to make more sacrifices to migrate) have both higher optimism about the US and more negative attitudes toward Black Americans than those who migrated earlier.

I conduct a pre-registered survey experiment to test the relationship between US Optimism and racial attitudes among both immigrants and native-borns (Study 3). Respondents were assigned to read a prime about a Guatemalan immigrant who started a trucking business in the US and either succeeded (Optimism Prime) or failed (Pessimism Prime). Respondents exposed to the Optimism Prime were significantly more optimistic about the US, had higher racial resentment scores, and believed that discrimination against Blacks, Latinos, and immigrants in the US was less frequent than respondents exposed to the Pessimism Prime.

Finally, I test three additional alternative explanations for first-generation immigrants' negative attitudes toward Black Americans: resource competition, anti-Black assimilation, and differ-

ential social desirability bias. I find that none of these alternative explanations are congruent with the data. Immigrants do not express anti-Black attitudes because they are competing with Black Americans for jobs, because they are strategically engaging in anti-Blackness to assimilate to the US, or because they are unaware of American norms around race.

How Migration Experiences Shape Racial Attitudes

Scholars have paid substantial attention to the attitudes of native-borns towards immigrants (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Masuoka and Junn 2013), including the role that racial attitudes play in native-borns' anti-immigrant sentiment (Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008; Valentino, Brader and Jardina 2013). Scholars have also studied processes of immigrant incorporation into the political system more broadly, such as the effect of nativity and generation on party ID acquisition (Wong 2000; Hajnal and Lee 2006; Just 2019; Hopkins et al. 2020), political socialization (Jones-Correa 1998; Dalisay 2012; Wong and Tseng 2008; White et al. 2008; Callahan and Muller 2013), political participation (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Barreto 2005; White 2016; Wong 2008; Ramakrishnan 2005; Stoll and Wong 2007; Junn 1999; Pantoja, Ramirez and Segura 2001), and ethnic identification (Jones-Correa and Leal 1996; Jones-Correa et al. 2018; Rumbaut 1994). Understanding immigrants' racial attitudes is key to understanding their incorporation into American social and political life. Anti-Black attitudes have a profound impact on native-borns' political affiliations (Craig and Richeson 2014; Schaffner, MacWilliams and Nteta 2016; Tesler 2013), political participation (Enos 2016; Knuckey and Kim 2015), and policy preferences (Banks 2014; Tesler 2012; Gilens 2009).

Scholars have found that first-generation immigrants of multiple groups tend to have negative attitudes toward native-born Black Americans (Rogers 2006; Waters 1999; Zamora 2016, 2022; Marrow 2009; McClain et al. 2006; Robertson and Roman 2023; Tokeshi 2021). Several other studies also identify heightened levels of anti-Black prejudice among Latinos (Krupnikov

and Piston 2016; Segura and Valenzuela 2010), as well as the role of American identity in activating anti-Black prejudice among Latinos (Pérez, Robertson and Vicuña 2023). These studies tend to examine the experiences of only one racial or ethnic group (such as Afro-Caribbeans in Rogers (2006), Mexican-Americans in Zamora (2016) and Asian Americans in Tokeshi (2021)). While this approach has notable strengths, it can generate explanations that are unique to the pre- (Zamora 2016, 2022) and post- (Tokeshi 2021; Yi and Todd 2021) migration contexts of specific ethnic groups when explaining phenomena that are consistent across a wide range of groups. For example, first-generation Asian-Americans are often stereotyped as a "model minority", an experience which may influence their attitudes toward other groups of color, including Black Americans (Yi and Todd 2021). However, as I show in my analysis, first-generation immigrants of many other racial and ethnic groups who are *not* stereotyped as model minorities show similarly negative attitudes toward Black Americans.

The contributions of this study are two-fold. First, I document consistent negative attitudes toward Black Americans among first- (but not second-) generation immigrants from a variety of major racial/ethnic groups. Second, I develop and test a theory to explain the commonalities in anti-Black attitudes between first-generation immigrants who have substantially different backgrounds and post-migration experiences.

I argue that first-generation immigrants are likely to hold substantially more optimistic views about the United States than their second and third+ generation coethnics. However, this view of America as a land of opportunity clashes with the realities of racial inequality in the US, especially with respect to inequality between Black and white Americans. Both Black and white Americans are overwhelmingly native-born and do not face the same economic, social, and linguistic hardships new immigrants face. Yet there are substantial racial inequalities between Black and white Americans in virtually every life outcome (Charles 2003; Munger and Seron 2017; Reskin 2012). In many ways, Black Americans occupy an "exceptional" status in American politics relative to other Americans, including immigrants of color (Sears and Savalei 2006).

Social psychologists have documented that holding two potentially contradictory beliefs, such as (1) "America is a land of opportunity" and (2) "There are undeserved inequalities between white and Black Americans", can generate an uncomfortable sense of cognitive dissonance, accompanied by a natural drive to reduce said dissonance (Festinger 1962; Kunda 1990). How do immigrants reconcile their optimism with American reality¹? First-generation immigrants are likely to reduce the dissonance between their deeply held positive views of America and the realities of racial inequality by derogating Black Americans. While some native-borns also engage in similar dissonance reduction strategies, immigrants, who are deeply invested in American opportunity, are thus more likely to reduce dissonance by derogating Black Americans rather than by attenuating their positive beliefs about the US.

This argument also draws on system justification theory, which argues that people, including some members of marginalized groups, have a psychological drive to view society as fair and just, resulting in derogation of lower-status groups (Jost, Banaji and Nosek 2004). Scholars within political science have used SJT to explain a variety of relationships, from attitudes toward climate change (Benegal and Holman 2021) to Latino support for nativist policies (Alhambra et al. 2024). I argue that due to several factors, first generation immigrants have a uniquely strong drive to justify social inequality within the US relative to their country of origin.

Why First-Generation Immigrants are Unique

While there is substantial scholarship that examines the role of second- immigrant generation on social and political outcomes (Carlos 2021; Portes and Zhou 1993; Farley and Alba 2002; Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller 2009), this paper focuses on the racial attitudes of first-generation immigrants. Second-generation immigrants have unique experiences relative to their third-plus-generation peers, but first-generation immigrants have distinctive experiences that set them apart

¹First-generation immigrants are aware of racial inequality in the US. For example, they are about equally likely to overestimate the proportion of welfare recipients who are Black Americans as are their native-born co-ethnics

from their native-born co-ethnics, including the second generation. Migration is a major life-shaping event with substantial social and psychological consequences for immigrants. As a result, first-generation immigrants are likely to share political beliefs shaped by their immigration experiences that differ from the views of even second-generation immigrants. I argue that first-generation immigrants are unique for three reasons: selection, frame of reference, and sacrifice.

Scholars have found substantial selection effects in the kinds of people who choose to migrate to the US (Gobillon and Solignac 2015; Kennedy et al. 2006). Immigrants tend to be healthier (Vang et al. 2015), better educated (Cañibano and Woolley 2015), and generally come from more advantaged backgrounds (Feliciano 2020) than non-migrants from their country of origin. Migrating to a new country is risky, so immigrants are likely to be more entrepreneurial than the average person from their native country (Vandor and Franke 2016). This selection effect has been used to explain first-generation immigrants' successes in scientific and technological innovation (Hunt and Gauthier-Loiselle 2010) as well as in business (Dabić et al. 2020).

This paper focuses on a different form of selection - would-be migrants' attitudes toward the receiving country. Attitudes toward the US differ dramatically both between and within countries (Morgenstern and Bohigues 2021; Steinberg 2015; Chiozza 2007). However, people with negative attitudes toward the US should be less likely to migrate there than people with positive attitudes. As a result, the average immigrant arrives in the US with favorable views of American institutions and American opportunity (Michelson 2003). Immigrants' native-born co-ethnics do not undergo the same selection process, potentially leading to lower optimism toward America.

Frame of reference is a second unique factor shaping first-generation immigrants' political attitudes. While the migration process may select for specific types of people, immigrants also have very different experiences than their US-born counterparts. Some scholars have argued that first-generation immigrants experience a "Dual frame of reference" with respect to the US and their country of origin (Ogbu 1987, 2014). First-generation immigrants can compare their country of origin and the receiving country in a way native-borns cannot. While some scholars argue

that a dual frame of reference can also apply to later generations, the ability to directly compare experiences between two countries is unique to first-generation immigrants, especially those who immigrated as teenagers or adults. In some cases, this also means that when first-generation immigrants think about their social position within the United States, their comparison group is in their country of origin rather than among native-born Americans (Ogbu 1991).

Furthermore, native-born Americans' party identification and political attitudes are substantially shaped by their parents (Jennings and Niemi 1978; Achen 2002; Tyler and Iyengar 2022) and their schools (Langton and Jennings 1968; Kahne, Crow and Lee 2013). While immigrants, especially those who immigrate as children, may have some political socialization into the American system from similar sources (Humphries, Muller and Schiller 2013), scholars have documented the outsized role of media narratives in shaping immigrants' beliefs about America (Liu and Gastil 2014) and the role that mass media has in shaping beliefs about economic mobility (Kim 2023).

Differences in political socialization can also explain why attitudes about Black Americans are not as cleanly transmitted between the first and second generation. First- and second-generation immigrants often have different political socialization pathways than do third+ generation Americans. Not only is parental party ID transmission from first to second generation immigrants weaker than among native-born generations (Raychaudhuri 2020*b*), but often the transmission flows in reverse within immigrant families, with the second generation providing political information to their parents (Wong 2008). Scholars have noted the importance of peer groups in socializing second-generation Asian-Americans into American political and racial contexts (Tokeshi 2021; Raychaudhuri 2020*a*). These complex patterns of socialization can explain why the attitudes I measure are unique to the first generation and experience relatively weak inter-generational transmission.

The final difference between immigrants and their native-born co-ethnics is that of sacrifice. While immigrants feel positively toward their host country, migration involves leaving family,

friends, and their native culture. Scholars have extensively documented the psychological hardships of migration (Finch and Vega 2003; Mui and Kang 2006; Oh, Koeske and Sales 2002). These sacrifices are likely to influence how immigrants think about their host countries. Cognitive dissonance theory finds that people who undergo effort to achieve a goal ultimately value that goal substantially more than those who achieve it easily (Aronson and Mills 1959; Alessandri et al. 2008). Scholars have documented this “effort justification” paradigm in a variety of situations, from hazing (Aronson and Mills 1959) to weight loss (Axsom and Cooper 1985), to interpersonal relationships (Aumer et al. 2016), to consumer shopping habits (Norton, Mochon and Ariely 2012).

In the context of immigration, effort justification suggests that immigrants will feel more positively about their host country than native-borns, especially if they (1) consciously decide to leave their country of origin and (2) make substantial sacrifices as part of migration. Age at migration is a key variable correlated with both of these factors. Immigrants who migrated when they were under 18 were unlikely to have consciously decided to leave their native country. Young adults were likely to make the decision to immigrate, but immigrants who moved in middle age or older were more likely to leave extended families, friends, and established careers as part of their move. They also were more likely to have to expend more effort to acculturate to their new country than people who moved as children or young adults (Berry 1992; Diwan, Jonnalagadda and Balaswamy 2004; Oh, Koeske and Sales 2002). This theory has several implications tested in this paper.

First, the theory predicts that first-generation immigrants of all racial/ethnic groups will have more negative attitudes toward Black Americans than their second or third+ generation co-ethnics (**H1**). Regardless of race/ethnicity, first-generation immigrants have unique migration experiences not shared with their second-generation co-ethnics. On the other hand, if there is substantial heterogeneity in nativity effects between different immigrant groups, where some immigrant groups feel more positively toward Black Americans than do their native-born co-ethnics would

be substantial evidence against this theory.

Second, immigrants' negative attitudes should be unique to perceptions of Black Americans (**H2**). Anti-Black racism is unique relative to other forms of racial prejudice in the U.S. Unlike other racial and ethnic groups that have experienced prejudice in the United States, the ancestors of many Black Americans were subject to chattel slavery and the laws, stereotypes, and social constructs created to justify and later to excuse enslavement, which continue to have consequences for Black Americans today. This history has led to a persistent "color line" different from the difficulties experienced by other people of color (Sears and Savalei 2006). Furthermore, the vast majority of Black Americans are native-born (91%), and most have had families in the U.S. for many generations. The same is not true for Asian Americans (33% native-born) and Latino Americans (66% native-born). The long-standing inequalities between Black Americans and White Americans can look different through the eyes of first- and second-generation Americans than their own and other immigrant groups' struggles for acceptance. Many immigrant groups experience substantial social and economic success in the US within a generation (Abramitzky and Boustan 2022), potentially making it harder to empathize with lack of inter-generational mobility experienced by some Black Americans.

Third, first-generation immigrants will have more positive attitudes toward the US than their second and third+ generation co-ethnics (**H3a**). First-generation immigrants will see racial discrimination in the United States as less serious than their native-born co-ethnics. More importantly, they will rate the United States more positively than native-borns on questions without an explicit race/ethnicity component (US Optimism), such as social mobility, political efficacy, and the rule of law. These differences in Optimism about the US will explain nativity-based gaps in racial attitudes (**H3b**).

The final hypothesis considers which immigrants will have the most negative attitudes toward Black Americans. First-generation immigrants who migrated as adults rather than as children will have been more likely to have personally made the decision to move. They will also have

more ability to compare life in the US to life in their country of origin, and will be more likely to have sacrificed career and social ties in their country of origin in order to migrate. As a result, first generation immigrants who immigrated later in life will have more optimism about the US (**H4a**), and this optimism will explain their more negative attitudes toward Black Americans (**H4b**).

I report three studies to test these hypotheses. Study 1 uses data from six surveys to demonstrate the unique relationship between first-generation nativity and negative attitudes toward Black Americans. Study 2 uses mediation analysis to examine the role of optimism about the US in explaining both nativity-based and within-group age-at-migration differences in racial attitudes. Study 3 (preregistered) uses a survey experiment to manipulate immigrants' and native-borns' attitudes about economic mobility in the US, and shows that increasing/decreasing optimism shapes attitudes toward Black Americans and views of discrimination.

Study 1: Immigrants View Black Americans Negatively

The first study examines the relationship between nativity and racial attitudes for first, second, and third plus generation immigrants. H1 argues that first-generation immigrants will have unique attitudes toward Black Americans relative to their second- and third plus- generation co-ethnics. Given the key role of first-generation immigrants' unique migration experiences in my theory, one important test of my theory is whether there is a clear cross-racial first-generation effect that is not present among the second-generation. To answer this question, I draw on data from a series of questions on six surveys (total $n = 202,661$). Table 1 describes each of these surveys. Study 1 uses all surveys but Original Survey II, which is analyzed in Study 3. I am also able to use these data to test whether first-generation immigrants' attitudes toward Black Americans are unique relative to their attitudes about other racial/ethnic groups (H2).

Table 1: Characteristics of the Survey Datasets

Survey	ANES	GSS	Original I	Original II
Dates	2012 - 2020	2010 - 2018	2021	2023
# Native-born	15,882	9,963	1,120*	958*
# Foreign-born	1,517	1,579	943*	560*
Foreign-born Race/Ethnicity[†]	W:404 B:134 L:661 A:318	W:385 B:189 L:742 A:263	W:255 B:203 L:228 A:257	L:262 A:298
Survey Languages	English, Spanish	English, Spanish	English	English
Target Population	Citizens 18+	All 18+	All 18+	Asians and Latinos 18+
Racial Resentment Measure	All	Subset	All	All
Stereotypes	Hardworking	Hardworking	Hardworking	Hardworking
Attributions for Inequality Measure	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Racism Prevalence Measure	Group Discrim	No	No	Group Discrim
Survey	CES (2018)	CES (2020)	CES (2022)	
Dates	2018	2020	2022	
# Native-born	53,389	53,774	52,382	
# Foreign-born	4,017	4,317	3,778	
Foreign-born Race/Ethnicity[†]	W:1517 B:448 L:1215 A:837	W:1662 B:632 L:1153 A:870	W:1376 B:642 L:1021 A:739	
Survey Languages	English	English	English	
Target Population	All 18+	All 18+	All 18+	
Racial Resentment Measure	All	Subset	Subset	
Stereotypes	None	None	None	
Attributions for Inequality Measure	No	No	No	
Racism Prevalence Measure	Racial Problems Rare	Racial Problems Rare	Racial Problems Rare	

[†] W = White non-Latino; B = Black, incl Black Latino; H = non-Black Latino; A = Asian

* Only includes those who passed the attention check

Study 1: Measurement and Methods

I use four sets of questions as racial attitude dependent variables. Not all questions were available on all surveys. Table 1 outlines which questions were available on which surveys. All four sets of measures were rescaled on a scale of 0 - 1.

The first measure of anti-Black attitudes I use is the Racial Resentment scale (Kinder and Sears 1981), which consists of four questions measured on a 5-point strongly agree - strongly disagree scale. While only three of the six surveys contain the full racial resentment scale, all six contain the Work Way Up question, which reads, *Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.* The racial resentment scale and particularly the work way up measure is a canonical measure of Americans' anti-Black attitudes.

My second set of measures comes from the General Social Survey, which includes a question that more overtly measures negative attitudes towards Black Americans, which I label Attributions for Inequality. The question reads, *On the average Blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are...* Respondents are prompted to choose one or more of the following explanations: (1) *Mainly due to discrimination*; (2) *Because most Blacks have less in-born ability to learn*; (3) *Because most Blacks don't have the chance for education that it takes to rise out of poverty*; (4) *Because most Blacks just don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves up out of poverty*. These are binary variables, and I code selection of explanation (4) as AFI - Motivation (1 if selected; 0 otherwise), and reverse-code selection of explanation (1) as AFI - Discrimination (0 if selected; 1 otherwise)².

The third set of measures is the ANES Hardworking stereotype measure. Respondents were asked to rate whites, Blacks, Latinos, and Asians on a "(1) lazy - (7) hardworking" scale. This

²I do not include "Because most Blacks have less in-born ability to learn" because very few respondents select this option.

survey question allows me to compare immigrants' and native-borns' ratings of Black and non-Black groups.

The final set of measures concerns perceptions of discrimination. If immigrants are more likely to see America as a colorblind society, this will shape their perceptions of racial inequality in the US. The first question reads: *Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations*. Responses are coded on a strongly agree (1) - strongly disagree (5) scale. I label this variable Racism Common. The second set of questions examines the amount of perceived discrimination against different groups in the US. Respondents are asked to evaluate *How much discrimination is there in the United States today?* against "Blacks", "Hispanics", "Asians", and "Whites" on a 5 point scale ranging from "None at all" (1) to "A great deal" (5).

To test the relationship between nativity and racial attitudes, I estimate a model of the following form separately for each of the four racial/ethnic groups of respondents:

$$DV \sim \text{First Gen} + \text{Second Gen} + \text{Age} + \text{Gender} + \text{Education} + \text{Income} + \text{Party ID}$$

First and second-generation are dummy variables that are coded as 1 when the respondent is a first- or second-generation immigrant, respectively. I estimate this model on data from six different surveys (not all dependent variables are available on all surveys). I also present estimates from pooled data³.

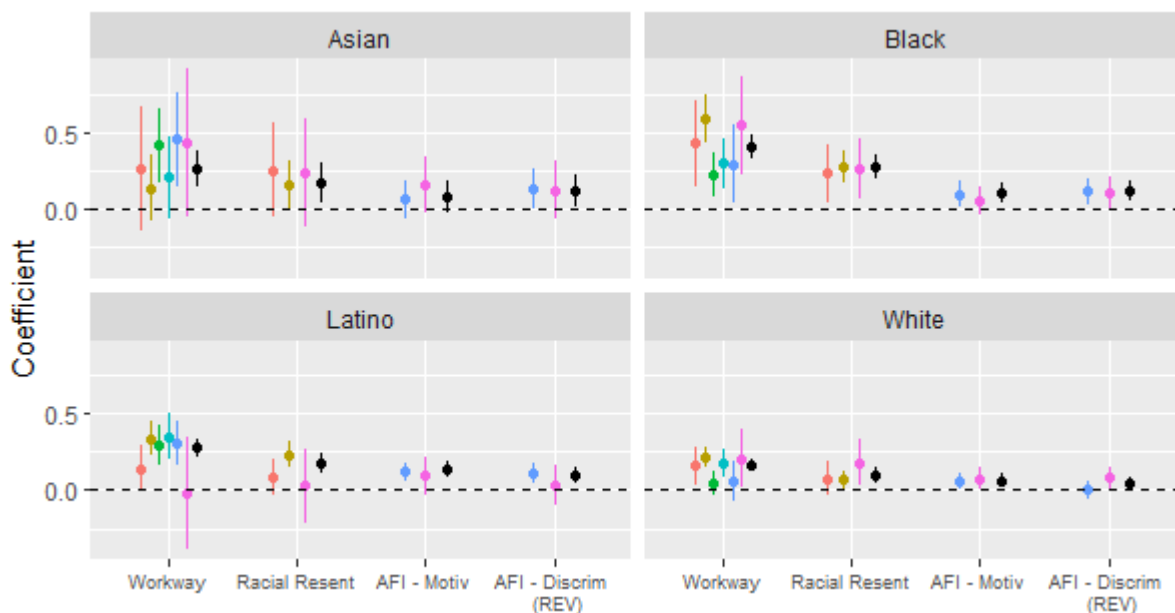
Study 1: Results

In Figure 1A, I plot the coefficient on the first-generation dummy variable for four dependent variables: Work Way Up, Racial Resentment, AFI - Discrimination, and AFI - Motivation. The figure illustrates a consistent first-generation effect. On most surveys, first-generation immigrants of all four racial/ethnic groups have higher levels of racial resentment, are more likely to attribute

³The model for the pooled data also contains a variable for survey

Figure 1: Racial Attitudes (Regression Coefficients)

A. First Generation vs Third+ Generation



B. Second Generation vs Third+ Generation

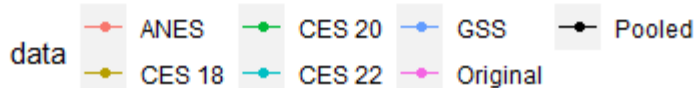
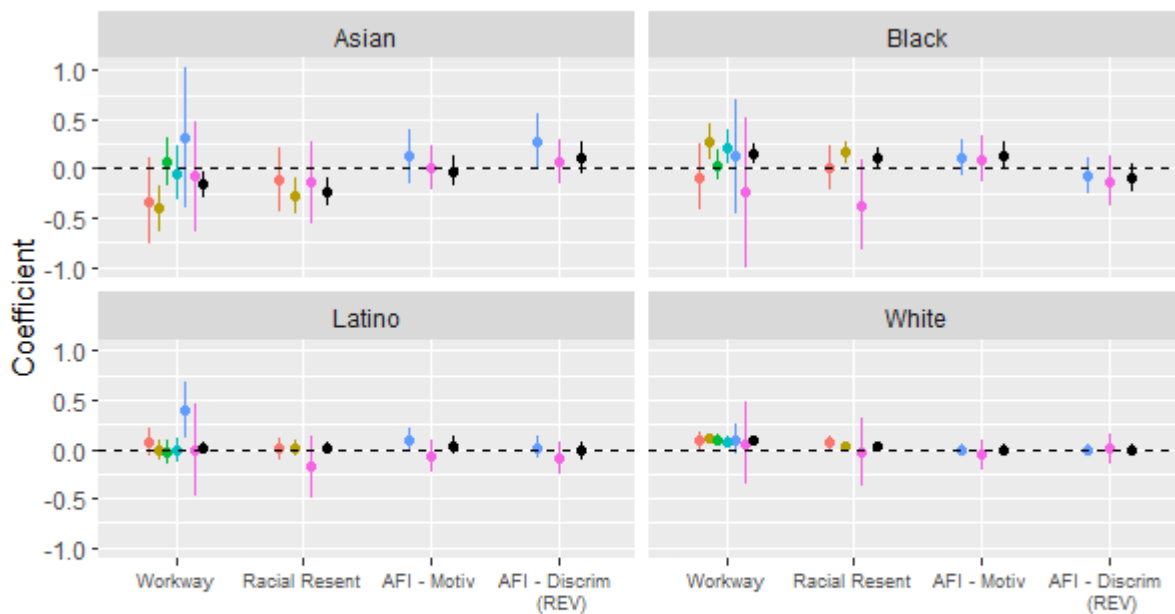
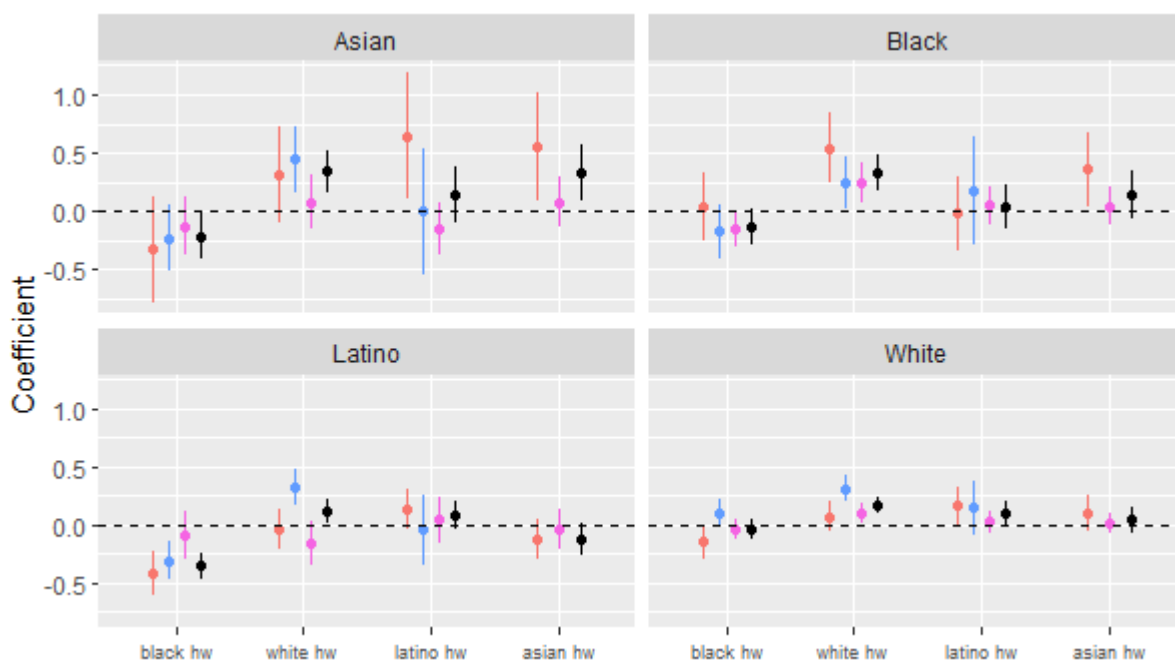


Figure 2: Hardworking Ratings (Regression Coefficients)

A. First Generation vs Third+ Generation



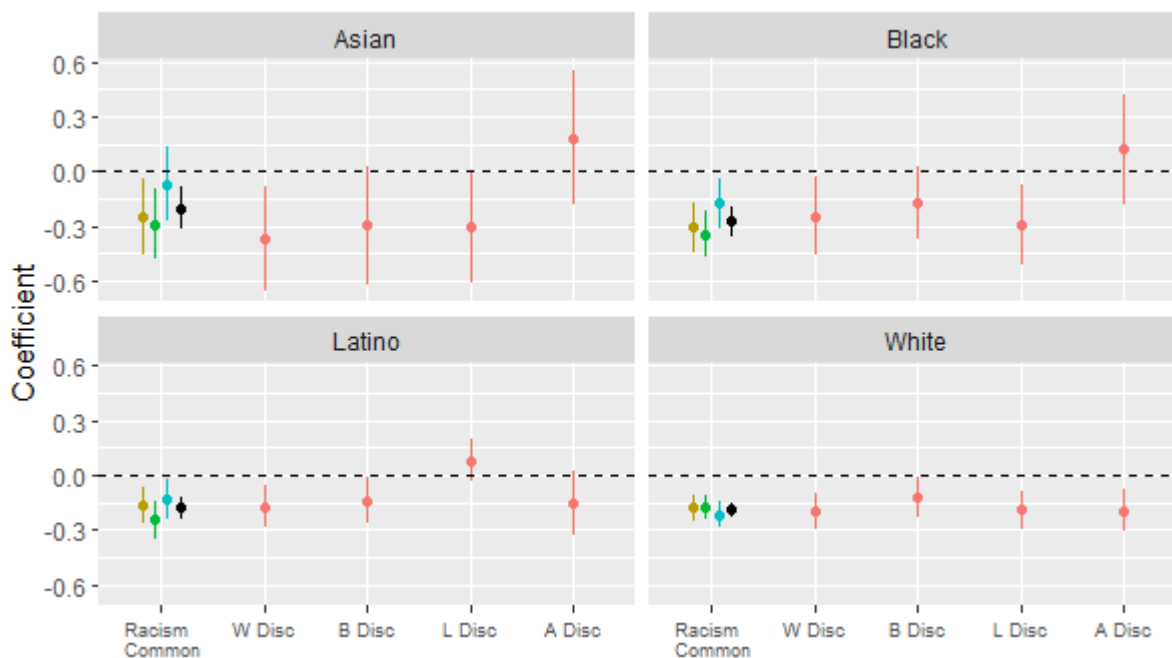
B. Second Generation vs Third+ Generation



data ANES GSS Original Pooled

Figure 3: Perceptions of Discrimination (Regression Coefficients)

A. First Generation vs Third+ Generation



B. Second Generation vs Third+ Generation



data ANES CES 18 CES 20 CES 22 Pooled

black-white inequality to Black Americans' perceived lack of motivation, and are less likely to attribute inequality to discrimination against Black Americans. In Figure 1B, I plot the coefficient on the second-generation dummy variable and find no consistent differences between second-generation immigrants and their third+ generation co-ethnics. First-generation immigrants are unique in their attitudes toward Black Americans. On average, the effect size of being a first-generation immigrant (relative to 3+ generation) is about one half the effect size of having a college degree (relative to being a high school graduate).

Do first-generation immigrants feel similarly toward non-Black racial/ethnic groups? In Figure 2A, I apply the above model to the Hardworking stereotypes dependent variable for the four racial/ethnic groups. Once again, first-generation immigrants of all four racial/ethnic groups consistently express more negative attitudes toward Black Americans than their third+ generation coethnics. They are significantly less likely to rate Black Americans as hardworking than their third+ generation coethnics. These negative ratings are only applied to Black Americans - first-generation immigrants are no less likely to rate whites, Latinos, or Asians as hardworking. First-generation immigrants are consistently more likely to rate white Americans as hardworking than are their third+ generation coethnics. In Figure 2B, I replicate this plot using the second-generation dummy variable and find no consistent differences in racial attitudes between second and third+ generation respondents. First-generation immigrants have uniquely negative attitudes toward Black Americans specifically, which do not spill over into their attitudes toward other groups.

Finally, to understand first-generation immigrants' perceptions of racial discrimination in the US, I plot the coefficient on the first-generation dummy variable for the discrimination perceptions DVs in Figure 3A. Once again, first-generation immigrants display very different attitudes than their third+ generation co-ethnics. First-generation immigrants of all four racial/ethnic groups are significantly more likely to agree with the statement, "Racial problems in the US are rare, isolated situations." They also believe that there is less discrimination in the US today

against Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Whites than do their third+ generation co-ethnics. First-generation immigrants are likelier to see America as a colorblind society where racial discrimination is rare. In Figure 3B I replicate this plot for the second-generation dummy variable and find no consistent differences between second and third+ generation respondents.

To demonstrate robustness to model specifications, I present the raw means between immigrants and native-borns for each set of variables in Appendix B1. The results of the raw difference in means analyses mirror the findings in Figures 1 - 3. Regression models and comparisons of raw means show similar outcomes.

Summary and Implications: Study 1

Drawing on evidence from six surveys of immigrants and native-borns, I find that first-generation immigrants have uniquely negative attitudes toward Black Americans. Consistent with H1, these attitudes are prevalent in the first, but not the second generation. Consistent with H2, these attitudes are unique to first-generation immigrants' attitudes toward Black Americans, and do not extend to their attitudes toward any other racial group.

The consistency of first-generation effects across respondents of all four racial/ethnic groups suggests that these effects result from the migration experience. Immigrants come from a wide variety of social contexts and have very different experiences within the United States. A white immigrant from Russia, a Black immigrant from Haiti, a Latino immigrant from Honduras, and an Asian immigrant from Taiwan all experienced dramatically different circumstances in their country of origin and are likely to experience very different treatment in the United States. Yet, relative to their native-born co-ethnics, they are all more likely to feel negatively toward Black Americans.

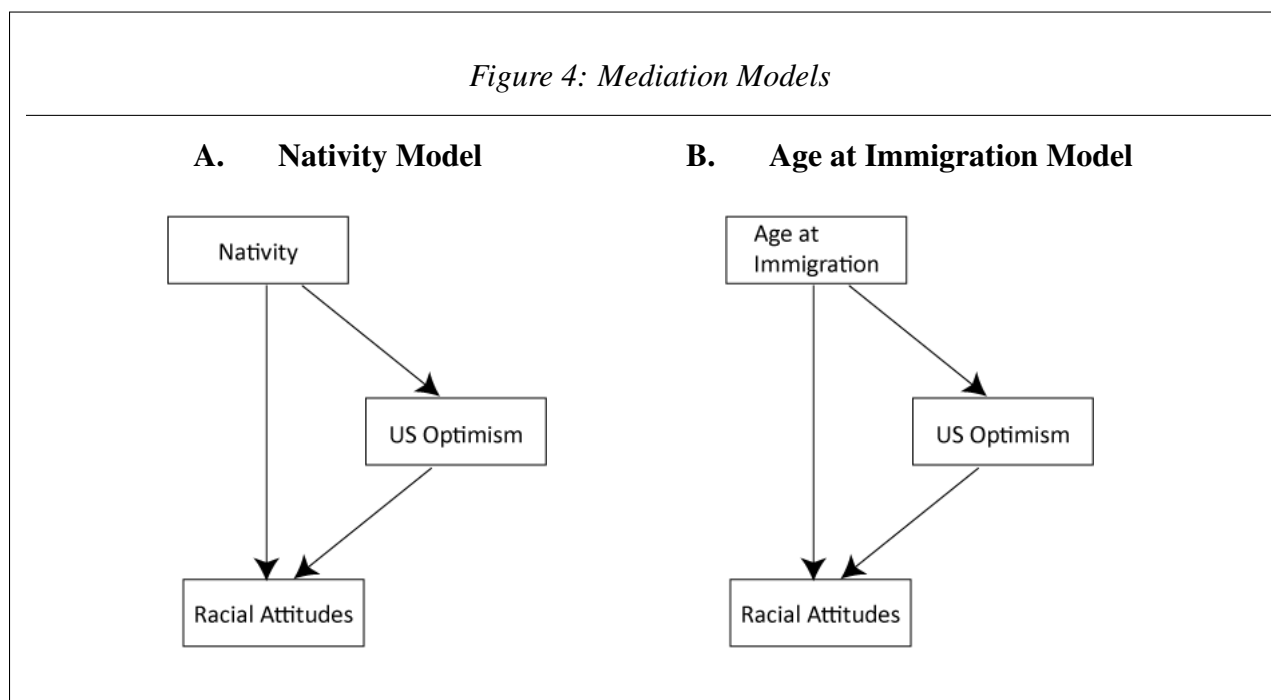
As I show in my analysis, first-generation immigrants are more likely to view America as a colorblind society where racial discrimination is rare. In the next section, I elaborate on this anal-

ysis and demonstrate that first-generation immigrants rate the United States very positively on dimensions that are not related to race or discrimination. I further explore how these perceptions of equality and opportunity in the US shape immigrants' racial attitudes with mediation analysis in Study 2 and with a survey experiment in Study 3.

Study 2: Optimism about the US Explains Differences in Anti-Black Attitudes

Why do first-generation immigrants have unique views about race in the United States? I argue that immigrants' heightened optimism about the United States is responsible for their negative beliefs about Black Americans. Immigrants, who are more likely to see America as a land of opportunity, are more likely to experience cognitive dissonance when confronted with Black-white racial inequality in the US. Due to their optimism about economic mobility in the United States, first-generation immigrants are more likely to reduce this dissonance by derogating Black Americans.

To test this theory, I develop a measure of optimism about opportunity and equality within the US. In Study 2, I examine the explanatory power this optimism to mediate differences both between immigrants/native-borns and within immigrant groups. In addition to measuring the ability of US Optimism to explain the nativity-based differences in racial attitudes reported in Study 1, I also examine the effects of age-at-migration on racial attitudes among first-generation immigrant respondents. My theory predicts that immigrants who migrated later in life will have more optimism about the US and more negative attitudes toward Black because these immigrants were more likely to personally make the decision to migrate and had more established lives in their country of origin (thus sacrificing more to migrate).



Study 2: Measurement and Methods

Study 2 focuses on an original survey⁴ of immigrants (n= 943) and native-borns (n = 1120) carried out on the Lucid platform in 2021. This survey contained approximately equal numbers of first-generation immigrants from all four racial/ethnic groups studied. More information about this survey can be found in Appendices A1 and A2. I examine two sets of dependent variables: the racial resentment scores and the attributions for inequality measures.

To test the effect of immigrants' optimism about the US on their racial attitudes, I develop a measure of optimism about life in the US and for immigrants in their native country. The scale contains the following questions:

⁴This survey is one of the six surveys used in Study 1

On a scale from 1-10, please rate how accurately each statement describes [country]

- 1. Anyone who is willing to work hard can make a decent income*
- 2. The legal system is fair and just*
- 3. The political system is responsive to the needs of its citizens*
- 4. It is a good place to live*

Immigrants were asked to rate both their native country (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$) and the US (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$) using this scale, while native-borns were only asked to rate the US (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$). In order to test the relationship between racial attitudes, age-at-migration, and US Optimism, I asked respondents the age at which they migrated to the United States. The immigrants in the survey immigrated at a wide range of ages - in Figure A2 in Appendix A4, I plot a histogram of this variable. Approximately one third of immigrant respondents immigrated before the age of 10, one quarter immigrated between the ages of 10 and 20, and the remaining 40% immigrated over the age of 20.

In Study 2, I use mediation analysis to test whether nativity-based differences in US optimism mediate nativity-based and age-at-migration based differences in racial attitudes. Mediation analysis is used in social sciences to test potential explanations for how a variable (such as nativity) influences an outcome (such as racial attitudes). This analysis tests the degree to which the inclusion of a mediator variable in a regression reduces the effect of nativity on racial attitudes. I treat US Optimism as a process variable in my analysis, in line with approaches taken by recent scholarship that uses mediation analysis to explain racial attitudes among people of color (Pérez, Robertson and Vicuña 2023; Alhambra et al. 2024). As I conduct this mediation analysis on observational data, I use it to measure statistical relationships between my variables, not to make a causal claim.

Mediation analysis is not a silver bullet - some scholars have highlighted the vulnerability of mediation analysis to confounders, especially with observational data (Bullock, Green and Ha

2010). Still, mediation is valuable for establishing statistical relationships between variables of interest (Preacher 2015; Montgomery, Nyhan and Torres 2018). Given the importance of US Optimism as an explanatory variable to my theory, if mediation analysis did not find that optimism about the US significantly mediates nativity effects on racial attitudes, this would be serious evidence against my theory.

Figure 4A shows the mediation model I test to measure the degree to which US Optimism explains nativity effects on racial attitudes. I argue that first-generation immigrant nativity increases US Optimism, creating more negative attitudes toward Black Americans. Figure 4B shows the similar model that I use to determine the relationship between Age at migration, US Optimism, and racial attitudes for immigrants. Both models contain covariates for age, race/ethnicity, gender, party ID, income, and education.

Study 2: Results

Figure 5A shows the means of US and native country optimism by nativity (first-generation immigrant vs. native-born) and by race/ethnicity. As predicted by H3a, immigrants are significantly more optimistic about the United States than are native-borns. They are also significantly more optimistic about the United States than about their country of origin.

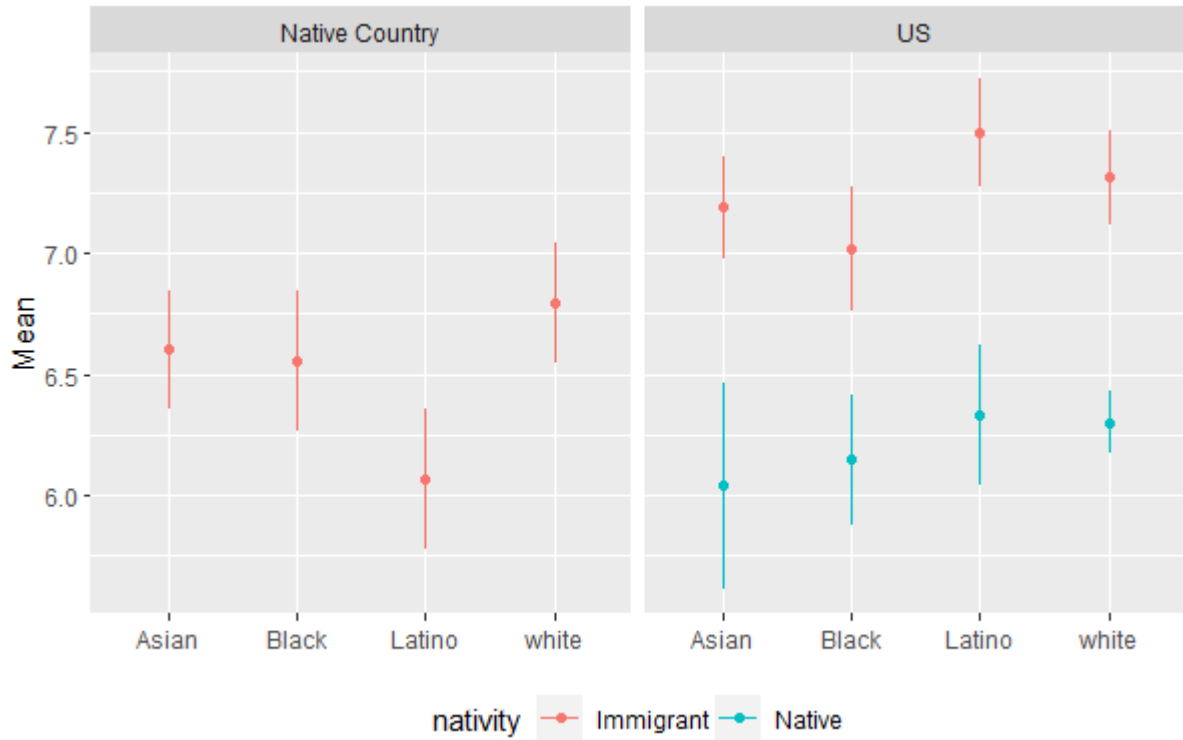
These differences are highly consistent across different racial/ethnic groups. First-generation immigrants of all four groups are significantly more optimistic than native-borns of all four groups. This consistency holds even when breaking the scale down into individual questions (see Appendix B.2.1). While there are some differences in optimism by race, they are substantially overshadowed by the nativity differences in optimism.

In Figure 5B, I plot the regression coefficients on the US Optimism variable from a regression of the following form (run separately on each combination of race/ethnicity + nativity):

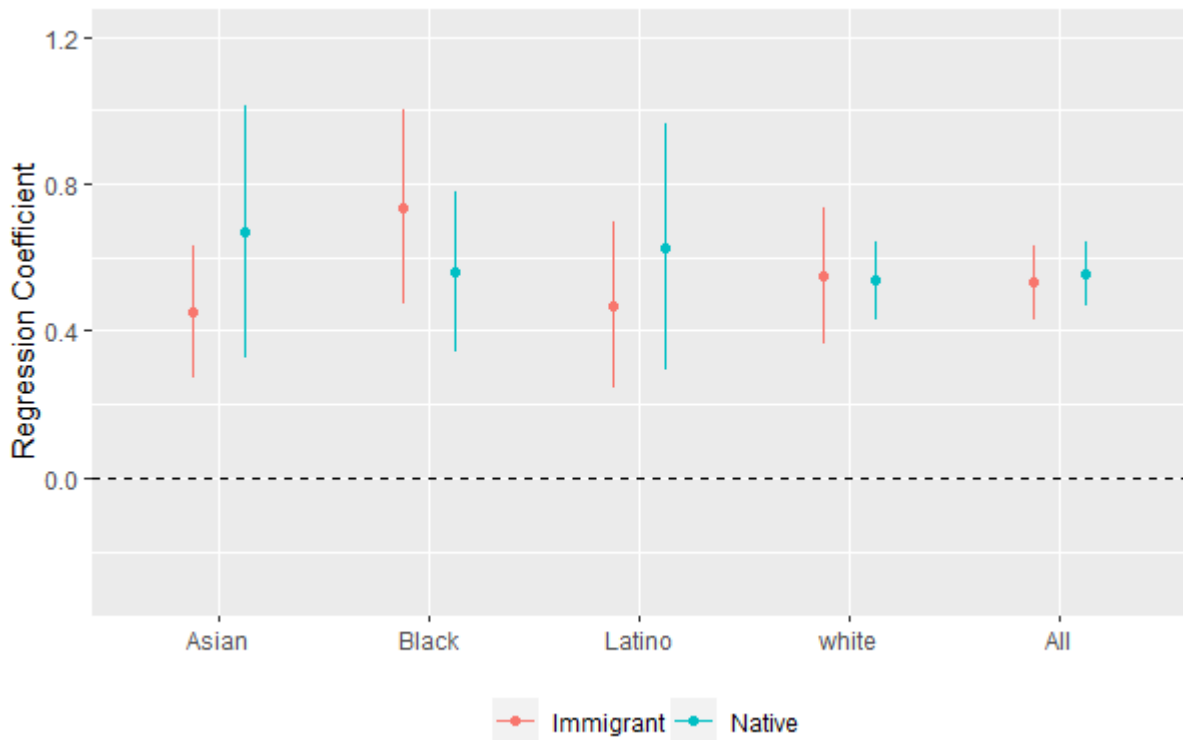
$$DV \sim US\ Optimism + Age + Gender + Education + Income + Party\ ID$$

Figure 5: Nativity, Optimism, and Racial Resentment

A. Optimism Measure Means by Race and Nativity



B. Racial Resentment Regressed on US Optimism



The coefficients presented in Figure 5B use the Workway measure as the dependent variable, coefficients for additional measures, which show a similar effect, are presented in Appendix B.2.2. Figure 5B shows that for all groups studied, there is a strong and significant association between the US Optimism scale and racial resentment, even after controlling for demographic variables.

On the other hand, among immigrants, there is no clear relationship between optimism about their country of origin and their racial attitudes. In Appendix B.2.3, I replicate the analysis in Figure 5B for immigrant ratings of their country of origin and find a clear null effect. Immigrants' ratings of the United States clearly correlate with their attitudes toward Black Americans, but their ratings of their native country do not.

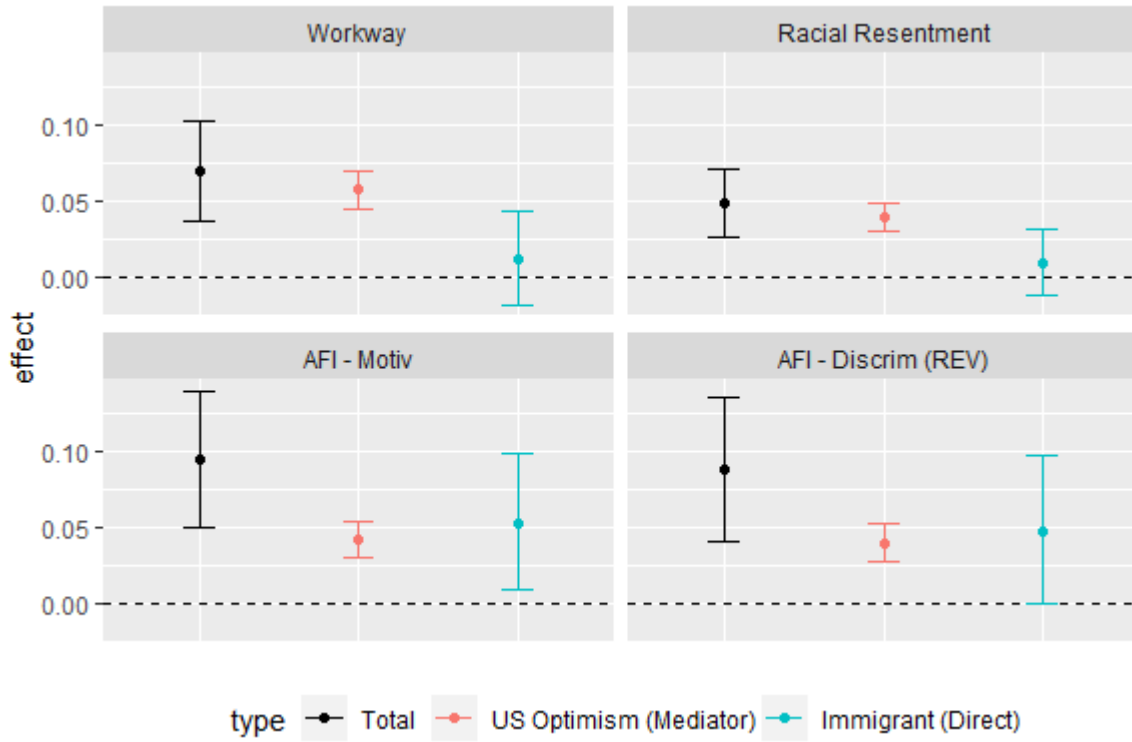
Figure 6A shows the results of the mediation analysis for four key variables. In the case of the Workway and Racial Resentment measures, US Optimism completely mediates the effect of immigrant nativity on racial attitudes. When accounting for the effect of nativity-based differences in US Optimism, the direct effect of immigrant nativity on racial attitudes is no longer significant. The AFI-Motivation and AFI-Discrimination variables show a partial mediation effect. While nativity-based differences in US Optimism significantly mediate the effect of immigrant nativity on these attitudes, there is still a significant direct effect of nativity even after accounting for US Optimism. To test the sensitivity of these results to unobserved confounders, I conduct a sensitivity analysis in Appendix A.5. These results provide strong support for H3b - nativity-based differences in racial attitudes result from nativity-based differences in optimism about the US.

Next, I turn to the question of optimism and age-at-immigration differences in racial attitudes. My theory predicts that because immigrants who migrate to the US at a later age are likely to have greater optimism about the US and more negative attitudes toward Black Americans. In Figure 7, I plot the regression coefficient on the age at migration variable⁵ in a regression of the

⁵scaled from 0 to 1, with 1 being the oldest age in the dataset (70)

Figure 6: US Optimism Mediates Nativity Effects on Racial Attitudes

A. US Optimism Mediates the Effects of Nativity



B. US Optimism Mediates the Effects of Age at Migration

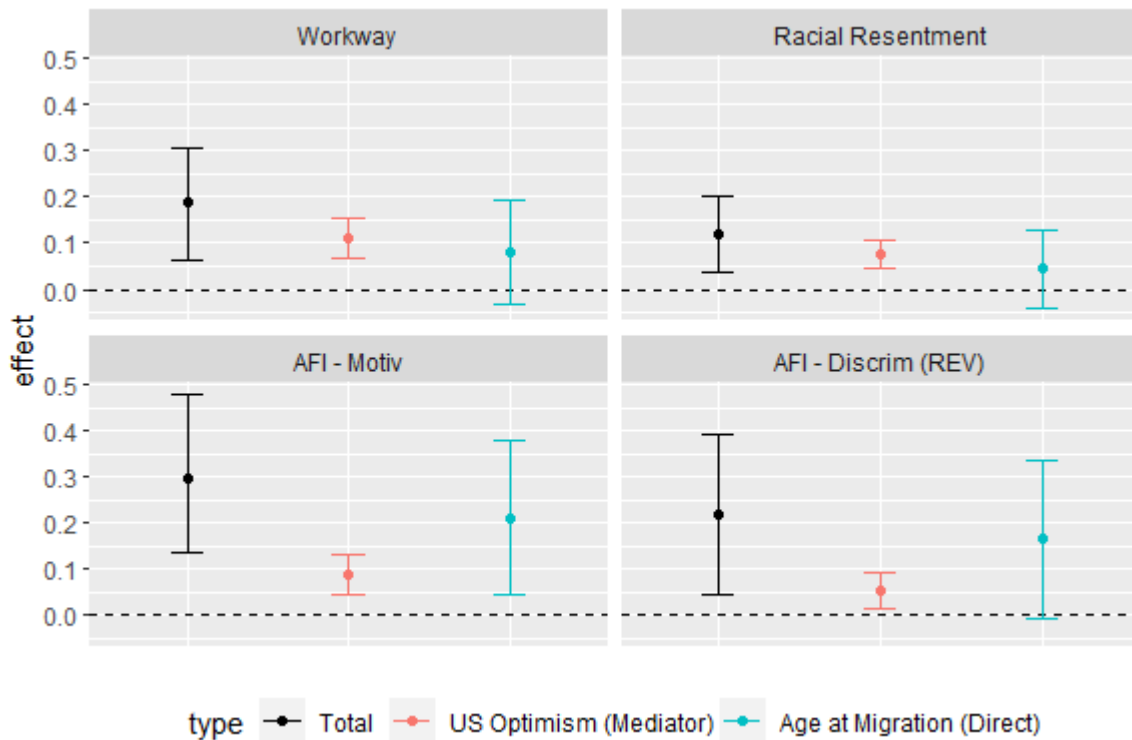
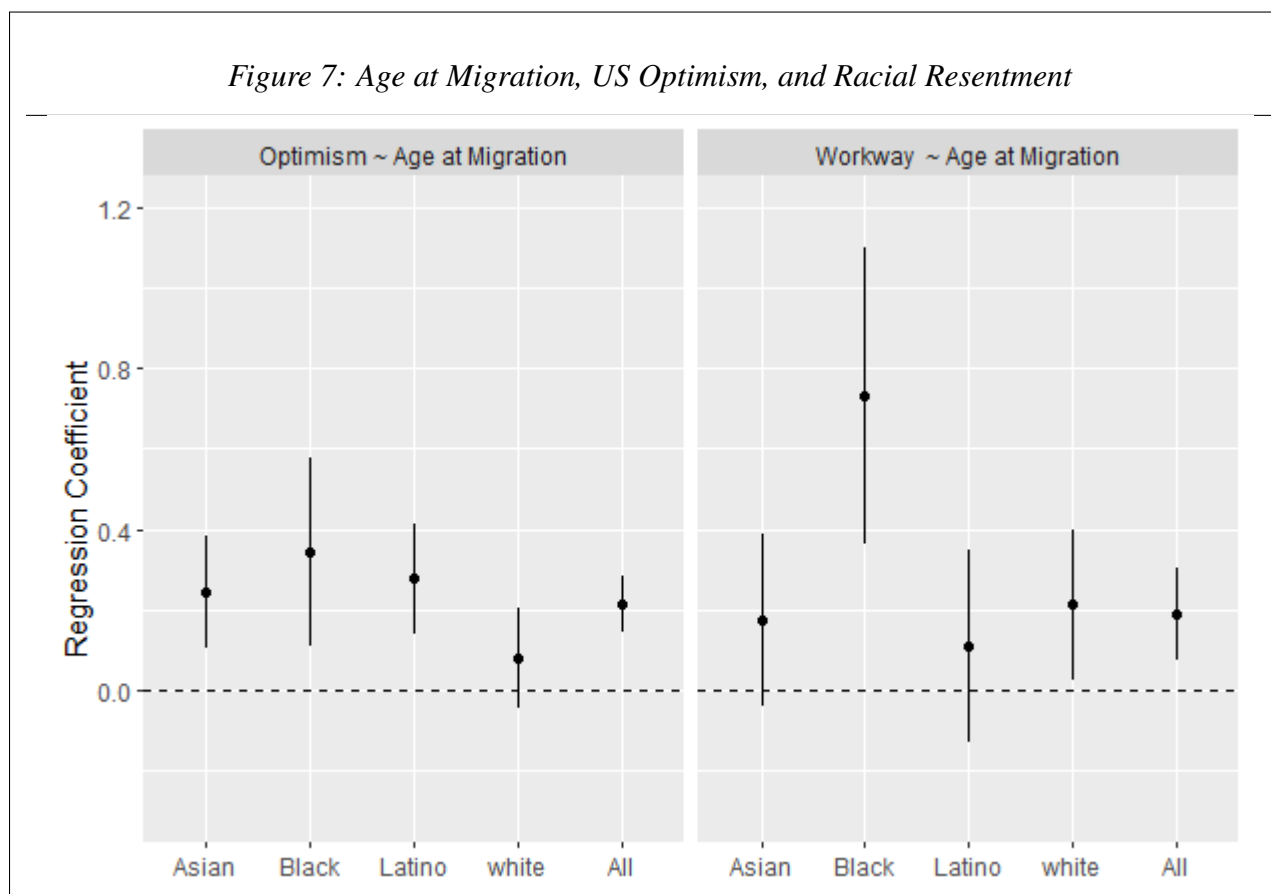


Figure 7: Age at Migration, US Optimism, and Racial Resentment



following form (run separately on each racial/ethnic group of immigrants):

$$DV \sim \text{AgeAtMigration} + \text{Age} + \text{Gender} + \text{Education} + \text{Income} + \text{Party ID}$$

As predicted by H4a, there is a consistent positive relationship between Age at Migration, US Optimism, and Racial Resentment, even after controlling for other key variables such as respondent age and party ID. In Figure 6B, I replicate the mediation analysis to test the effect of US Optimism on the relationship between age at immigration and racial attitudes. As predicted by H4b, US Optimism substantially mediates the effect of migrating later in life. For the Workway, Racial Resentment, and AFI - Discrimination variables, US Optimism fully mediates the effects of Age at Migration on racial attitudes. For the AFI - Motivation variable, US Optimism only partially mediates these differences. I conduct a sensitivity analysis for this mediation analysis in Appendix A.5.

Summary and Implications: Study 2

First-generation immigrants have substantially higher levels of optimism about the US than their native-born counterparts, as do immigrants who immigrated later rather than earlier in life. The data also establishes a clear link between this optimism and racial attitudes for immigrants and native-borns of all racial/ethnic groups studied, even after controlling for relevant variables such as party ID. Whether Democrat or Republican, white or POC, respondents who feel that America is a land of opportunity are more likely to blame Black Americans' perceived shortcomings for American racial inequality.

While mediation analysis can provide valuable insights into the relationship between Nativity, Racial Attitudes, and US Optimism, it cannot establish causality. In Study 3, I conduct a survey experiment to test whether manipulating US Optimism can cause changes in racial attitudes among immigrants and native-borns⁶.

Study 3: Manipulating US Optimism Shapes Racial Attitudes

Studies 1 and 2 established a clear relationship between nativity, racial attitudes, and optimism about the US. Study 3 allows me to manipulate optimism about opportunity and mobility through the use of a survey experiment. If differences in beliefs about US optimism are responsible for the nativity and age-at-immigration effects seen in Studies 1 and 2, priming optimism should influence racial attitudes among immigrants and native-borns.

Study 3: Measurement and Methods

In Original Survey II, which was conducted on Latino and Asian respondents only, respondents (n = 1,518) were assigned to read a prime that was designed to either increase optimism about

⁶This study was pre-registered at AsPredicted: https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=QTW_RRX

Figure 8: Survey Experiment Primes

Optimism Prime

Immigrant from Guatemala Builds Successful Trucking Business in the US



By Dorothy McMahon

Samuel Cruz came to America with 200\$ in his pocket and the dream of starting his own business. "I did landscaping, I worked in restaurants. I worked washing trucks, I worked cleaning vegetables in supermarkets, I worked separating garbage in the landfill," he said.

After decades of scrimping and saving, Cruz's hard work paid off. "I started with one truck, and I grew it into an empire of trucks. We now have over a hundred trucks in the street and over 200 trailers." His company serves over 3000 accounts, including major companies like Amazon and UPS.

"Without America, where would I be?" Cruz said, "It gave me the opportunity to grow, the opportunity to become something."

Pessimism Prime

Trucking Business Started by Guatemalan Immigrant Fails



By Dorothy McMahon

Samuel Cruz came to America with 200\$ in his pocket and the dream of starting his own business. "I did landscaping, I worked in restaurants. I worked washing trucks, I worked cleaning vegetables in supermarkets, I worked separating garbage in the landfill," he said.

But after decades of scrimping and saving, Cruz feels like he's farther away from the American Dream than when he started. "I decided to take a chance and open up my own business. I got my own truck, then had a bad accident that almost killed me".

"Now, I have all this debt and no truck." Cruz said, "I'm back to square zero. I don't know how much longer I can keep doing this."

Table 2: Survey Experiment US Optimism Manipulation Check

Group	Nativity	Optimism Prime	Pessimism Prime	Difference
Asian	Immigrant	7.42	6.17	1.25***
Asian	Native-born	6.36	5.38	0.98***
Latino	Immigrant	7.17	6.24	0.93***
Latino	Native-born	6.12	5.96	0.16

†p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

social mobility in the United States (Optimism Prime) or to decrease it (Pessimism Prime). The text/image for both primes is presented in Figure 8. Both primes contain similar details about a Guatemalan immigrant who started a trucking business in the United States. The first paragraph of both conditions is identical and establishes Samuel Cruz, the protagonist, as a hard worker trying to achieve the American Dream. In the Optimism Prime, Cruz’s hard work pays off, and he builds a successful trucking business. In the Pessimism Prime, Cruz is badly derailed by a truck accident and is unable to build a successful business. The prime is designed to be as similar as possible across both conditions, with an identical first paragraph and similar accompanying images. I do not include a no-prime control due to concerns about statistical power and the possibility of compound prime effects⁷.

To test whether this treatment successfully primes US Optimism, I compare the US Optimism scores of the respondents who received the Optimism and Pessimism primes. Table 2 shows the US Optimism score for each set of respondents. For all four groups, respondents who read the Optimism prime had higher US Optimism scores than those who read the Pessimism prime, and for three groups, that difference was statistically significant.

⁷Because the experiment is measuring racial attitudes and includes a story of a person of color, it would be difficult to determine whether differences between respondents in a no-prime vs optimism prime condition would be the result of increased optimism or the result of reading about a hardworking person of color

Study 3: Results

In Table 3, I present the results of the survey experiment on the anti-Black attitudes and Frequency of Discrimination variables. Respondents in the Optimism Prime had higher Workway and Racial Resentment scores, were more likely to believe that discrimination against whites in the US is more frequent and less likely to believe in discrimination against Blacks, Latinos, and Immigrants in the US. While the data does not have sufficient power to adequately measure subgroup effects, I present the results by nativity group and race/ethnicity in Appendix B.3.2. The treatment effects are highly consistent in magnitude among immigrants ($n = 560$) and native-borns ($n = 958$), and among Latinos ($n = 766$) and Asians ($n = 752$). Asians had a slightly larger treatment effect than Latinos, as expected from their stronger response to the Optimism prime, as described in Table 2. This evidence suggests that increasing US Optimism shapes immigrants' and native-borns' attitudes toward Black Americans and the American racial context.

The Discrimination variable results provide an especially useful test of the theory. In both conditions, the prime discusses the story of a Latino immigrants. It does not mention any white or Black characters. Yet, respondents exposed to the optimism prime saw the US as a more hospitable place for both Black and Latino Americans, and a less hospitable place for white Americans. This suggests that optimism about the US is tied into broader understandings of system justification and racial hierarchy in the US.

In Appendix B.3.3, I conduct a mediation analysis testing whether the effect of the treatment on racial attitudes is mediated by the effects of the treatment on US Optimism. I find strong evidence that the effect of the treatment on racial attitudes is mediated by its effect on US Optimism. I also replicate the analysis from Studies 1 and 2 using the data from this survey in Appendix B.3.1. I find that the relationships between nativity, US optimism, and racial attitudes replicate for the respondents in this survey as well.

Table 3: Survey Experiment Results (All Respondents)

	Optimism Prime	Pessimism Prime	Difference
<i>Anti-Black Attitudes</i>			
Workway	3.35	3.15	0.20**
Racial Resentment	2.94	2.82	0.12*
AFI - Discrimination	0.51	0.55	0.04
AFI - Motivation	0.29	0.31	0.02
<i>Discrimination against...</i>			
Whites	2.27	2.10	0.17**
Blacks	3.62	3.73	-0.11*
Latinos	3.38	3.56	-0.18**
Asians	3.27	3.33	-0.06
Immigrants	3.62	3.75	-0.13*

†p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Summary and Implications: Study 3

The results of studies 1-3 point to a consistent set of conclusions. In Study 3, I show that increasing US Optimism leads to higher racial resentment and less belief in discrimination against Blacks, Latinos, and immigrants among immigrants and native-borns alike. This is compelling evidence that immigrants' positive attitudes about the United States are responsible for their uniquely negative attitudes toward Black Americans.

Testing Alternative Mechanisms

My theory argues that first-generation immigrants' negative attitudes toward Black Americans result from their optimistic attitudes about equality and social mobility within the US. I test three

alternative explanations for first-generation immigrants' unique attitudes: (1) resource competition, (2) host society rejection, and (3) differential social desirability bias.

The first alternative explanation, resource competition, stems from the literature (Mohl 1990; Waters 1999). Scholars have long found that intergroup competition for resources exacerbates prejudice against out-groups (Bobo 2004; Zárate et al. 2004; Esses et al. 2005). In the context of immigrant attitudes toward Black Americans, the resource competition explanation would be as follows: First-generation immigrants, due to their disadvantaged status, are more likely to reside in close proximity to Black people and compete with them for jobs and other resources. As a result, both groups would experience heightened animosity toward the other.

This explanation yields an easily testable prediction. If resource competition among lower status immigrants and Black Americans explains first-generation immigrants' negative attitudes, the differences between native-borns and first-generation immigrants should be strongest for respondents with the lowest socioeconomic status, and should attenuate significantly if not disappear completely for high SES immigrants and native-borns.

Table 4 shows the raw and race/ethnicity adjusted⁸ nativity effects on the Work Way Up measure by household income and education from the six-survey pooled data. These results differ substantially than those predicted by the resource competition explanation. Nearly all socioeconomic groups show strong nativity effects, and the difference between immigrants and native-borns is generally strongest among the most educated respondents⁹. This eliminates resource competition as a plausible explanation for the observed nativity-based differences in racial attitudes.

A second alternative mechanism is anti-Blackness as a response to discrimination or host society rejection. Scholars have noted that Latino and Asian immigrants are often given a limi-

⁸Race-adjusted nativity effect is the coefficient on the nativity variable in the following model: $DV \sim race + nativity$

⁹Conducting a similar analysis subset on partisanship/ideology yields similar results. The nativity gaps are consistent across all groups but largest for Democrats and liberals

Table 4: Nativity Effects by Education and Income

	Immigrant	Native-Born	Raw Diff	Race-Adj Diff
<i>Education</i>				
No HS	3.61	3.57	0.04	0.07
HS Grad	3.53	3.47	0.06 [†]	0.21***
Some College	3.22	2.99	0.23***	0.34***
College Grad	3.07	2.63	0.44***	0.49***
Post Grad	2.89	2.39	0.50***	0.52***
<i>Income</i>				
<25K	3.33	3.05	0.28***	0.40***
25-50K	3.27	3.04	0.22***	0.34***
50-75K	3.20	2.91	0.28***	0.39***
75-100K	3.20	2.89	0.31***	0.45***
100-125K	3.10	2.77	0.33***	0.39***
125-250K	3.00	2.66	0.34***	0.38***
250K+	2.80	2.57	0.23*	0.23*

†p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

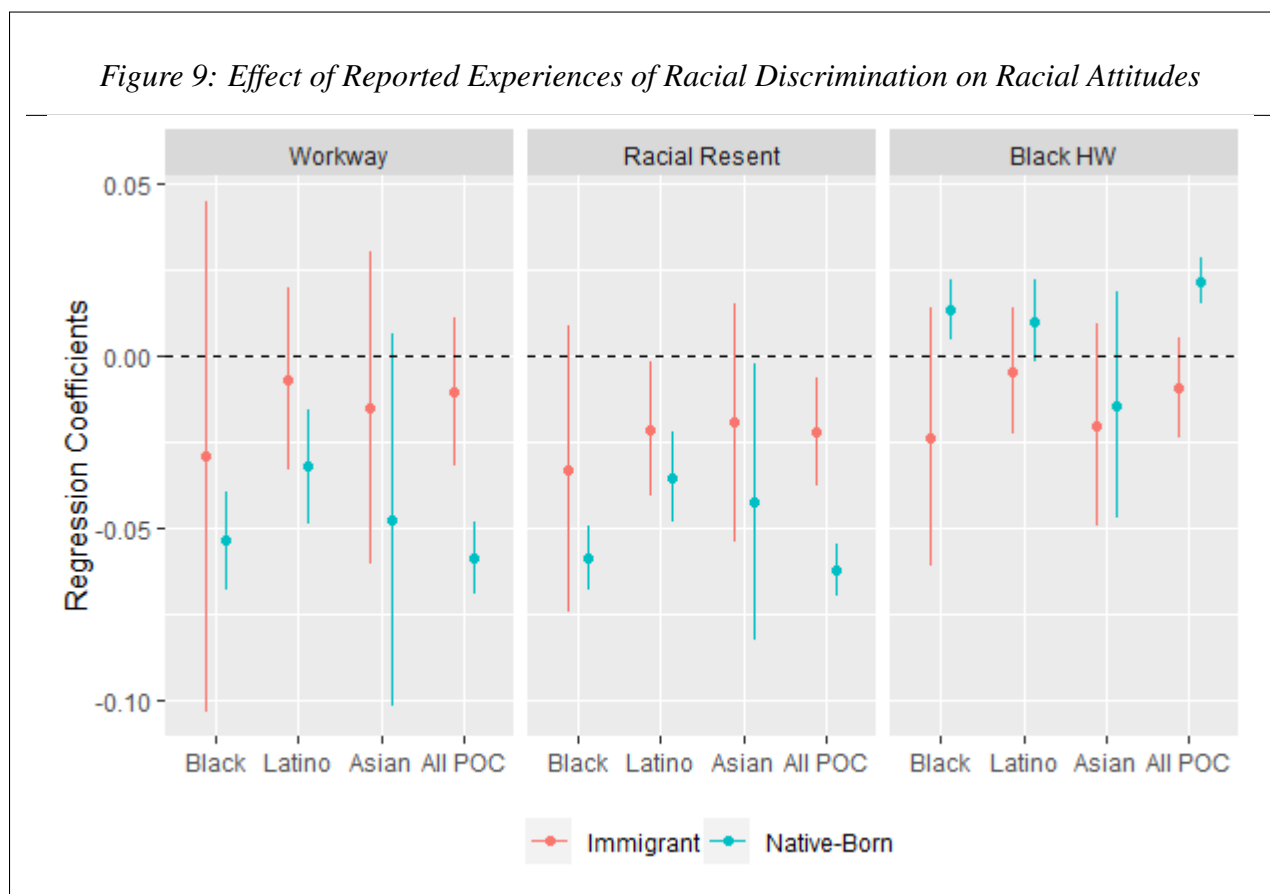
nal status in the US, and may attempt to engage in anti-Black assimilation as a way to re-assert their belonging in the US (Robertson and Roman 2023; Pérez, Robertson and Vicuña 2023; Marrow 2009; McClain et al. 2006). Using this strategy, first-generation immigrants who perceive discrimination against their racial/ethnic groups may attempt to distance themselves from Black Americans, a low status group, in order to raise their position within the American racial hierarchy. In order for anti-Black assimilation to explain the observed first-generation nativity effects in racial attitudes, two patterns must be observed in the data. First, anti-Blackness as an assimilation strategy should be most common among Latino and Asian immigrants, as first generation white immigrants benefit from whiteness and do not experience racially liminal status, while first generation Black immigrants cannot raise their status through anti-Black assimilation.

The data presented in Figures 1 - 3 suggests that anti-Black assimilation is unlikely to explain the observed effects. First-generation immigrants of all four racial/ethnic groups express anti-Black attitudes. Nativity effects are largest among Latino and Asian respondents, and smallest (but still significant and persistent) among white respondents. This suggests that racial distancing may contribute to anti-Black attitudes among some groups, but cannot explain the consistent nativity effects among white and Black respondents, neither of whom benefit from racial distancing.

I also test the relationship between reported experiences of racial discrimination among immigrants/native borns of color and anti-Black attitudes. Using data from the ANES (2012-2020)¹⁰, I regress anti-Black attitudes on racial discrimination experiences among immigrants and native-borns¹¹. In Figure 9, I present the coefficients on the Discrimination Experience variable. I consistently find a robust negative relationship between anti-Black attitudes and discrimination experiences among native-born people of color. Native-born respondents of color who report more racial discrimination also have lower scores on the racial resentment scale and are more likely to rate Black Americans as hardworking. However, Figure 9 shows no consistent relationship

¹⁰The discrimination experience question reads: "How much discrimination have you personally faced because of your ethnicity or race?"

¹¹Model of the form $DV \sim DiscriminationExperience + Age + Gender + Income + Education + Party ID$. I add a covariate for race in the regressions that pool across groups



between experiences of racial discrimination and anti-Black attitudes among first-generation immigrants of color. First generation immigrants who report experiencing frequent racial discrimination are no more and no less likely to express negative attitudes toward Black Americans.

These findings are extremely consistent with the results presented in Figure 3. First-generation immigrants who experience racial discrimination are more likely to view it as a "rare, isolated event" than are their native-born co-ethnics. Due to their optimism about opportunity and equality in the US, they are less likely to update their attitudes about race in the US even after experiencing racial discrimination. This suggests that the immigrants' expressions of anti-Black attitudes are not the result of their experiences with racial discrimination in the US.

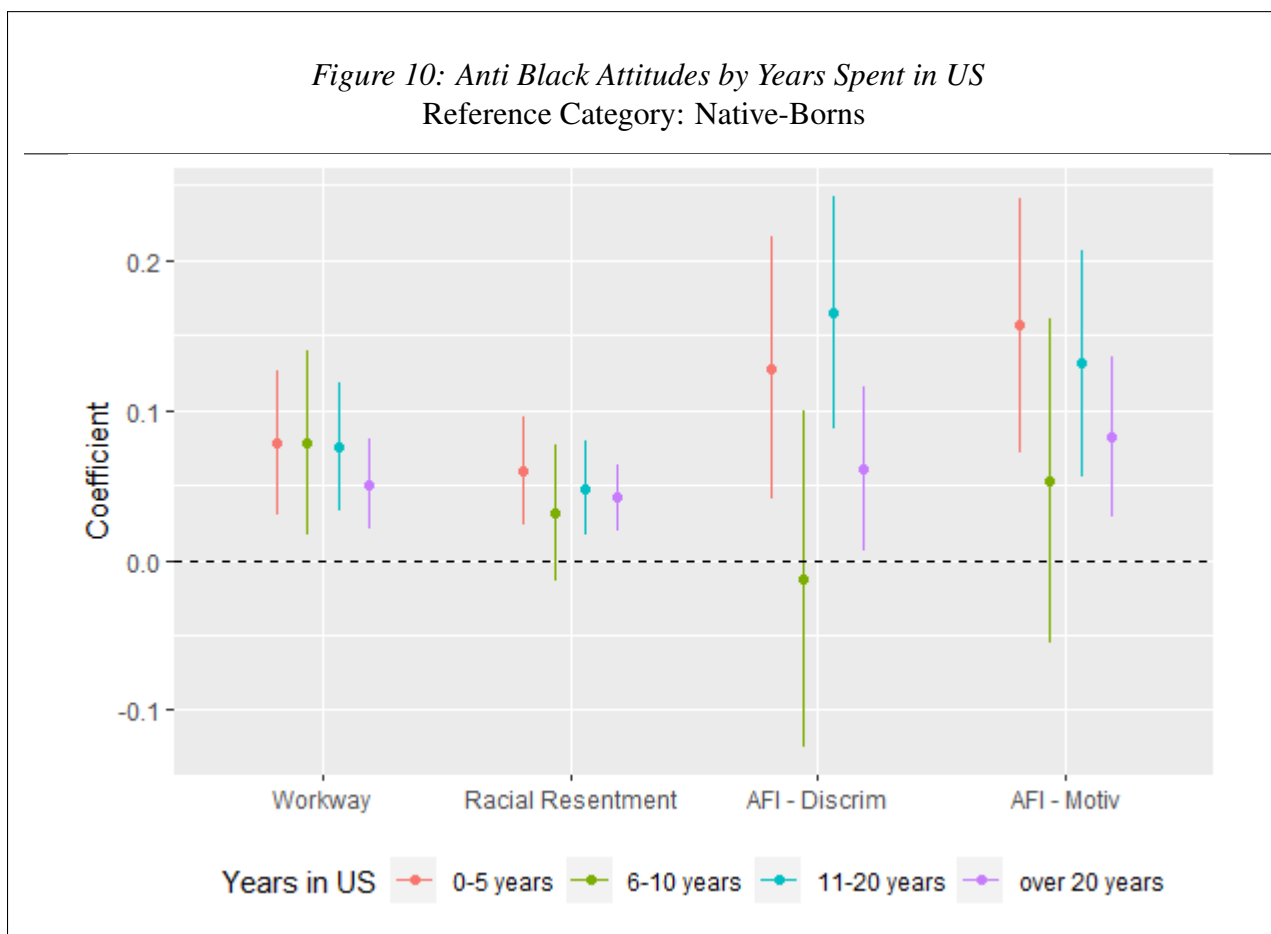
The final alternative explanation that I test is differential social desirability bias. Responses

to survey questions about racial attitudes are known to exhibit social desirability bias, as respondents with prejudiced attitudes are less likely to be open about these attitudes on a survey (Kuklinski, Cobb and Gilens 1997). Scholars have noted that first-generation immigrants may not be fully aware that displaying openly prejudiced attitudes about Black Americans is considered socially undesirable behavior in the US (Goldenberg and Saxe 1996). If this is the case, it may be possible that the observed nativity-based differences are a survey artifact rather than a true difference of opinion. To test this explanation, I examine the effect of time spent in the US on racial attitudes among first-generation immigrants. Time spent in the US is positively associated with US acculturation (adaptation to the receiving country). If the outcomes I measure are the result of differential social desirability bias, then spending more time in the US should be negatively associated with anti-Black attitudes.

In Figure 10, I present coefficient estimates from a regression analysis¹² that compares immigrants who have spent differing amounts of time in the US to their native-born co-ethnics. For all four variables, immigrants who have spent substantial amounts of time in the US continue to have significantly more negative attitudes toward Black Americans than do their native-born co-ethnics. This finding is generally in line with the results from McClain et al. (2006), which found that time spent in the US does not attenuate anti-Black attitudes among Latino immigrants. While I do find a slight decrease in anti-Black attitudes with time spent in country, these findings provide strong evidence against the differential social desirability bias as the main explanation for my results. If immigrants who have spent over 20 years within the US continue to express negative attitudes toward Black Americans, this outcome is unlikely to be the result of a lack of understanding of American norms.

¹² $DV \sim \text{YearsInUS} + \text{Age} + \text{Gender} + \text{Income} + \text{Education} + \text{Race/Ethnicity} + \text{Party ID}$. Native-born is the reference category for the *YearsInUS* variable. The results are robust to the inclusion/exclusion of covariates, including Party ID

Figure 10: Anti Black Attitudes by Years Spent in US
Reference Category: Native-Borns



Conclusion

In a piece titled, "When Demography Isn't Destiny", second-generation Pakistani-American Zaid Jilani writes, "My own parents came to this country from Pakistan in the 1970s. They described America to me as a country with some of the kindest, most welcoming people in the world. As a child, I had a hard time believing them."¹³ There is no shortage of quotes from first-generation immigrants expressing a deep warmth and appreciation for their experiences in the United States, backed up by extensive survey data ¹⁴. Across the board, first-generation immigrants have a uniquely positive view of the United States.

Yet this positive view of America comes with a cost. I find that first-generation immigrants are more likely to justify racial inequality in the US by blaming it on Black Americans' perceived shortcomings, rather than discrimination and structural inequality. I theorize that this is because first-generation immigrants are deeply attached to America as a land of opportunity, and acknowledging the role of racial discrimination and structural inequality fundamentally undercuts this perception. As a result, first-generation immigrants are more likely to reduce this cognitive dissonance by blaming Black Americans for US racial inequality.

Using data from six surveys, I find consistent evidence that first-generation immigrants have uniquely negative attitudes toward Black Americans. This pattern holds for first-generation immigrants of all racial/ethnic groups, but does not hold for the second generation. These negative attitudes are unique to immigrants' perceptions of Black Americans - they do not rate whites, Latinos, or Asians as lazier than do native-borns. In Studies 2 and 3, I use original surveys to explore the relationship between US Optimism and racial attitudes, and find a strong relationship between positive views of the US and negative views of Black Americans that mediates the relationship between nativity and racial attitudes.

¹³<https://www.city-journal.org/article/when-demography-isnt-destiny>

¹⁴<https://www.cato.org/publications/immigration-research-policy-brief/immigrants-recognize-american-greatness-immigrants>

I believe these findings are important to our understanding of immigrant political incorporation. After the 2020 election, many political scientists and commentators noted increased electoral support of Donald Trump among some Latinos (Sommer and Franco 2024) (though others have noted little movement within Latinos' partisan identities during this period: see Hopkins, Kaiser and Perez (2023)). However, some evidence suggests that naturalized citizens in these groups may have been particularly likely to choose Trump over Biden in 2020 (Cai and Fessenden 2020). Understanding the unique dynamics of first-generation political opinion can shed light on political attitudes and vote choices of naturalized Americans. In one sense, some first-generation immigrants (especially those of color) can be seen as cross-pressured voters, with immigration attitudes closer to those of Democrats, but attitudes about American opportunity and social mobility closer to those of Republicans.

It is valuable to understand the difference between the effects of acculturation versus first generation status on immigrant political behavior. I find that acculturation (measured by time spent in the US) appears to have little effect on first-generation immigrant anti-Blackness. Immigrants who have spent decades in the US still hold attitudes about Black Americans that are substantially more negative than those of their native-born coethnics. This points to a unique first-generation effect on immigrant political behavior, which is distinct from the effects of acculturation.

These attitudes also have important implications for conflict as well as coalition-building between Black and immigrant Americans. Recent history provides numerous examples of Black-immigrant tensions erupting in violence (such as violent conflict in LA (Min 1996) and Miami (Mohl 1990)), as well as examples of successful coalition-building between Black Americans and immigrant groups at both local (Gosin 2019) and national (Lee 2011) levels. If first-generation immigrants see themselves and their problems as distinct from problems facing native-born Black Americans, this undercuts the possibility of forming multi-racial coalitions, which rely on a sense of commonality (Benjamin 2017; Cortland et al. 2017; Kaufmann 2003; Wilkinson 2015).

These findings generate a number of directions for future research. First, do immigrant attitudes about the US lead to greater system justification in non-racial contexts? For example, are first-generation immigrants also more likely to justify economic inequality in the US as a symptom of "lazy" people who do not take advantage of their opportunities? System justification has been tied to ideological conservatism (Jost, Ledgerwood and Hardin 2008) and support for Donald Trump (Azevedo, Jost and Rothmund 2017). If first-generation immigrants share so many beliefs with Republicans, is Republican rhetoric about immigration the sole reason that more first-generation immigrants do not support the Republican party?

Second, many first-generation immigrants struggle economically (Picot, Hou and Coulombe 2007). To what degree do these economic struggles attenuate the effects of optimism on immigrant attitudes? These questions all pose additional tests of the nativity-optimism link. On one hand, dashed hopes and economic disappointments may lead immigrants to re-evaluate their positive view of the US. If immigrants are deeply invested in American opportunity and may have experienced low income conditions in their country of origin, a poor experience by American standards may still feel comparably good relative to their prior experiences (Waters 1999).

Finally, how does immigrant optimism about the US translate into immigrant naturalization and political participation? Do immigrants who feel optimistically about the US feel moved to naturalize to further their sense of belonging in the US? Does a sense of American opportunity depress immigrant political interest, voting, participation in protests and other forms of political participation? If immigrants feel that their main goal is to take advantage of American opportunities to the fullest, they may be less interested in politics than their native-born coethnics. On the other hand, if immigrants feel a greater sense of freedom to speak their mind about politics without fear of repression (as some would experience in their country of origin), they may be more likely to participate.

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A Methodology

A.1 Survey Data and Measurement Overview

I draw on survey data to measure immigrants' and native-borns' racial attitudes among white non-Latino, Black, Latino, and Asian American respondents.

The data on immigrants' racial attitudes analyzed in this paper comes from seven surveys. Five of these surveys are nationally representative samples from publicly available datasets: the American National Election Studies (ANES), the Cooperative Election Study 2018 survey (CES, formerly CCES¹⁵), the CES 2020 survey, the CES 2022 survey, and the General Social Survey (GSS). The other two surveys are original surveys run by the author using the Lucid platform. Table A1 provides detailed information about each survey.

Original Survey I aimed to measure the US Optimism variable and test the relationship between optimism and racial attitudes among immigrants and native-borns. Original Survey II was designed as a survey experiment. Respondents were exposed to a prime meant to increase or decrease optimism about the US. Due to data limitations, Original Survey II was conducted on Latino and Asian respondents only¹⁶.

People from the United States define whiteness, Blackness, *Latinidad*, and other racial/ethnic classifications in distinctive ways. Not all countries/cultures use the same racial definitions (Clealand 2022). To ensure that I am comparing native-borns and immigrants of comparable backgrounds, I examine the countries of origin of the survey respondents in Original Survey I. In Appendix A3, I present a table that includes immigrants' countries of origin and racial self-definitions. I find that immigrants primarily identify in ways consistent with US-based racial classifications.

¹⁵I treat the three CES datasets as separate surveys because of their size and because they contain different racial attitudes questions

¹⁶Due to a data collection error in Original Survey II, only a subset of demographic covariates (including race/ethnicity and nativity) were collected

Among white immigrants, 81.2% hail from Europe, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand. 65.1% of Black immigrants were born in Africa or the Caribbean, and an additional 15.3% were born in Europe/Canada/Australia/New Zealand. Among non-Black Latino immigrants, 80.6% come from Latin America, with an additional 8.9% from the Caribbean. Finally, 90% of Asian immigrants were born in Asia.

While the ANES and the GSS are administered in English and Spanish, all other surveys are in English only. The ANES is administered to citizens only, which excludes the least acculturated immigrants. As a result, except for Spanish-speaking non-citizens immigrants on the GSS, all immigrants surveyed in this project are at least moderately acculturated to the US.

Despite these limitations, there is reason to believe that at least some of the conclusions of this project apply to poor and less acculturated immigrants as well. First, scholars using interview-based methodologies have documented substantial levels of anti-Blackness among immigrants, including those who are poor and less acculturated. For example, most immigrant participants interviewed in Marrow (2009) were undocumented - however, they still expressed highly anti-Black attitudes. Similarly, working-class Afro-Caribbean fast food workers interviewed by Waters (1999) also described Black Americans as lazy and undisciplined. 62% of Russian immigrants interviewed for Goldenberg and Saxe (1996) had been in the US for less than seven years, and the interviews were conducted in Russian. Many were not employed. These immigrants also had extremely anti-Black views. These studies suggest anti-Black attitudes are not limited to acculturated or higher-status immigrants.

Second, the demographic differences between the immigrants sampled in my surveys and the immigrant population in the US, as measured by Pew's tabulations of the American Community Survey, are not overwhelming. Figure A1 Panel A plots the proportion of immigrant respondents by educational achievement for six surveys I use and the relevant proportions on the ACS¹⁷. Figure A1 Panel B plots the same statistic by approximate income quintile.

¹⁷Pew does not provide tabulations by race/ethnicity but by region of origin. As a result, I estimate race/ethnicity by aggregating by region of origin (e.g., European is counted as White, Mexican counted as Latino and so on)

Table A1: Characteristics of the Survey Datasets

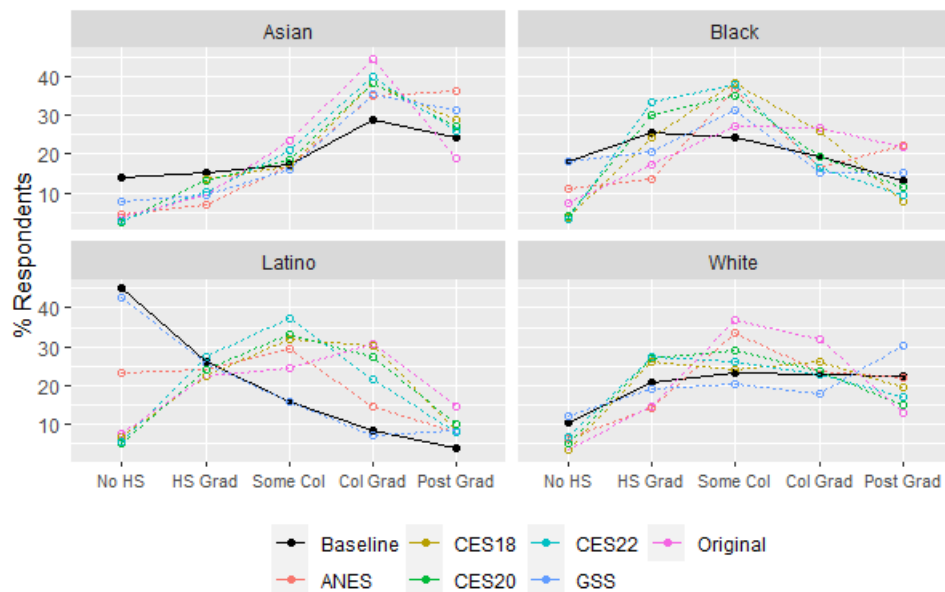
Survey	ANES	GSS	Original I	Original II
Dates	2012 - 2020	2010 - 2018	2021	2023
# Native-born	15,882	9,963	1,120*	958*
# Foreign-born	1,517	1,579	943*	560*
Foreign-born Race/Ethnicity[†]	W:404 B:134 L:661 A:318	W:385 B:189 L:742 A:263	W:255 B:203 L:228 A:257	L:262 A:298
Survey Languages	English, Spanish	English, Spanish	English	English
Target Population	Citizens 18+	All 18+	All 18+	Asians and Latinos 18+
Racial Resentment Measure	All	Subset	All	All
Stereotypes	Hardworking	Hardworking	Hardworking	Hardworking
Attributions for Inequality Measure	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Racism Prevalence Measure	Group Discrim	No	No	Group Discrim
Survey	CES (2018)	CES (2020)	CES (2022)	
Dates	2018	2020	2022	
# Native-born	53,389	53,774	52,382	
# Foreign-born	4,017	4,317	3,778	
Foreign-born Race/Ethnicity[†]	W:1517 B:448 L:1215 A:837	W:1662 B:632 L:1153 A:870	W:1376 B:642 L:1021 A:739	
Survey Languages	English	English	English	
Target Population	All 18+	All 18+	All 18+	
Racial Resentment Measure	All	Subset	Subset	
Stereotypes	None	None	None	
Attributions for Inequality Measure	No	No	No	
Racism Prevalence Measure	Racial Problems Rare	Racial Problems Rare	Racial Problems Rare	

[†] W = White non-Latino; B = Black, incl Black Latino; H = non-Black Latino; A = Asian

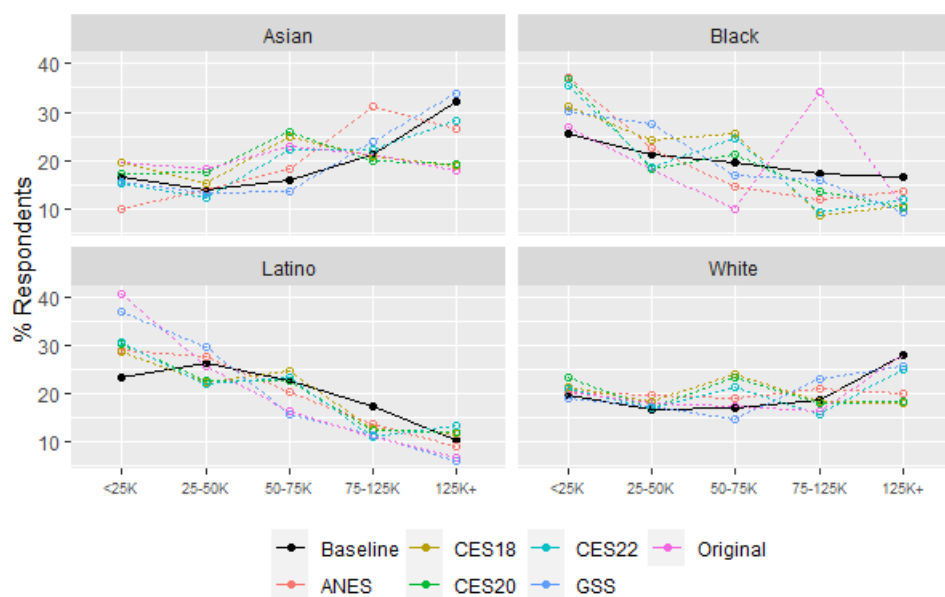
* Only includes those who passed the attention check

Figure A1: Survey Distributions versus Baseline ACS

A) Education



B) Income



Notes: Figure shows the distributions of immigrant respondents by education and income across all four surveys, and compares them to statistics from the American Communities Survey (ACS), which is conducted as part of the Census. The surveys used in this book over-represent educated immigrants. These differences are slight in the case of white, Black, and Asian immigrants, but large in the case of Latino immigrants (with exception of the GSS). The surveys also tend to over-represent poorer immigrants, and under-represent wealthier ones.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these plots. First, the surveys tend to reasonably approximate educational distributions for three of the four immigrant groups. While all four surveys somewhat oversample the number of college graduates for Black, White, and Asian immigrants, the differences are not overwhelming. However, the same cannot be said for survey estimates of Latino immigrants. Except for the GSS, the four other surveys seriously undersample Latino immigrants without a high school education. On this measure, the GSS performs well. For the CES and original survey, the discrepancy is most likely because the survey is English-only, while for the ANES, it is likely the result of the citizens-only design.

Second, while all surveys do a decent job at sampling across the income distribution, unsurprisingly, all oversample poorer immigrants relative to wealthier ones. Undersampling of more affluent respondents is a common problem in online survey research (Berinsky, Huber and Lenz 2012), as wealthier potential respondents are less likely to respond to the financial incentives survey companies use to acquire respondents. The GSS does the best job sampling wealthier White and Asian immigrants but has the greatest oversample of poorer Latino respondents. The other surveys perform very similarly to one another on this variable.

Third, the GSS provides the most accurate sampling of immigrants based on their educational status, whereas the other three show deficiencies in their sample of lower-education Latino immigrants. However, despite this substantial difference, as I show in Study 1, the results from the GSS do not differ dramatically from those of other surveys. This consistency is especially important for Latino immigrants, where the GSS has the biggest representativeness advantage over the other surveys.

These distributions do not suggest that the surveys used in this study only sample the most privileged immigrants. However, even if these findings only apply to more acculturated immigrants, this analysis provides a valuable study of the role of acculturation on immigrants' racial attitudes. If even very acculturated immigrants have high levels of anti-Blackness, this suggests that greater familiarity with American culture does not erase immigrants' anti-Blackness.

A.2 Original Surveys

A.2.1 Original I

The first original survey targeted 1,300 native-born and 1,000 foreign-born respondents. The foreign-born respondents were split into four groups by race/ethnicity, with approximately equal numbers of respondents per group. This breakdown was important, as my goal in this project is to uncover patterns of attitudes that are common across immigrant groups, rather than focusing on patterns unique to one specific group.

To ensure that my data was of high quality, I asked respondents for their birth year as an attention check. The Lucid panel includes pre-existing information on respondent demographics, including their age. In order for a respondent to be included in the dataset, their response to the birth year question had to be consistent with the age that was included in the Lucid demographics. This means that in order for them to have passed this attention check, they needed to have had the same answers both on Lucid's demographic survey and on my survey, two separate surveys which may have been administered weeks if not months apart. Approximately 90% of respondents in the original survey passed this attention check. There were no significant differences in pass rate between immigrants and native-borns. Re-running the analysis and including the attention check excluded respondents does not substantively alter the results.

Hardworking Stereotype Question Wording The original Hardworking Stereotype question that is asked on the ANES and GSS is worded as follows:

Now we have some questions about different groups in our society.

We're going to describe a seven-point scale on which the characteristics of the people in a group can be rated.

In the first statement a score of '1' means that you think almost all of the people in that group tend to be 'hard-working.'

A score of '7' means that you think most people in the group are 'lazy.'

A score of '4' means that you think that most people in the group are not closer to one end or the other, and of course, you may choose any number in between.

On this scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means hard-working and 7 means lazy, where would you rate blacks in general on this scale?

On Original Survey I, I had planned to compare immigrant and native-born beliefs about native-born Americans and immigrants of the same race. As a result, the question about native-born Black Americans read. The hardworking question was reverted to the standard question in Original Survey II.

Do you think most Black Americans are more or less hard-working than most other Americans?

[Much more; Somewhat more; About the same; Somewhat less; Much less]

A.2.2 Original II/Survey Experiment

The second original survey targeted Latino and Asian immigrants and native-borns. I sought to survey the maximum number of immigrants available for each group.

To ensure that my data was of high quality, I used two attention checks after respondents read the article. The first attention check asked which country the immigrant in the story was from.

Table A2: Proportion of Immigrants of Each Group by Region of Origin

Region	White	Black	Asian	Latino
Africa	2.1	35.8	0.4	0
Anglosphere	31.6	4.8	1.4	1.6
Asia	7.4	12.2	90	4
Caribbean	0.4	29.3	0	8.9
Europe	49.6	10.5	1.8	3.6
Latin America	6.7	7.4	2.9	80.6
MENA	2.1	0	3.6	1.2
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

The second attention check asked which business the immigrant in the story started. Respondents who answered both attention checks incorrectly were dropped from the analysis. Including or excluding respondents on this basis did not meaningfully change the results of the study.

A.3 Immigrant Race by Country of Origin

Racial definitions in the US often do not neatly translate to racial definitions in other parts of the world. Here, I present data on the proportion of respondents of each of the four groups from Original Survey I by continent/region (Table A2). I also present the raw number of respondents from each country that are grouped into the white, Black, Latino, and Asian categories. The overall categories that immigrants classify themselves into are generally consistent with their region of origin (Table A3-A4).

Table A3: Percent of Immigrants of Each Group
by Region of Origin (Part I)

Africa					Caribbean				
	A	B	L	W		A	B	L	W
Angola	0	1	0	2	The Bahamas	0	3	0	1
Burkina Faso	0	15	0	0	Barbados	0	4	0	0
Burundi	0	1	0	0	Dominica	0	1	1	0
Cape Verde	0	2	0	0	Dominican Republic	0	2	15	0
Central African Republic	0	1	0	0	Grenada	0	0	1	0
Republic of the Congo	0	3	0	0	Haiti	0	13	0	0
Democratic Republic of the Congo	0	1	0	0	Jamaica	0	33	1	0
Equatorial Guinea	0	1	0	0	Saint Kitts and Nevis	0	1	0	0
Ethiopia	0	3	0	0	Saint Lucia	0	1	0	0
Ghana	0	2	0	0	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	0	1	0	0
Kenya	0	5	0	0	Trinidad and Tobago	0	8	4	0
Liberia	0	1	0	0					
Malawi	0	1	0	0	Europe				
Morocco	0	0	0	2		A	B	L	W
Nigeria	0	29	0	0	Albania	0	2	1	1
Mali	0	0	0	1	Andorra	0	1	0	0
Senegal	0	2	0	0	Armenia	0	2	0	4
Somalia	0	2	0	0	Austria	0	0	0	3
South Africa	0	1	0	1	Belarus	0	0	0	2
Togo	0	1	0	0	Belgium	0	0	0	3
Uganda	0	2	0	0	Denmark	0	0	0	5
Tanzania	1	3	0	0	Finland	0	0	0	2
Zambia	0	2	0	0	France	0	2	0	9
Zimbabwe	0	3	0	0	Georgia	0	2	0	0
					Germany	2	9	1	33
Anglosphere					Greece	0	0	0	6
	A	B	L	W	Hungary	0	0	0	5
Australia	0	0	0	18	Iceland	0	3	0	0
Canada	2	7	3	32	Republic of Ireland	0	0	0	5
New Zealand	0	0	0	1	Italy	1	0	2	14
United Kingdom	2	4	1	38	Latvia	0	0	0	1
					Malta	0	0	0	1
Asia					Netherlands	0	2	1	4
	A	B	L	W	Poland	0	0	0	7
Bangladesh	8	0	1	1	Portugal	0	0	0	2
Cambodia	2	0	0	0	Romania	0	0	0	2
China	47	0	1	1	Russia	1	0	0	12
Hong Kong	15	0	0	0	Serbia	0	0	0	1
India	56	26	3	1	Spain	0	0	3	1
Iran	0	0	0	3	Sweden	1	0	0	3
Japan	18	1	0	6	Switzerland	0	0	0	1
Kazakhstan	0	0	0	2	Turkey	0	1	1	4
Laos	2	0	0	0	Ukraine	0	0	0	9
Malaysia	1	0	0	1					
Micronesia	0	0	0	1	MENA				
Myanmar	1	0	0	0		A	B	L	W
Nepal	2	0	0	0	Afghanistan	1	0	0	0
North Korea	0	0	0	1	Egypt	1	0	2	1
Philippines	56	0	4	1	Israel	0	0	0	3
Singapore	2	0	0	1	Jordan	0	0	1	0
South Korea	19	1	0	1	Pakistan	7	0	0	0
Sri Lanka	2	0	0	0	Saudi Arabia	1	0	0	0
Thailand	8	0	0	0	Syria	0	0	0	1
East Timor	1	0	0	0	Yemen	0	0	0	1
Uzbekistan	0	0	0	1					
Vietnam	11	0	1	0					

Table A4: Percent of Immigrants of Each Group by Region of Origin (Part II)

Latin America				
	A	B	L	W
Argentina	0	2	10	1
Belize	0	0	3	0
Brazil	0	1	5	4
Chile	0	1	2	0
Colombia	1	1	26	2
Costa Rica	0	1	3	0
Cuba	1	3	26	3
Ecuador	0	0	9	0
El Salvador	0	1	8	0
Guatemala	0	0	7	0
Guyana	4	2	0	0
Honduras	0	0	3	0
Mexico	0	5	62	3
Nicaragua	0	0	5	0
Panama	0	0	2	0
Peru	2	0	3	2
Uruguay	0	0	1	0
Venezuela	0	0	24	4

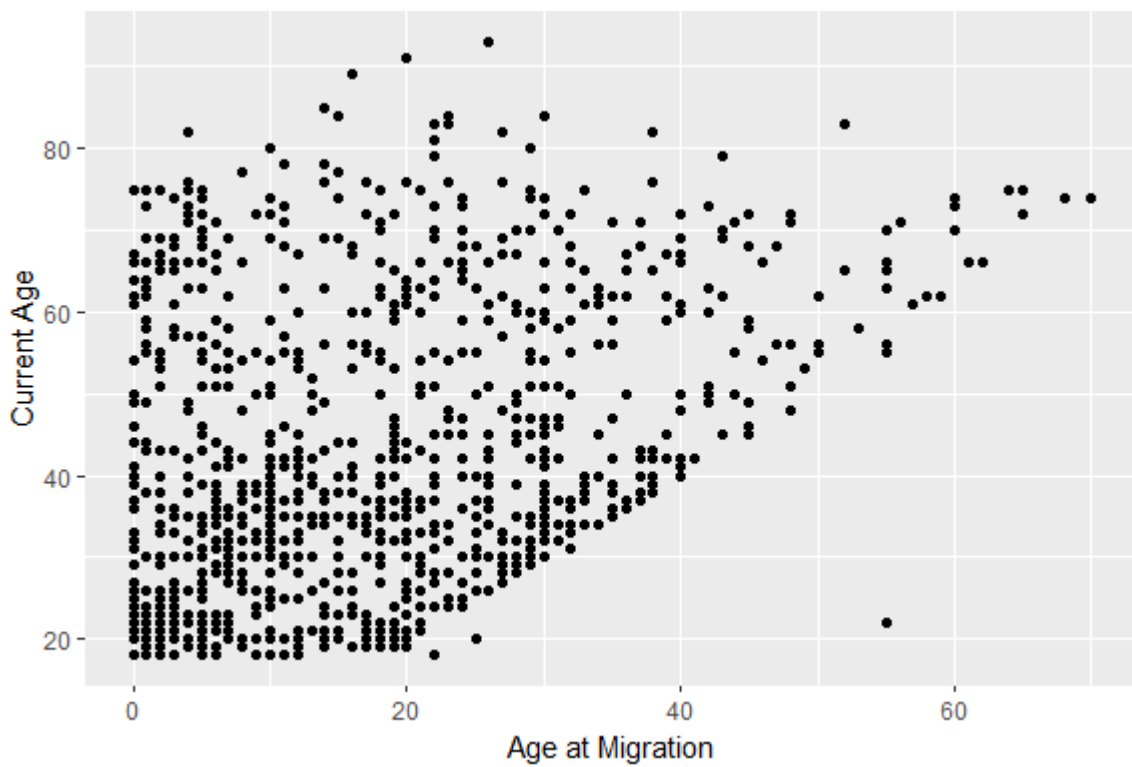
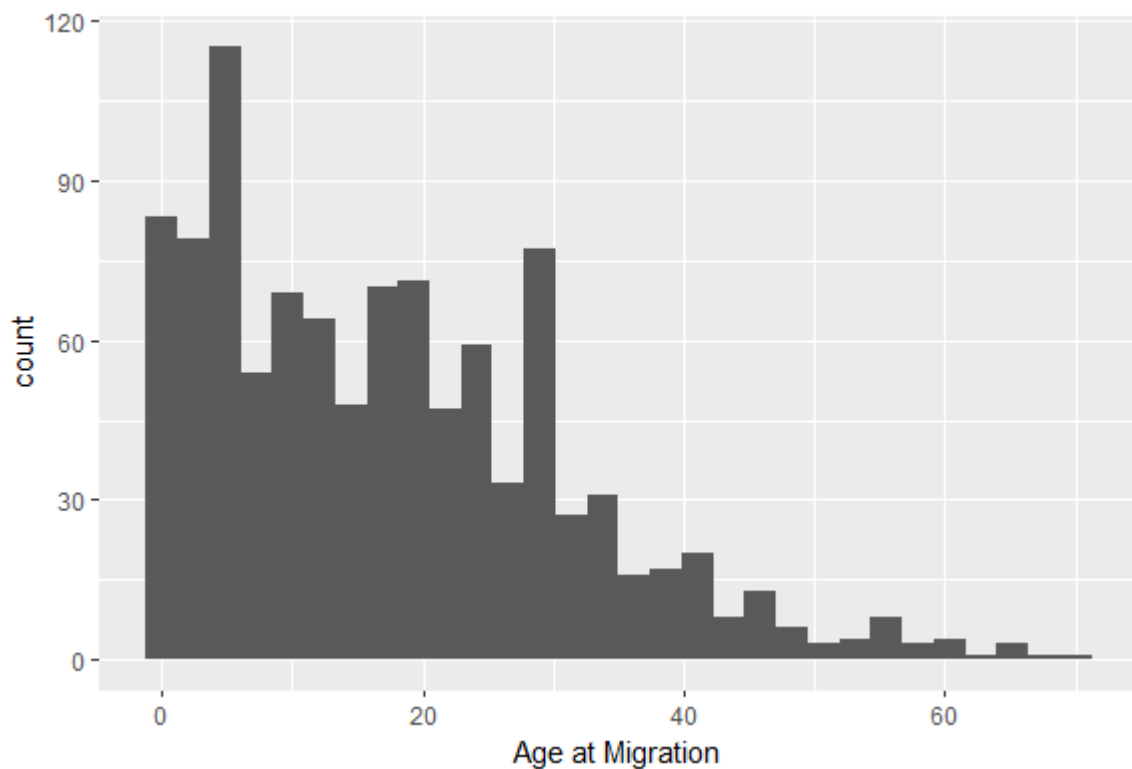
A.4 Age at Migration

In Figure A2, I plot the reported age at migration for all of the respondents in Original Survey I, as well as the relationship between the age at migration and the current age of respondents. There was a wide range of ages at migration represented in the dataset. There was also a wide range of time spent in the US reported. Three respondents reported lower current ages than ages at migration - their "time spent in US" variable was coded as 0 (the results were robust to the inclusion or exclusion of these variables).

A.5 Mediation Sensitivity Analysis

Mediation analysis can be vulnerable to unobserved confounders. To test the degree to which my mediation results change under violations of the sequential ignorability assumption, I conduct a sensitivity analysis using the methodology presented in (Imai, Keele and Tingley 2010). For the nativity analysis, the sensitivity parameter ρ at which $ACME = 0$ is between 0.17 and 0.35 for the

Figure A2: Age at Migration



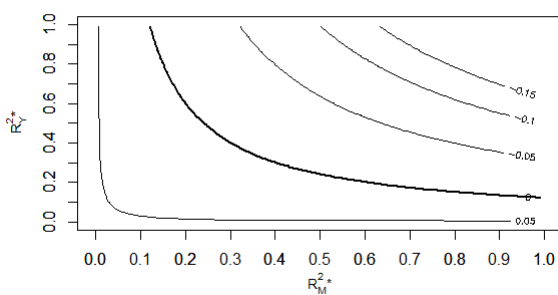
four variables measured (Figure A3). For the age at migration analysis, this parameter is between 0.1 and 0.32 (Figure A4). This means that the mediation results presented here are moderately sensitive to violations of the sequential ignorability assumption.

Sensitivity analysis measures the strength of the relationship that a confounding variable would need to have with the mediator and outcome variables in order for the "true" mediation effect to be zero given the observed mediation effect. The bolded curve in each plot in Figures A3 - A4 represents how strong the relationship between the confounding variable and the outcome and mediator variables would need to be in order for $ACME = 0$. For example, for the Workway mediation analysis, if there is an omitted confounding variable that accounts for 40% of the residual variance in the outcome variable regression and 30% of the residual variance in the mediator regression, this would mean that the true mediation effect of US Optimism on the Workway variable is actually zero, and the observed mediation effect is just the result of omitted variable bias.

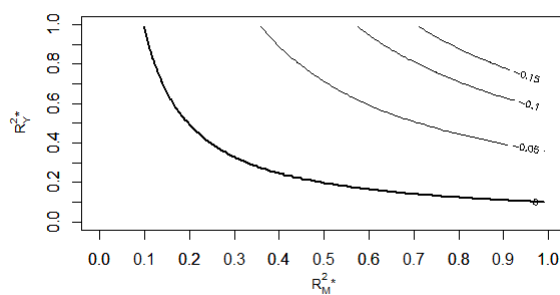
Figure A3: Mediation Sensitivity Analysis (Nativity)

Workway ($\rho = 0.35$)

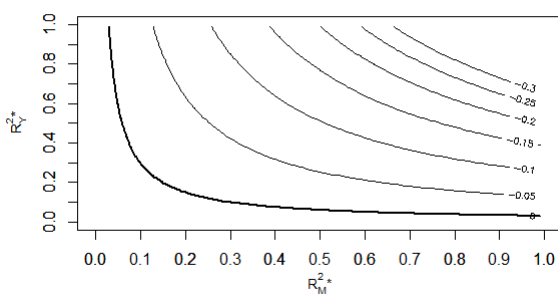
$$\text{ACME}(R_M^{2*}, R_Y^{2*}), \text{sgn}(\lambda_2\lambda_3) = 1$$

**Racial Resentment ($\rho = 0.32$)**

$$\text{ACME}(R_M^{2*}, R_Y^{2*}), \text{sgn}(\lambda_2\lambda_3) = 1$$

**AFI - Motivation ($\rho = 0.17$)**

$$\text{ACME}(R_M^{2*}, R_Y^{2*}), \text{sgn}(\lambda_2\lambda_3) = 1$$

**AFI - Discrimination ($\rho = 0.16$)**

$$\text{ACME}(R_M^{2*}, R_Y^{2*}), \text{sgn}(\lambda_2\lambda_3) = -1$$

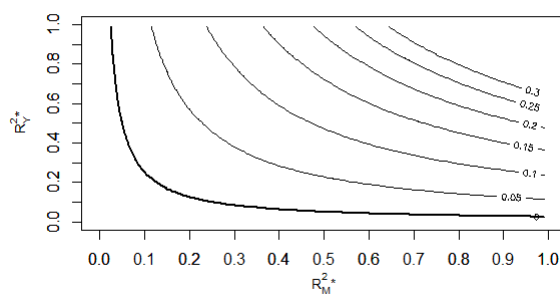
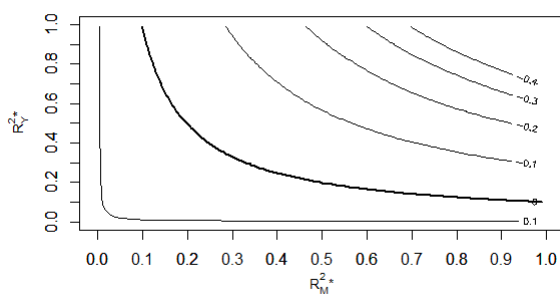


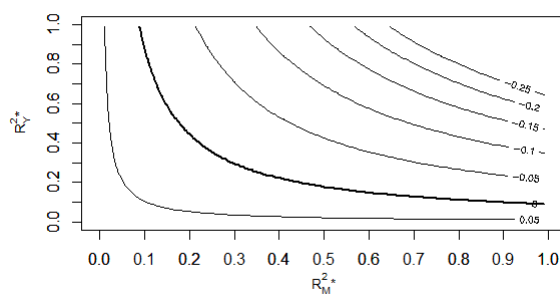
Figure A4: Mediation Sensitivity Analysis (Age at Migration)

Workway ($\rho = 0.32$)

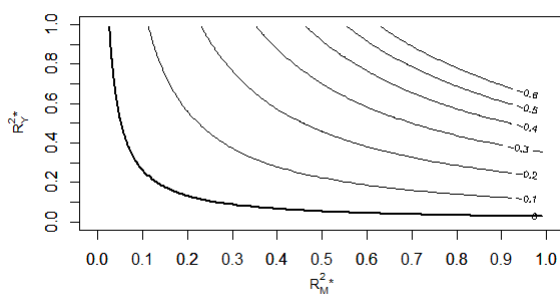
ACME(R_M^{2*}, R_Y^{2*}), $\text{sgn}(\lambda_2\lambda_3) = 1$

**Racial Resentment ($\rho = 0.30$)**

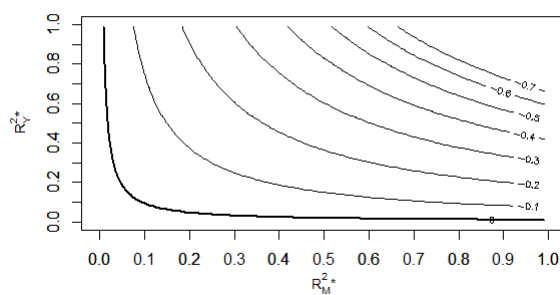
ACME(R_M^{2*}, R_Y^{2*}), $\text{sgn}(\lambda_2\lambda_3) = 1$

**AFI - Motivation ($\rho = 0.16$)**

ACME(R_M^{2*}, R_Y^{2*}), $\text{sgn}(\lambda_2\lambda_3) = 1$

**AFI - Discrimination ($\rho = 0.10$)**

ACME(R_M^{2*}, R_Y^{2*}), $\text{sgn}(\lambda_2\lambda_3) = 1$



B Additional Results

B.1 Raw Difference in Means

In this section, I plot the raw Difference in Means between the first and third+ generation by DV for each of the four racial/ethnic groups. The Difference in Means analysis yields substantively identical results to Figures 1-3 in the body of the paper. This shows that the results reported are robust to model specification

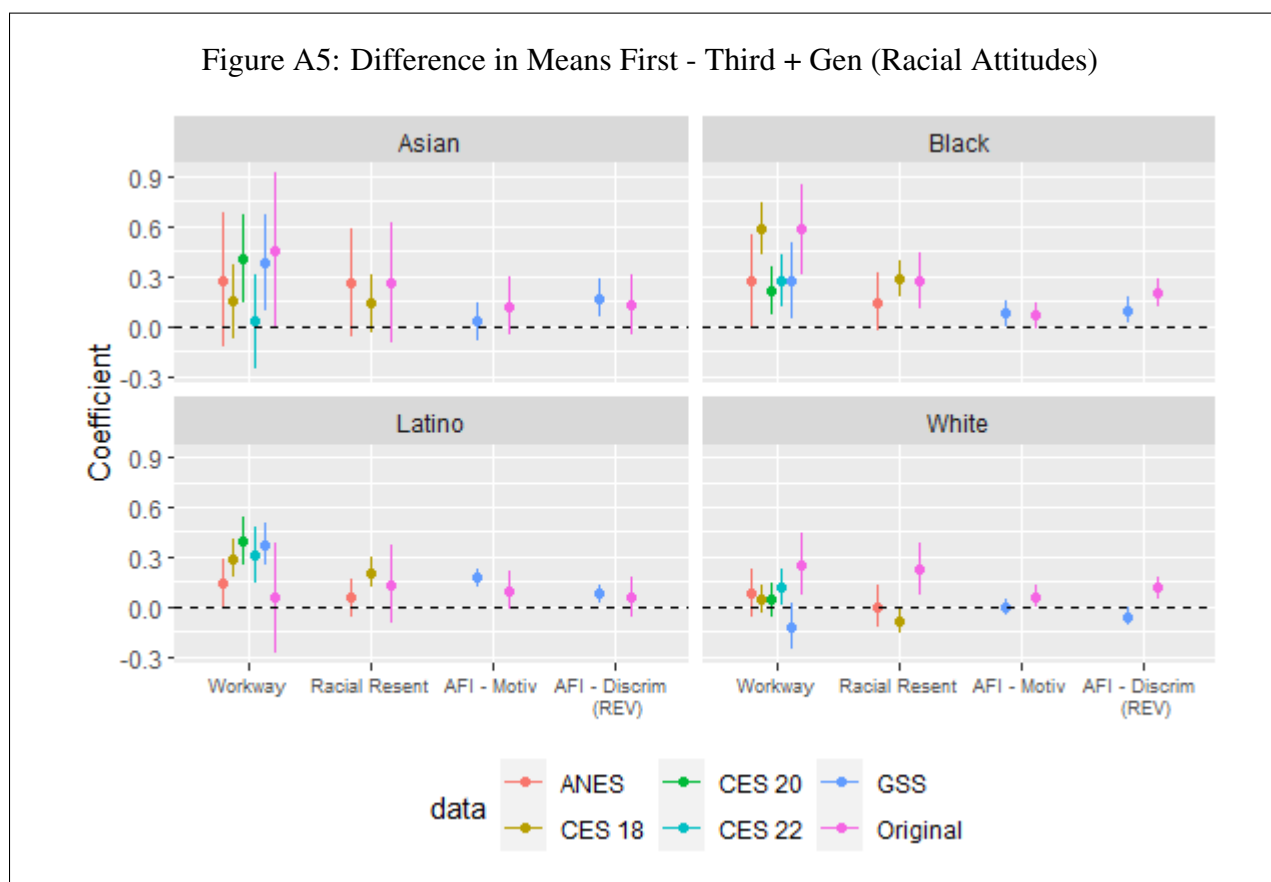
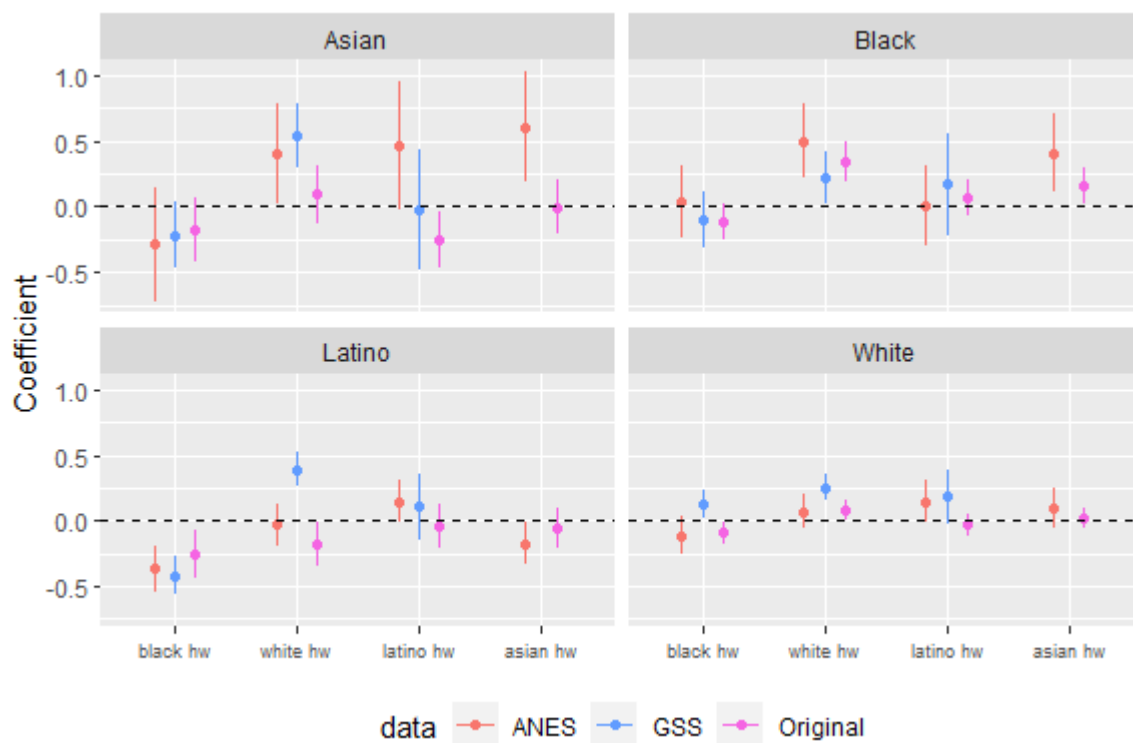
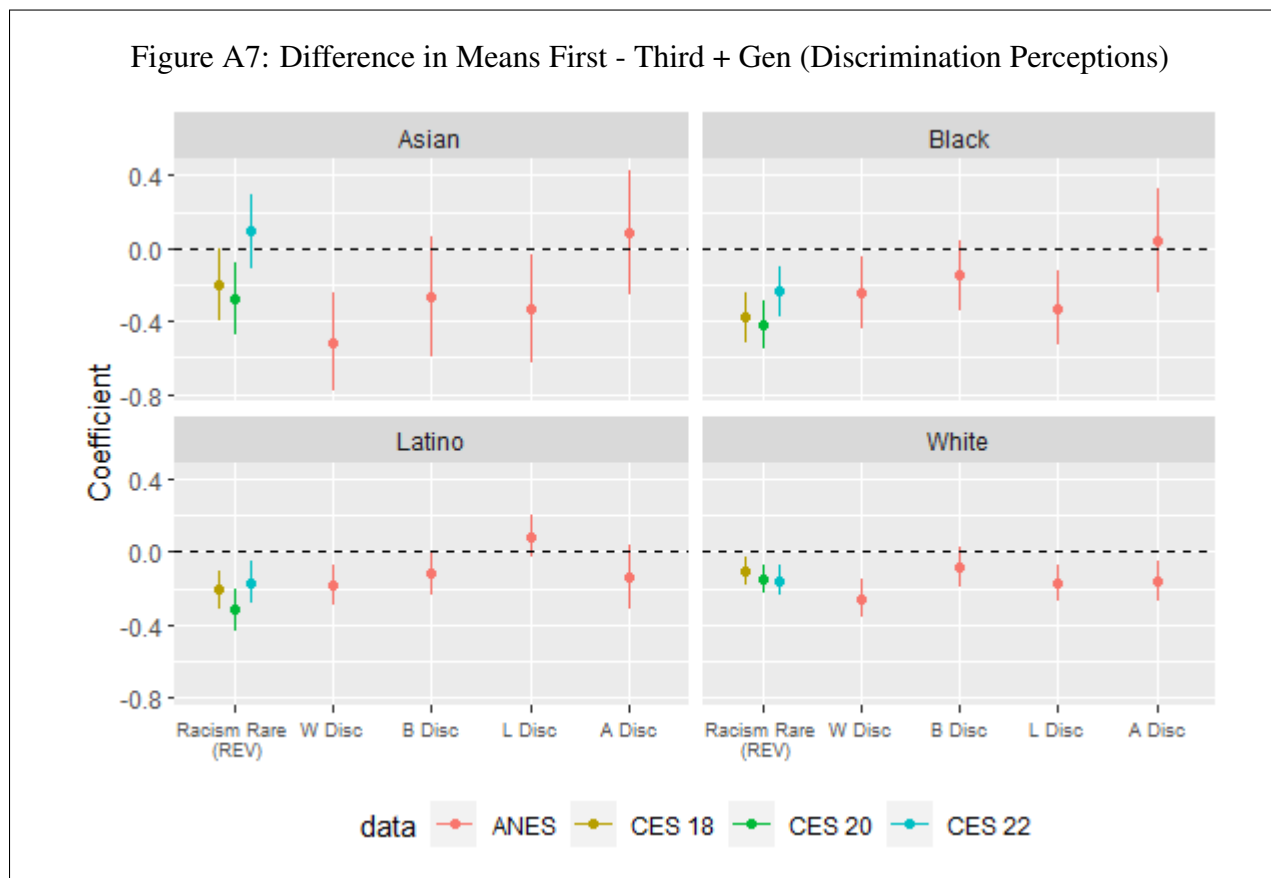


Figure A6: Difference in Means First - Third + Gen (Hardworking)



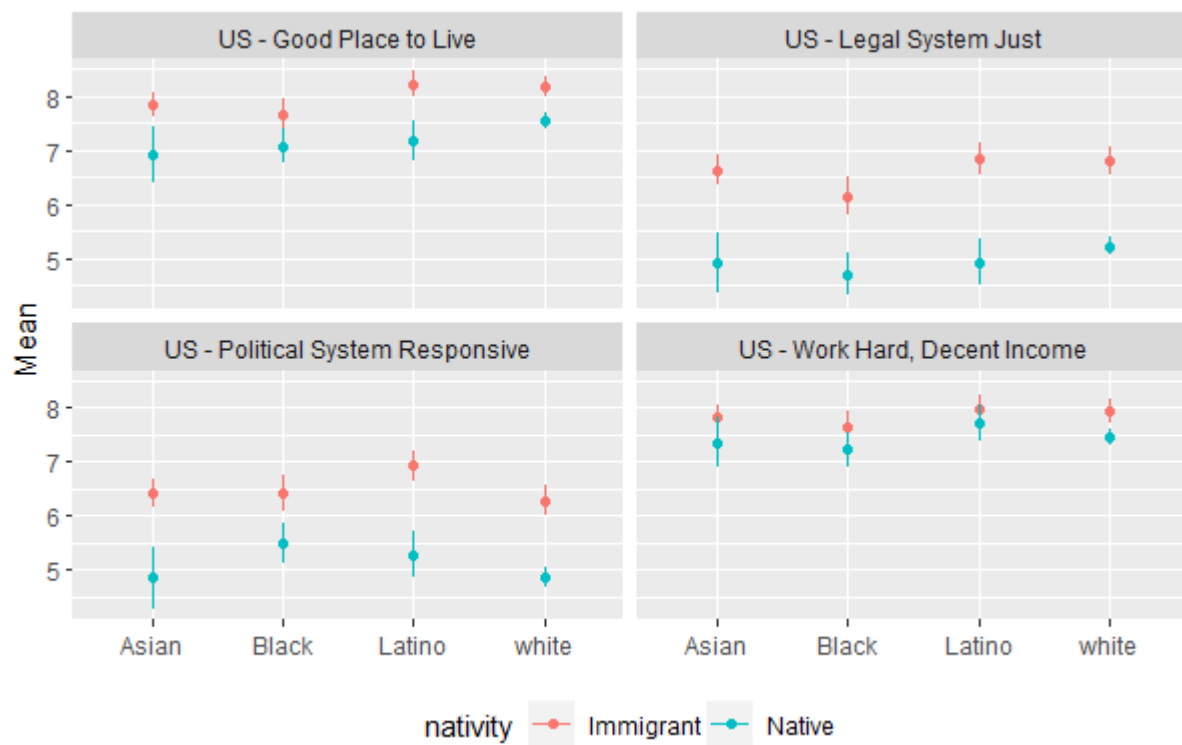


B.2 Country Optimism Scale

B.2.1 US Optimism Individual Questions

In this section, I present differences between immigrants and their native-born co-ethnics on each of the four questions that comprise the US Optimism scale. On all four questions, immigrants are more optimistic than native-borns. The smallest difference between immigrants and native-borns is in the "work hard, decent income" question, though immigrants are still significantly more optimistic when the data is pooled across all racial/ethnic groups.

Figure A8: US Optimism by Individual Questions



Notes: Immigrants are consistently more optimistic about the US than are native-borns on all 4 questions asked.

B.2.2 US Optimism and Racial Attitudes

The relationship between US Optimism and Racial Attitudes presented in Figure 5B is consistent with the other racial attitudes variables asked on Original Survey I, as presented in Figure A9. Higher scores on the US Optimism scale translate to more negative attitudes toward Black Americans

B.2.3 Native Country Optimism and Racial Attitudes

In Figure A10, I examine the relationship between country of origin optimism and racial resentment. In the body of the paper, I documented a strong positive relationship between US optimism and racial resentment.

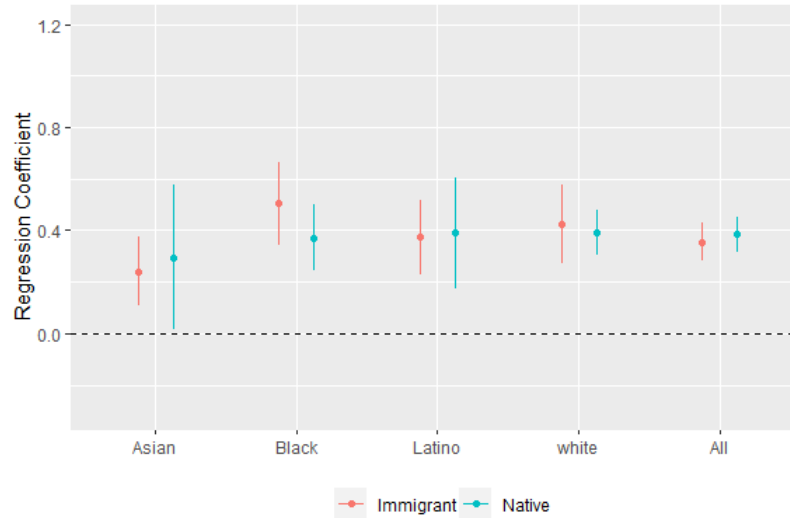
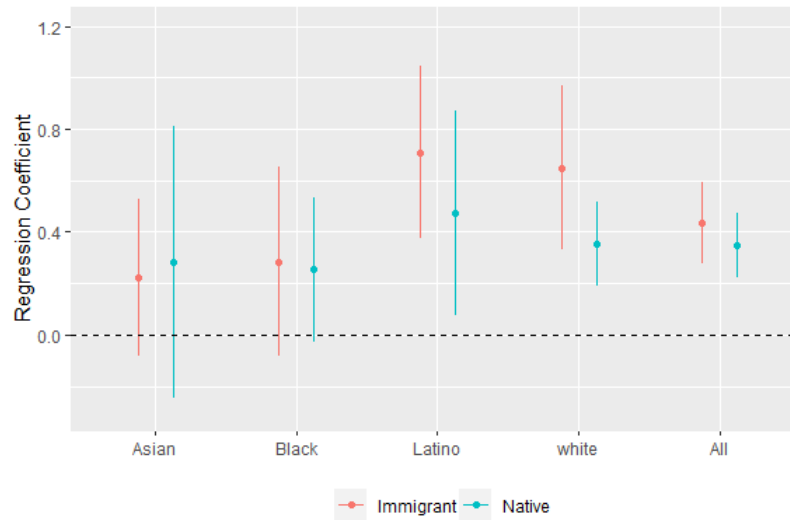
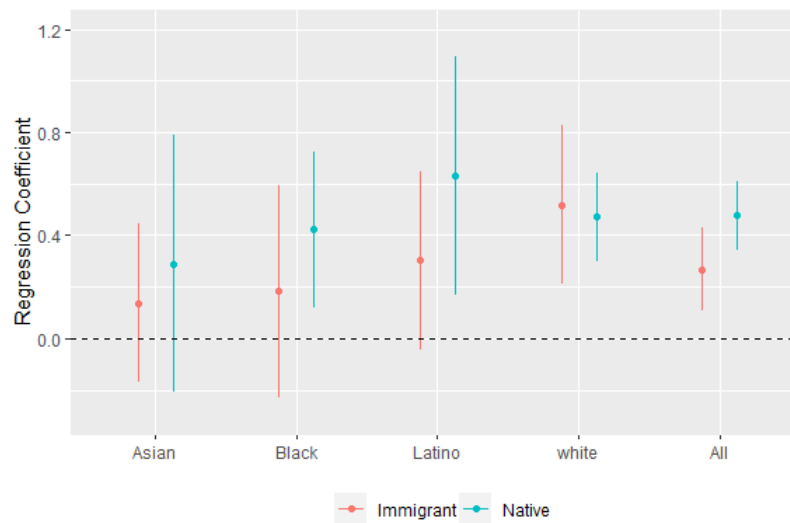
US Optimism and native country optimism have a substantial positive correlation ($\rho = 0.41$). Respondents who rate the US more positively are also likely to rate their native country more positively. Here, I present the results of two models. In Model 1, I replicate the results from Figure 5B, replacing the US optimism variable with the Native Country Optimism variable. In Model 2, I include both Native Country and US Optimism variables. I find that while there is a significant relationship between Native Country Optimism and Racial Resentment, that relationship disappears when both Native Country and US Optimism are included in the model. On the other hand, including Native Country Optimism does not diminish the relationship between US Optimism and Racial Resentment for immigrants.

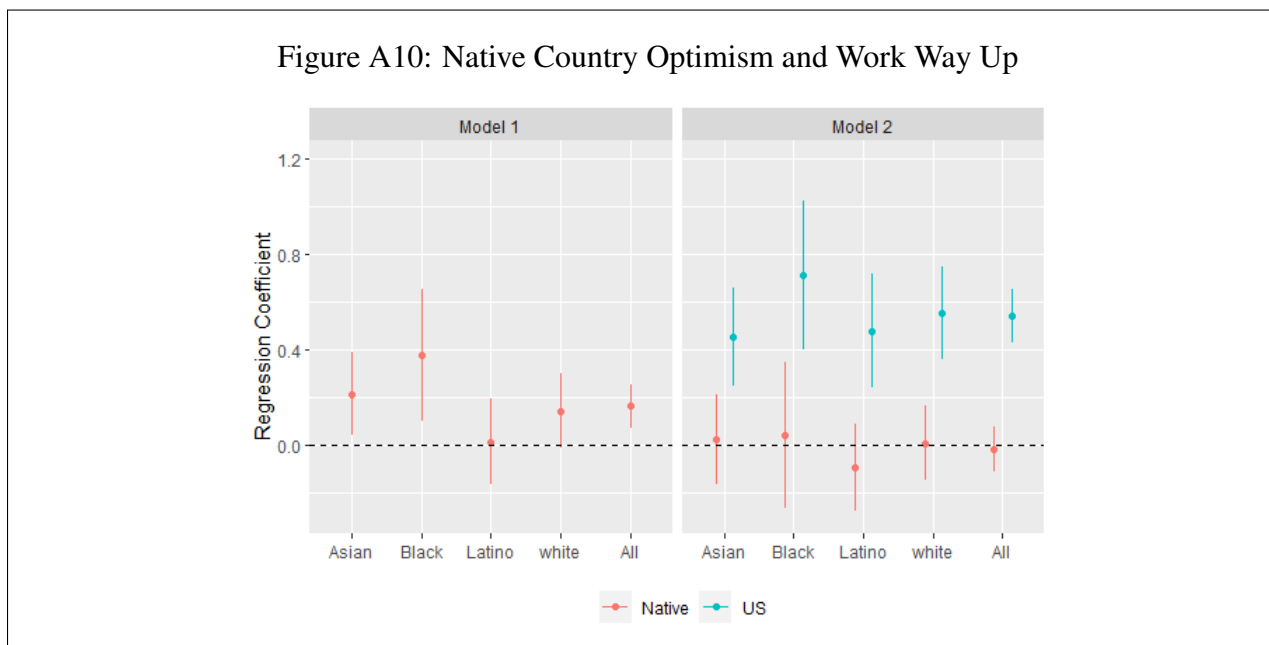
B.3 Original Survey II and Survey Experiment

B.3.1 Replication of Figures 1-3 and 5-7 Using Original Survey II

In Figure A11, I plot the difference between immigrants' and native-borns' racial attitudes. Due to a data issue which precluded the collection of some demographic variables, the regressions

Figure A9: US Optimism and Racial Attitudes

Racial Resentment Scale**AFI- Motivation****AFI- Discrimination (REV)**



contain only age and party ID as covariates. The results are generally consistent with the findings in Figures 1-3, though in this survey there appears to be no nativity effect on the hardworking measure, and the effects appear to be weaker for Latino respondents than for Asian respondents.

In Figure A12, I plot the US Optimism ratings, and the relationship between US Optimism and racial resentment. Both plots replicate the relationships previously presented in the paper.

In Figure A13, I conduct a mediation analysis similar to the one conducted in the body of the paper. Again, due to a data collection error, the only available covariates are age, party ID, and race/ethnicity. The results of this mediation analysis are similar to those in Figure 6A in the body of the paper, though in this analysis only the AFI-Discrimination variable is fully mediated by US Optimism, and the other three are only partially mediated.

B.3.2 Subgroup Analysis Survey Experiment

While the survey experiment data is not sufficiently powered to detect subgroup effects, I conduct an analysis to determine whether the magnitude and direction of the subgroup effects are consis-

Figure A11: Replicating Figures 1-3

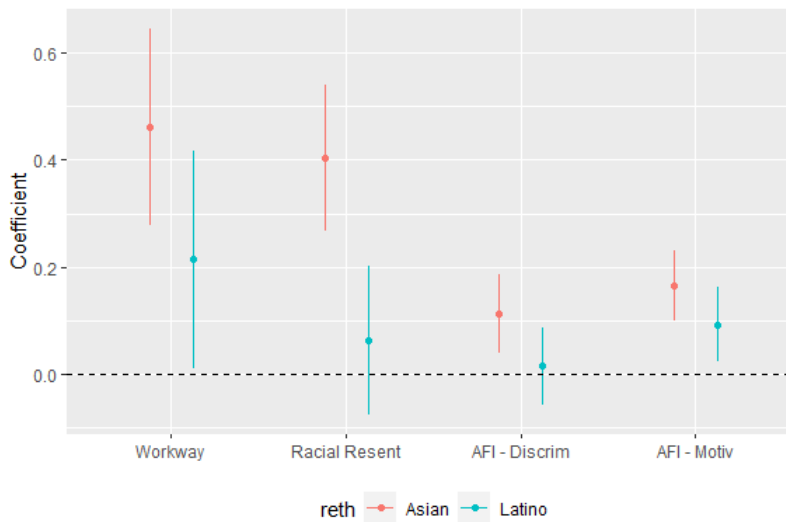
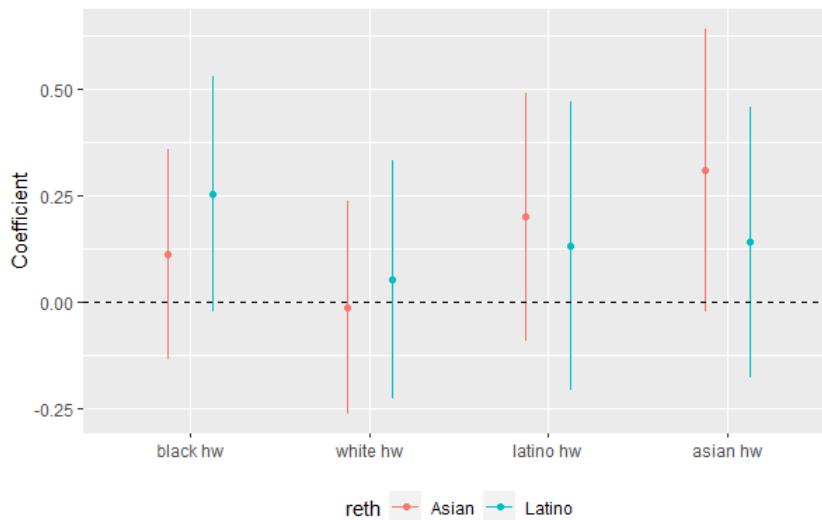
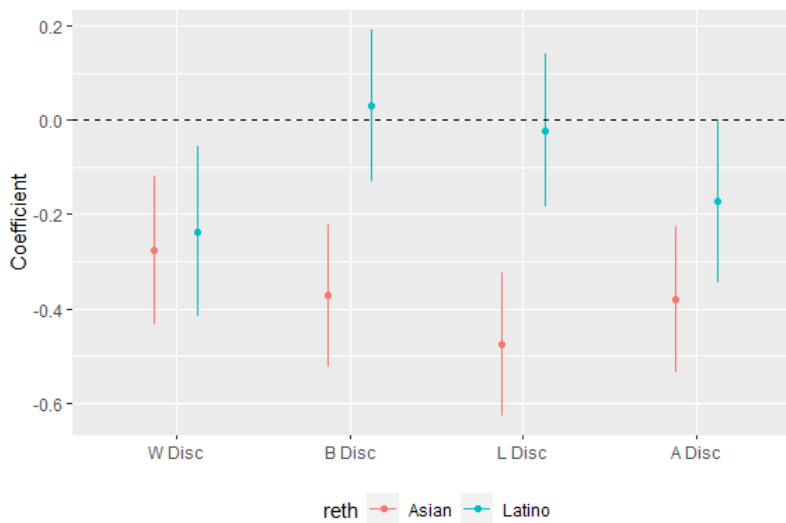
Racial Attitudes**Hardworking Stereotypes****Perceptions of Discrimination**

Figure A12: Nativity, Optimism, and Racial Resentment (Full)

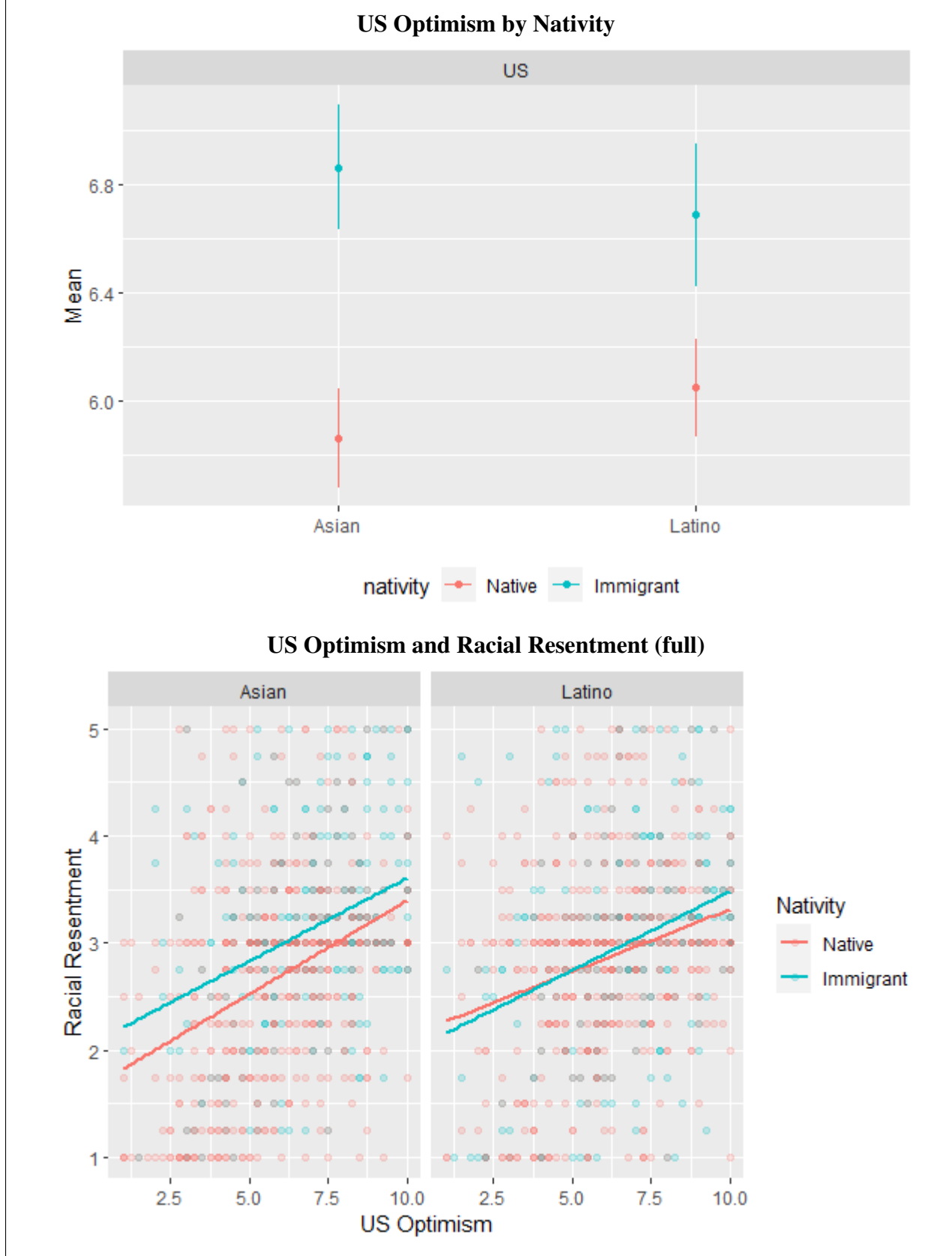


Figure A13: Replicating the Nativity Mediation Analysis

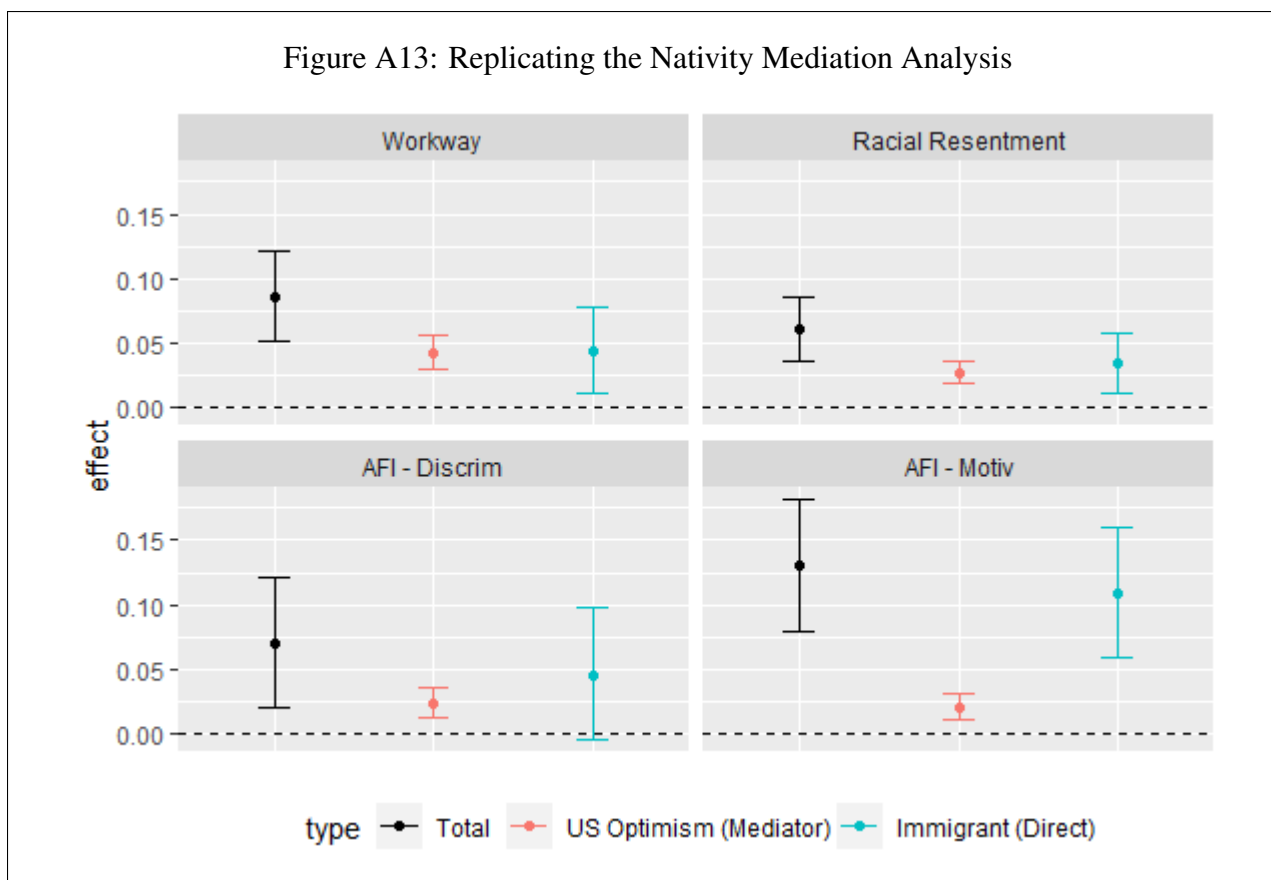
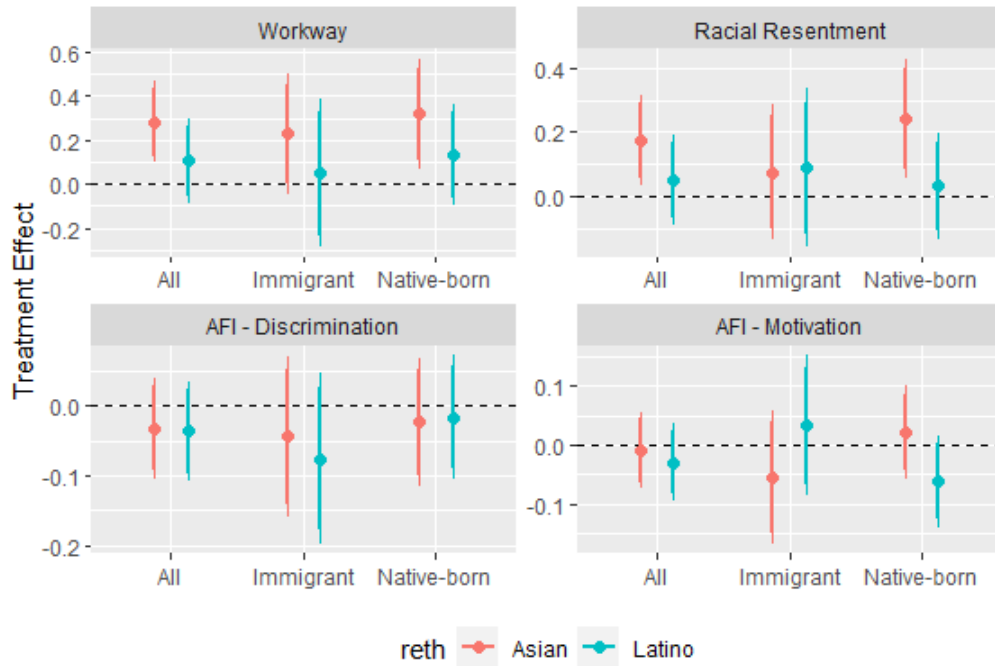
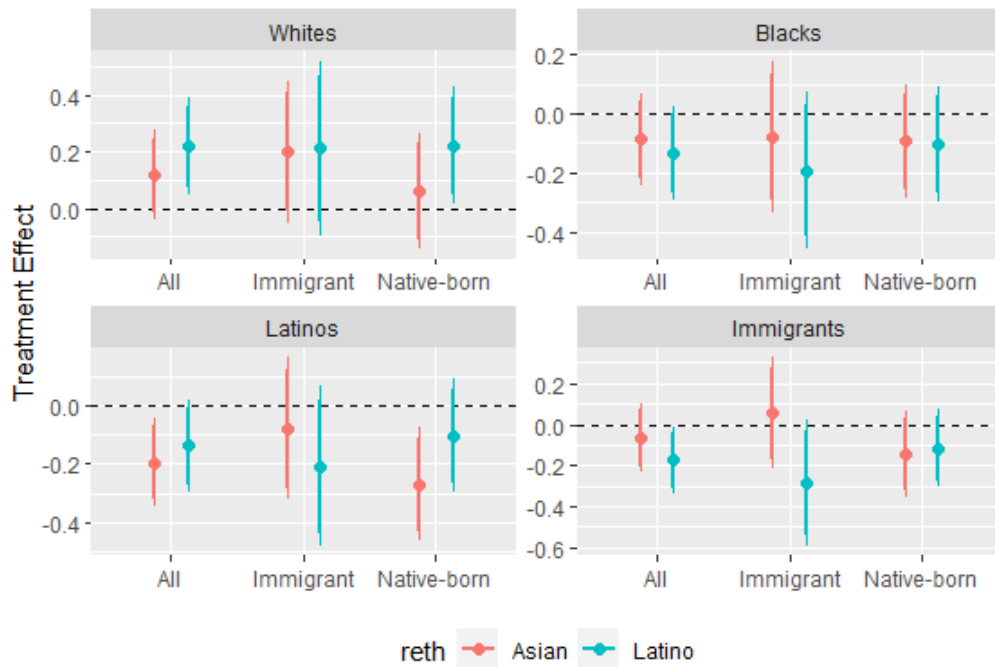


Figure A14: Survey Experiment Subgroup Effects

A) Racial Attitudes**B) Discrimination**

tent. In Figure A13, I find several patterns.

Asian American and Latino respondents have generally similar responses to the survey prime, as do immigrants and native-borns. All four groups almost always respond in the same direction, with an effect of comparable magnitude. However, Asian Americans tend to have stronger responses on average than Latinos, especially to the Racial Resentment questions.

B.3.3 Survey Experiment Mediation

Finally, I conducted a mediation analysis on the survey experiment results, coding the prime as the treatment (Optimistic = 1; Pessimistic = 0), US Optimism as the mediator, and the significant outcomes from Table 3 as the DVs. Due to a data collection error, I do not have the relevant demographic covariates, so I use race/ethnicity and nativity as my covariates. When the regression is specified this way, the total treatment effect is significant for the Workway, Racial resentment, Discrimination against whites, and Discrimination against Blacks variables, and no longer significant for the Discrimination against Latinos or Immigrants variables. Of the four variables where the treatment effect remains significant, the effect of the treatment on US Optimism significantly and completely mediates the treatment effect for all four variables. This suggests that the treatment is affecting racial attitudes by shaping Optimism about the US.

Figure A15: Survey Experiment Mediation

