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Why (some) immigrants resist assimilation: US racism and the African immigrant experience

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Abstract

Scholarship shows that Black immigrants to the US resist assimilation to reduce exposure to racial discrimination faced by native-born African Americans. But, not all Black immigrants are equally likely to be (mis)perceived as African American. We argue that immigrants who are likely to be misidentified as African American have incentives to reify ethnic boundaries as a form of protection against racial discrimination. We develop this argument from interviews and focus groups with African immigrants. We then use a lab experiment to measure rates of miscategorization and identify its correlates among African immigrants. Finally, we test our argument with a novel survey of Somalis, an immigrant population with two ethnic subgroups who differ in their likelihood of being miscategorized as African Americans. We show that this difference shapes the degree of resistance to assimilation. These findings improve our understanding of the relationship between racial discrimination and incentives for Black immigrants to resist assimilation.

"When you first see me, you see Black. You don't see that I'm African or whatever. It doesn't really matter, I'm still Black." An immigrant from Côte d'Ivoire, Joyce,[1] echoes a phenomenon first observed twenty years earlier by sociologists studying the experience of Caribbean immigrants to the United States: that for some immigrant groups, assimilation in the US means assimilation into a marginalized community (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1999). But Joyce is not Caribbean; she is a member of one of the fastest-growing group of new immigrants to the United States today: Africans (Nwoye and Kopf, 2019; Tamir and Anderson, 2022). African immigrants have doubled in number every decade since 1970, and reached 2.1 million in 2015 (Anderson, 2017). Yet scholars have only just begun to interrogate the uniqueness of, and variation in, their immigrant experience (e.g., Adjepong, 2018; Alex-Assensoh, 2009; Guenther, Pendaz and Makene, 2011; Halter and Johnson, 2014; Smith, 2014; Smith and Greer, 2019; Showers, 2015).

The study of African immigration to the US provides scholars an opportunity to better understand the changing effects of immigration as the country absorbs new waves of migrants. What does immigrant assimilation look like when the segment of the host

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[1]We employ respondent-chosen pseudonyms throughout the paper.

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population into which immigrants would most likely assimilate – which Mittelberg and Waters (1992) call the *proximal hosts* – is itself a marginalized minority? How do persistent structural disadvantages faced by African Americans shape the assimilation trajectories of African immigrants to the US? And, what explains variation in immigrant assimilation among Black immigrants?

In this paper, we build on the insight that some immigrant groups are better off resisting assimilation (Laitin, 1995; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1999), and push forward our theoretical understanding of variation in resistance to immigrant assimilation *among* foreign born Black immigrants and their children[2] Specifically, we argue that different individuals and immigrant groups face different risks of being *racially lumped* with members of the marginalized host community, and therefore face different incentives to reify their ethnic identities as protection from race-based discrimination. We recognize, of course, that no single factor will explain all variation in immigrant assimilation. For example, the social capital an immigrant community confers may also provide incentives for immigrants to reify their immigrant identity and resist assimilation (e.g., Cobas, 1987; Portes and Manning, 1985). Thus, while many factors – both idiosyncratic and systematic – may shape rates of assimilation, we argue that when the proximal host is itself marginalized, then the degree to which one could be ascribed membership in this group is an important factor that shapes incentives to resist assimilation.

We substantiate this argument with three distinct empirical approaches. First, we rely on qualitative interview data from first and second generation immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa to demonstrate that not all African immigrants are equally likely to be mistaken for African Americans, complicating existing understandings of Black immigrant experiences. Second, we use a lab experiment to identify the demographic correlates of African immigrants being mistaken for African American. We find that immigrants from the Horn of Africa are significantly less likely to be mistaken as African Americans than immigrants from other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Third, we draw on focus group discussions and original survey data from Somali immigrants, who constitute one of the fastest-growing groups of African migrants to the US (Connor and Krogstad, 2016).[3] We focus on Somali immigrants because they comprise two distinct ethnic groups – Somali Bantus and ethnic Somalis– that differ markedly in their physical distinctiveness from African Americans: ethnic Bantus are more likely to be mistaken for African Americans than ethnic Somalis. By studying these groups, we are able to evaluate our theoretical claim that the risk of being misidentified as a member of a marginalized segment of the host population disincentivizes assimilation, while holding constant the national identity, migration status, and religious identity of the immigrant group.[4] Our results confirm that Somali Bantus, those who our

[2]We use *African American* to refer to American descendants of enslaved peoples and *Black immigrant* for more recent arrivals who are ascribed a Black racial classification. While these groups are not inherently mutually exclusive – African immigrants may very well self-identify as African American – we define them such that they are analytically mutually exclusive. In particular, we use “African American” to refer to Black Americans with four native-born grandparents, and we use “African immigrant” as a short hand to refer to individuals with recent immigrant heritage (typically, immigrants and their native born children), regardless of citizenship status.

[3]In response the protracted conflict following the collapse of the Somali government in1991, the Somali population in the US jumped from around 2,500 in 1990 to close to 150,000 in 2015 (Connor and Krogstad, 2016).

[4]This research design is similar to Adida, Laitin and Valfort’s (2016) study of two Senegalese ethnic groups in France that are similar in a number of key ways but differ on a variable of interest.

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theory predicts will more strongly resist assimilation, are indeed more likely to reinforce ethnic boundaries – through support for endogamous marriage – and to invest in distinct cultural markers – such as giving their American-born children ethnic names. We then provide further evidence that these patterns are driven, at least in part, by differential perceived risks of racism: ethnic differences in resistance to assimilation widen over time and generation, which suggests that ethnic Bantu resistance is in response to experiences in the US; ethnic Bantus are more likely than ethnic Somalis to perceive their Somali identity as protective against racism; and ethnic Bantu are also more likely to distance themselves from African Americans in terms of both social connections and residential integration.

This study contributes to our general understanding of identity formation and cultural change by situating the assimilation of African immigrants within a broader class of rationalist models of cultural adaptation (e.g., Acharya, Laitin and Zhang, 2018; Esser, 2004; Laitin, 1986, 1998). We build most explicitly on models of assimilation that emphasize the potential costs and benefits of adopting or abandoning cultural attributes (e.g., Adida, 2014; Laitin, 1995; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1999). We contribute to this body of work by emphasizing that the degree to which racial discrimination shapes the potential costs of assimilation for Black immigrants depends on the likelihood that an immigrant is perceived as African American. This underscores the fact that identities are socially constructed within a set of social and political constraints: they are renegotiated and reformed through transitions from one cultural context to another, and may do so differently across individuals or groups.

Our paper also contributes to a general understanding of how social discrimination and exclusion affect the identity, attitudes, and behavior of marginalized groups. Scholars show that perceptions of discrimination are fundamental to understanding political preferences, attitudes, and behaviors of immigrant and minority populations (Abdelgadir and Fouka, 2020; Fouka, 2019; Guo, 2020; Kuo, Malhotra and Mo, 2017; Maxwell and Bleich, 2014; Oskooii, 2016, 2020; Pérez, Deichert and Engelhardt, 2019; Schildkraut, 2005). Our research contributes to this literature by focusing on a relatively understudied immigrant population, and by demonstrating that the persistent racial discrimination and inequities faced by African Americans have direct implications for the integration of Black immigrants.

Finally, our theoretical expectations offer new intuitions for the Black politics literature. A core tenet of this literature is that common experiences with discrimination facilitate the formation of common political identity preferences among African Americans (Chong and Rogers, 2005; Dawson, 1995; McClain et al., 2009; Miller et al., 1981; Schmermund et al., 2001). Our study brings a new twist to this traditional intuition, based on the immigrant experience: here, it is instead the ability to escape some (but not all) forms of discrimination that facilitates the assimilation of Black immigrants. Our research thus contributes to the small but growing literature that integrates the study of Black politics in America with a focus on Black immigrants (Austin, 2019; Greer, 2013; Rogers, 2006; Smith, 2014). We advance this literature by leveraging a key source of variation *among* Black immigrants – the likelihood of misidentification as African American – to better understand how race shapes the strategic assimilation of immigrants. Our approach thus acknowledges that both race

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and ethnicity are complex combinations of multiple characteristics – or “bundles of sticks” (Sen and Wasow, 2016) – while isolating a particular component of the Black immigrant experience that is hypothesized to disincentivize assimilation.

Rational Resistance to Cultural Assimilation

Social scientists have studied Black immigrant assimilation for decades, motivated by the observation that Black immigrants seem to resist assimilation into the racialized US landscape, with important implications for their integration.[5] Relying first on Caribbean immigrant experiences but more recently extending the analysis to African immigrants to the US, scholars have found that – in contrast to other immigrant groups – *resistance* to assimilation among Black immigrants yields better economic (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1999) and health (Hamilton, 2014; Koya and Egede, 2007) outcomes. Indeed, the selection effect of immigration to the U.S. has led to the arrival of relatively highly-educated Black immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean (Tesfai, 2017). In the United States, these immigrants are then perceived as African Americans (Bonilla-Silva, 2004*a*), exposed to racial discrimination and prejudice; as a result, for these immigrants, assimilation means the possibility of down-ward social mobility (Mittelberg and Waters (1992), p. 425). Haitian immigrants to the US, for example, transition from a context where race is fluid and somewhat endogenous to class – upper-class Blacks, for example, are perceived as closer to white Europeans – to a context where race is a sticky and exogenous social identity (Mittelberg and Waters, 1992; Vickerman, 1999).

As a result, Black immigrants to the US tend to adopt a process of selective assimilation, in which they retain elements of their immigrant culture and identification (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Waters et al., 2010). A case study of Ethiopian immigrants in Washington DC finds that these immigrants prefer to identify as “African”, “Ethiopian American,” or “Ethiopian,” rather than “Black” (Chako, 2003). African immigrant students in Atlanta also use ethnicity as a buffer against discrimination (Ogundipe, 2011). These deliberate efforts to resist assimilation do not appear to dissipate over immigrant generations. The children of middle-income Nigerian immigrants to the US adopt a hybrid identity, in which they distance themselves from low-income African Americans (Imoagene, 2017). And an ethnographic study of West Indian and West African immigrant children in New York City, reveals that these second and one-and-a-half generation immigrants deliberately retain elements of their immigrant culture through cuisine, fashion, and language (Sall, 2019). Black immigrants are rational when they resist assimilating into American culture and being misidentified as African Americans: they resist a lowering of their social and economic status (Hamilton, 2019).

Central to literature on Black immigrant integration is the recognition that Black immigrants resist assimilation *because they are otherwise indistinguishable from the stigmatized and*

[5]Some scholars use the terms *assimilation* and *integration* interchangeably to describe the processes by which members of immigrant groups and host societies come to resemble one another (Brown and Bean, 2006; Waters and Pineau, 2015). However, we follow Harder et al. (2018), who distinguish integration – “the degree to which immigrants have acquired the knowledge and capacity to build successful lives” – from assimilation – the degree to which immigrants “shed their home country’s culture in favor of adopting the cultural practices of the host country.” We focus here on cultural assimilation and behavioral practices that resist it.

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marginalized African American population. In reference to Afro-Caribbean immigrants and African Americans, Rogers (2001) notes, "under the peculiar American system of racial ascription, the two groups are practically indistinguishable by phenotype" (p. 174). Ogundipe (2011), echoing an insight from Bryce-Laporte (1972), describes Black immigrants as "invisible" and Butterfield (2004) reports that second-generation West Indians are frustrated by the fact that "their phenotype places them into a situation in which they are assumed to be African American" (p. 83). Tormala and Deaux (2006) emphasize how this racial lumping translates into increased discrimination: "at automatic and nonconscious levels, Black immigrants and Black Americans are perceived in the same way. Whether by passersby, customers walking around a store, or drivers in an upper-class neighborhood, Black immigrants will be categorized as Black and subjected to the same kinds of race-based bias and discrimination as American Blacks" (p. 137).

This fact puts Black immigrants in a decidedly different position vis-à-vis the American racial landscape than most other immigrant groups. Earlier waves of immigrants were able to avoid discrimination – even when such stigma was assumed to be driven by racial difference – by distancing themselves from African Americans (Kim, 2003; Loewen, 1971; McClain et al., 2006) or culturally assimilating into white American culture, with some groups even "becoming white" (Ignatiev, 1995; Jacobson, 1998; Roediger, 2005; Sacks, 1998). Those for whom assimilation as white is limited by phenotypic and cultural characteristics – as is the case for many Asians and non-Black Latinos – are typically seen as perpetual foreigners, which the American racial hierarchy tends to place in a middle ranking, well below white Americans but still above African Americans (Kim, 1999; Forman, Goar and Lewis, 2002; Alco, 2003; Kim, 2003; Bonilla-Silva, 2004*b*; Greer, 2013; Trietler, 2013).[6] For such groups, assimilation moves them up in the racial hierarchy, even if not all the way to the top. However, Black immigrants face a markedly different situation: the social and institutional legacies of chattel slavery in the United States, such as the uniquely-American *one drop rule* that ascribes a Black identity to anyone with identifiable African heritage (Davis, 1991), make it virtually impossible to escape racial classification as Black for most immigrants from Africa.[7] Thus, it is only among those ascribed a Black racial identity that overtly signaling foreign heritage results in moving up, rather than down, the racial hierarchy.

Historical accounts of African Americans donning turbans and robes, claiming to be foreign dignitaries, and successfully accessing spaces that were off limits to African Americans in the Jim Crow era (Kramer, 2011), exemplify the value of a foreign identity relative to an African American one. For those African Americans, signaling foreign heritage was a strategy to escape Black subjugation when passing as white was not an option. Similarly, most African immigrants today do not have the option to assimilate as white Americans and, thus, the loss of a foreign status results in default classification as African American. As a result, the risk to Black immigrants comes not from assimilation into African American

[6]In contrast, and consistent with the broader literature on Black immigrants, Afro-Latino/as who are ascribed a Black identity in the US context actively work to distance themselves from African Americans (Howard, 2003).
[7]Research suggests that African Americans' ability to pass as white is limited and typically conditional on significant white ancestry (Mill and Stein, 2016; Nix and Qian, 2015).

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culture, but from assimilating into any facet of American culture that erases the visibility of their foreign heritage.[8]

Research suggests that Black immigrants are aware of the benefits of foreign heritage within the American racial hierarchy. Thus, as documented by Waters (1999), Black immigrants prioritize and signal an ethnic or national identity that differentiates them from African Americans. In particular, Waters finds that "by evoking their foreign status" Black immigrants aim to "'exit' from the stigmatized black category" (Waters, 1999, p.151). Subsequent work on Black immigrants echoes this finding: it shows that Black immigrants strategically distance themselves from African Americans in order to reduce their exposure to race-based discrimination (e.g., Chako, 2003; Foner, 1998; Greer, 2013; Guenther, Pendaz and Makene, 2011; Howard, 2003; Imoagene, 2017; Mensah and Williams, 2015; Ogundipe, 2011; Portes, 2004; Rogers, 2006; Trietler, 2013; Husain, 2019).[9] The evidence as to whether African Americans are actually subject to more race-based discrimination than Black immigrants is limited, yet it is certainly a commonly reported belief among Black immigrants.[10] In particular, Black immigrants who are able to "foster a perception of themselves as different from the bottom…of the racial hierarchy" (Trietler, 2013) expect to be granted a form of "elevated minority status" (Greer, 2013), in which they are still subject to race-based discrimination, but of a less extreme form: they are viewed as "different, special, and good" Blacks (Rogers, 2006).[11]

Black immigrants can signal an ethnic or national identity in numerous ways in order to differentiate themselves from African Americans. For example, not *Americanizing* one's own name, giving one's children ethnic names, wearing national or ethnic-signaling attire, using their native languages in public, valuing ingroup over outgroup marriages, and choosing to live in particular neighborhoods – behaviors referred to elsewhere as "ethnic embeddedness" (Waters et al., 2010) – all signal an identity separate from African Americans. While such outward signals of ethnic and national identity among immigrants are certainly shaped by a multitude of factors – including underlying strength of group attachment or efforts to reinforce community commitments, among others – we follow others in arguing that they also serve as investments in distinctiveness.

Investments in ethnocultural distinctiveness are not trivial. Immigrants to the United States, from the earlier wave of European immigration to the more recent wave of immigration from

[8]While Black immigrants may opt to adopt facets of white American culture (Ferguson, Bornstein and Pottinger, 2012), such white acculturation does not allow them to escape a Black racial ascription and may even result in social sanctioning by African Americans (Bergin and Cooks, 2002; Thelamour and Johnson, 2017).

[9]While we focus on the potential costs of being misidentified as African American based on pervasive racial discrimination, we also acknowledge contexts in which identification with or as African American is beneficial. For example, embracing an African American identity could confer advantages in contexts of affirmative action (Antman and Duncan, 2015), such as college admissions or employment decisions. However, research suggests that even within these narrow contexts of assumed African American advantage, Black immigrants often still benefit more than African Americans (Brown and Bell, 2008; Onwuachi-Willig, 2007; Rimer and Arenson, 2004).

[10]Tormala and Deaux (2006), Krieger et al. (2011), and Griffin, Cunningham and George Mwangi (2016) all find that Black immigrants *report* less exposure to racism than do African Americans, but direct data on the beliefs and stereotypes held by members of the host society are rarely captured.

[11]Some research challenges the expectation that immigrants perceive their national or ethnic identities as protective against racial discrimination. For example, Clark (2008) argues that second generation African immigrants fuse their racialized American identity with an African identity, while Showers (2015) highlights that many Africans in the US attribute more discrimination to their African identity than their Black identity.

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Latin America and Asia, all follow an assimilationist trend over time (Waters and Jiménez, 2005): within two generations, immigrants become "more like other native-born Americans than their parents were" across all measurable outcomes (Waters and Pineau, 2015, p.3). Absent concerted efforts to remain distinctive, immigrant groups assimilate, not necessarily because they seek this out, but rather as a result of weaker incentives to resist it. Racism in the US means that all Black immigrants are likely to resist assimilation more than non-Black groups, but that they may do so at different rates based on the strength of group-specific disincentives for assimilation. Our argument concerns this relative difference in incentives, and its implications for assimilation.

We focus, in particular, on variation in immigrants' distinctiveness based on physical appearance, which shapes whether they are perceived to have recent immigrant heritage or not. Black immigrants to the United States are a diverse group, and not all are equally likely to be *mistaken* for African Americans. Recognition of this within-group variation in immigrant visibility is our central theoretical contribution. While existing research highlights the role of racial discrimination in the assimilation of Black immigrants relative to other immigrant groups, we focus on the differential risks of cultural assimilation *among Black immigrants* with different propensities to be misidentified as African American and the incentives that creates for reification of ethnic boundaries. This within-group approach provides significant analytical leverage: it allows us to disaggregate race-of-immigrant effects and focus on the constituent component of immigrant race – phenotypic overlap with African Americans – that is theoretically posited to shape assimilation outcomes (Sen and Wasow, 2016). In addition, focusing on variation among Black immigrants allows us to better isolate the role of racial discrimination in driving assimilation outcomes, while holding constant many other facets of the immigrant experience that also shape ethnocultural behaviors. Thus, we argue that while it is not the sole factor shaping immigrant assimilation, a Black immigrant's propensity to be misidentified as African American creates incentives to adopt or maintain ethnic markers as a means to mitigate race-based discrimination.

Empirical strategy

To assess this argument, we draw on three original sources of data. First, we conducted in-depth interviews with 33 African immigrants – defined as having at least one parent born in Sub-Saharan Africa – who either worked or studied at a large public university in the Midwest.[12] These participants were recruited in May and June 2016 via solicitations to Africa-related social organizations on campus, and participants were interviewed by trained research assistants who were African immigrants themselves. The interviews lasted approximately one hour, and covered a wide variety of topics, such as the immigration trajectory of the respondent or their family, ethnic and racial self-identification, perceptions of race relations in the United States, social networks, cultural practices, and exposure to discrimination. These interviews were recorded, transcribed, anonymized, and inductively coded by at least two research assistants or authors. The resulting data were used to

[12]We also recruited and interviewed 17 African Americans, defined as anyone who self-identified as Black and with all four grandparents born in the US.

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generate insights about variation in immigrant experiences, and highlighted the importance of immigrant visibility in driving different perceptions of race and racial self-identification.

Second, in November and December of 2016, we conducted a lab experiment among 170 undergraduates at the same university, in which we randomly showed participants the name, photograph, or a short introduction video of a subset of the African immigrants we had interviewed, as well as African Americans.[13] We asked these participants, recruited via a departmental course participant pool, whether the name, photograph, or video was an African immigrant (defined as having at least one parent born in Africa) or an African American (defined as having all four grandparents and both parents born in the United States). The stimuli were presented in the form of a name, a photo, or a video (of the confederate saying "Hi, my name is [First name] [Last name]") displayed on the screen of a private computer terminal in a lab setting. Each participant saw a randomly selected set of 25 stimuli: the computer program randomly generated the interview participant, the stimulus for that participant, and the order of presentation. Figure A.1 of the appendix illustrates a sample stimulus from this lab experiment, using a photograph from one of the project research assistants (not a real participant), with permission. We used monetary incentives ($0.25 per correct guess) when asking participants to classify each name, photograph or video as being African immigrant or African American. After this classification task, we paid participants for their correct guesses overall ([\$5.50, \$12.00], $\bar{x} = \$9.36$, $\sigma = \$1.29$), but did not provide feedback on the correct classification of any individual stimulus. We use the resulting data to build an objective measure of the degree to which different immigrants who we interviewed are mistaken for African Americans by the larger American population.[14]

Third, we collected both qualitative and quantitative data from members of the Somali communities in Columbus, Ohio. In terms of qualitative data, we conducted eight focus groups of ten participants each, who we recruited from the wider Somali communities through community leaders and organizations. We organized these focus groups by gender, ethnicity, and age group (under and over ~ 35 years of age); trained research assistants from the respondents' particular ethnic community led the discussion. These discussions focused on experiences and challenges as immigrants in the United States, relationships with and perceptions of African Americans, and political knowledge and engagement. We then transcribed, translated (if necessary), and inductively coded their content.

Then, in March and April of 2018, we collected survey data from a convenience sample of 520 members of the Columbus Somali communities.[15] Four Somali enumerators recruited respondents and interviewed them face-to-face. The resulting sample includes 293 ethnic

[13]All 33 African immigrants, as well as the 17 African Americans we also interviewed, were given the option to have their name, photograph, and brief introduction via video used in a follow-up study. Twenty-four African immigrants and 15 African Americans agreed to our use of their information and images in the subsequent study.

[14]Overall, respondents were able to correctly distinguish African immigrants from African Americans 75% of the time. One might be concerned that the ability of students to identify immigrants differs systematically from the broader population that is most relevant for the theoretical argument. To assess this possibility, we compare accuracy rates in the student sample to accuracy rates in a nationally representative sample of white, native-born Americans. The task in this broader sample, surveyed by the authors for a different purpose, was slightly different, as respondents saw a different stimulus pool, only evaluated photographs, and were not monetarily incentivized for accurate classification. Still, the accuracy rate for this national sample is 56%, only slightly lower than the 62% accuracy rate for white student respondents.

[15]557 potential participants were approached, but 12 declined and 25 did not complete the survey. Among the 520 respondents who completed the survey, there is some missingness. Our main analyses rely on multiple imputation of four key control variables: age (n

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Somali and 227 ethnic Bantu respondents. For feasibility and appropriateness, all interviews were conducted by coethnic research assistants and most were conducted by same-gender research assistants.[16] Enumerators were asked to interview strangers as well as people they might know. Typically, enumerators report that the respondent was either a complete stranger or that they recognized the person without him or her being an acquaintance, close friend, or family member (see Figure A.3). However, the sample is a convenience sample and may not be fully representative of the larger populations.[17] This is inevitable given the size and vulnerability of the population of interest; and, because our objective is to compare the two ethnic groups, we focused primarily on standardizing the method of recruitment across the two groups. Figure A.2 shows the distribution of respondents by the type of location in which they were interviewed and Table A.3 reports demographic characteristics of the interview respondents. We use the survey data from these respondents to assess the degree to which ethnic differences in the risk of racial lumping with African Americans shapes behavioral investments in, and attitudinal endorsements of, ethnocultural markers.[18]

Results

We present our results in four sections below. First, we use the qualitative data from our in-depth interviews and the accompanying lab experiment to show clear regional patterns to phenotypic overlap with African Americans, with immigrants from the Horn of Africa region being less commonly miscategorized as African American. Second, this finding leads us to focus on variation in phenotypic overlap with African Americans *among* a single national origin group – Somalis. In particular, we leverage the difference in risk of racial lumping between ethnic Somali, who have less phenotypic overlap with African Americans, and ethnic Somali Bantu, who are phenotypically closer to African Americans. Third, we use survey data to show that the Somali Bantu resist assimilation more across a host of cultural indicators. Fourth, we provide evidence for our mechanism, i.e. that this difference in assimilation is driven by differential concern about racial discrimination.

Our interviews and lab experiment allow us to establish that some African immigrants are more identifiable as such, while others are more often mistaken for African Americans. The data also suggest that one of the strongest correlates of being misclassified as African American is the region from which the immigrant or their parents migrated. In particular,

= 6 imputed), employment ($n = 2$), income ($n = 35$), and education ($n = 6$). Results based on case-wise deletion, which show the same patterns, are presented in the appendix.

[16]The ethnic Somali male interviewer's respondents were 68% men, while the ethnic Somali female enumerator's respondents were 54% women. Cross-gender interviews were rarer among the Somali Bantu interviewers, with the male interviewer interviewing 93% men and the female enumerator interviewing 94% women. Although this gives us less opportunity to control for enumerator effects, this decision ensured the feasibility of the study, the protection of respondents, and the minimization of social desirability bias (Adida et al., 2016).

[17]Our sampling strategy relied on enumerators' ability to identify Somali respondents: this means that our sample excludes members of both ethnic categories who are so assimilated that they are no longer perceived to be Somali. Our sample is therefore truncated and, as a result, our results are only generalizable to members of the Somali population who are still identifiable as such, based on appearance, social networks, or commercial activity.

[18]Prior to the collection of the survey data, we registered our study and a set of expectations with EGAP (http://egap.org/registration/4332). While the pre-registered hypotheses focused on how an immigrant's propensity for misidentification as African Americans would shape political and cultural outcomes, we did not pre-register hypotheses specifically related to the investment in ethnic markers by immigrants. The expectations evaluated here, however, are nevertheless consistent with the general argument made in the pre-analysis plan that immigrants with greater propensity for misidentification would resist assimilation. Our larger project considers the outcomes included in the pre-registered hypotheses, which are farther down a causal chain, including racial self-identification and political engagement.

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immigrants from the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia) reported being much more visible as immigrants within the larger American context. In our student interviews, respondents with heritage from outside the Horn repeatedly mentioned that others perceived them to be African Americans. Ross, who immigrated from Benin as a child, said "You are Black. There are not going to know, oh you are African" and Joyce, an Ivoirian American, said "when you first see me you see Black. You don't see that I'm African or whatever. It doesn't really matter I'm still Black." Jackie, a second generation Nigerian American, similarly said "people looking at me on the outside without looking at my name…they are going to be like "oh she's African American."' Another second generation Nigerian American, Paul, also felt that most Americans assume he's African American: "People from other races when they look at me, they don't really see different parts of Africa, they see African American." And Sarah, a recent immigrant from Ghana, recalled, "my roommate, she didn't recognize me as African before I told her 'I'm African, I came from Ghana.' I think they can't really tell until you say it, or start speaking."

In contrast, interview subjects from the Horn clearly recognized that Americans distinguish them from African Americans. One respondent of Ethiopian heritage, Rachel, remarked that people say that she is "black but not 'Black'." Cara, a first generation Somali immigrant, said that Americans "almost always they know I'm East African" and Mary, a recent immigrant from Ethiopia, said "they know that I'm not [African American], either I'm mixed or Somali or East African." Similarly, Nancy, an Ethiopian immigrant who came to the U.S. as a child, said "I was always mistaken as native American or Latina, or something, they always said I looked exotic." Marlum, an American whose parents are Somali, remarked that other people often say to her "you look foreign."

Most of these respondents from the Horn of Africa focused on their physical appearance as *marking* them distinct from African Americans. Thomas, a recent immigrant from Eritrea, remarked that Americans know he and other Eritreans are not African Americans "by our looks" and Rachel, a second generation Ethiopian American said "I'm not sure what they mistake me as, especially since I'm a lighter complexion. I've gotten different, you know, non-Black… they think I'm not Black or not African." Ariel, a second generation Ethiopian American, recounted, "From what I've experienced, people don't assume I'm African. Even when I tell them, they go, 'Oh, you're light,' or some other stupid comment." Cara, originally from Somalia, noted that "we have different hair" and Thomas, originally from Eritrea, said "most of the Eastern Africans look alike, with a light skin color and a different look than most African nations." Halima, a 1.5 generation Somali immigrant, noted that "people say that our features are kind of different as East Africans compared to African Americans."

These stark patterns are consistent with existing knowledge about phenotypic differences within Africa. Those who hail from the Horn of Africa region are primarily Afroasiatic peoples, who are, on average, phenotypically distinct from the Bantu and Nilotic groups that comprise the majority of the rest of the continent and from which most African Americans descend (Tishkoff et al., 2009). Existing evidence suggests that many Afroasiatic peoples do not consider themselves Black or ethnically African, although they acknowledge that they

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are typically ascribed a Black racial identity within the US context (e.g., Eno and Eno, 2010; Habecker, 2012).

The lab portion of our study further corroborated the self-reports that African immigrants from the Horn of Africa are less often mistaken for African Americans. In particular, student participants correctly identified photographs of African immigrants from the Horn as immigrants 75% of the time, compared to only 51% for African immigrants not from the Horn ($t = 2.77$, $p < 0.05$).[19] This difference, however, disappears when the name or video stimuli are provided instead of the photo, which suggests that immigrants with Horn of Africa origins are more visible as immigrants based primarily on physical appearance.[20]

The results of our student study highlight that region of origin within Africa has a strong bearing on immigrant visibility *vis-à-vis* Blacks in the American context. However, the study was limited to university students, and there are likely to be other significant differences between immigrants from the Horn and other regions. Our next step was thus to expand to an off-campus community context, and to try to isolate visibility due to Afroasiatic heritage while holding many other factors constant. This led us to a focus on two distinct ethnic communities from Somalia: ethnic Somali (referred to within the Somali diaspora as *Somali Somali*) and Somali Bantu.

The distinction between these two communities is due, in large part, to the fact that ethnic Somali have largely Afroasiatic heritage, while the Somali Bantu – a minority of around 5% within Somalia – are of Bantu-Nilotic origins. The ethnic Bantu are a heterogenous group, but within Somalia they are all called *Jareer* (hard hair) to distinguish them from ethnic Somalis, who are perceived to have softer hair (Eno and Kusow, 2014). Today, the ethnic boundary, both within Somalia and in the US, is relatively impermeable (Menkhaus, 2003; Besteman, 2016).

However, while long victimized (Besteman, 2012, 2016; Eno and Kusow, 2014; Grady, 2015), the construction of a distinct Somali Bantu ethnic identity is a recent one, dated to the discussion of “Somali farmers with Black African physical features” (Menkhaus, 2003, p.335) by the international community during the 1991 famine in Somalia. The term was coined to describe a class of subsistence farmers with no status in the Somali lineage system and with a shared history of discrimination at the hands of ethnic Somalis (Declich, 2000; Deramo, 2016; Menkhaus, 2003). Until that point, these “riverine identities remained diverse [and] localized” (Besteman, 2012, p.288) and the individuals now identified as Somali Bantu possessed “almost none of the features typically associated with a cohesive ethnic group” (Menkhaus, 2010, p.93). Eventually, the Somali Bantu were identified by the US State Department as eligible for refugee priority status as a persecuted ethnic group in need of resettlement. After a decade in camps for refugees and the internally displaced, approximately 10,000 Somali Bantus were resettled throughout the US in the early 2000s.

[19]These two groups do not differ significantly in terms of the proportion who are foreign-born immigrants (50% among those with Horn origins vs. 37% among those with non-Horn origins, $t = 0.616$, $p = 0.544$).

[20]See appendix Table A.1 for t-tests. Table A.2 shows that the difference in immigrant visibility among Horn and non-Horn immigrants is robust to controlling for the immigrant’s religion, generation, and sex.

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Ethnic Somalis also resettled in the United States as refugees beginning in the 1980s and in significant numbers after the collapse of Somalia in 1991. Although they escaped violence and resettled as refugees, their status in Somalia was never as dire as that of the Somali Bantu. Indeed, all ethnic Somalis belong to a clan – each of different Arab lineage – and while the clans themselves occupy clear positions in a hierarchical structure, they are socially, economically, and politically superior to the non-clan ethnic minorities of the country. To be sure, many ethnic Somalis also suffered tremendously at the hands of the country's dictator, Siad Barre, who terrorized certain clans such as the Hawiye and the Isaaq as he lost his grip on power after the end of the Cold War.

We focus our study on these two communities in the context of Columbus, OH. Columbus offers a unique opportunity because it is home to the second largest Somali population in the US (after Minneapolis), but unlike most other concentrations of Somalis, includes large populations of *both* ethnic Bantus and ethnic Somalis. The estimated size of the ethnic Somali community in Columbus is around 55,000 individuals, while the size of the Somali Bantu community is estimated to be between 10,000 and 15,000 individuals.[21] Columbus is also home to a large African American population, about 28% according to the 2010 Census, and the city suffers from stark racial inequality and severe segregation. This means that the risk of systematic racial discrimination for new Black immigrants is quite real.

In April of 2017, we conducted a series of focus group discussions with the Somali community in Columbus to further probe our intuition that the differential risk of racial lumping that we had identified in the lab would apply to the ethnic differences among Somalis. Recruited via our research assistants' social networks, our focus group participants were organized into eight groups of 10, for a total sample size of 80. To facilitate widespread participation, we organized the groups by gender, ethnicity, and age. These focus groups were administered by coethnic interviewers in both English and the group's ethnic language (Af-Maay or Af-Somali), and lasted approximately one and a half hours. They were held on a university campus or at community centers near Somali neighborhoods. We compensated participants for their time ($30), and we never recorded their names. We did record, transcribe, translate, and code the focus group conversations. We instructed focus group facilitators to ask questions and direct the conversation toward the following topics: life in the United States, identity and attitudes about race, American perceptions of Somalis/Bantus in the US, discrimination, social and cultural engagement with Americans, and political participation and attitudes.

We draw two main inferences from our analysis of how ethnic Bantus and ethnic Somalis responded to questions about American perceptions of their identity. First, while both ethnic Somalis and ethnic Bantus report that they are sometimes mistaken for African Americans, especially by white Americans, only ethnic Somalis also mention being ascribed other non-Black identities, such as mixed-race, Arab, or Indian. This suggests a larger identity repertoire to which ethnic Somalis are ascribed compared to ethnic Bantus. Second, when

[21]The two communities overlap religiously and commercially, but tend to be residentially segregated within Columbus. Figures A.4 and A.5 of the appendix show the concentration of our survey respondents by zipcode. The maps comport with commonly held perceptions that the two groups reside in different parts of the city.

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the participants discussed which characteristics differentiated them from African Americans, ethnic Somalis would often refer to physical traits such as the shape of their face or their hair, while ethnic Bantus only referred to their accent or dress. These patterns are consistent with the claim that ethnic Bantus are more likely to be ascribed an African American identity based on their appearance than are ethnic Somalis.

We first note that both ethnic Bantus and ethnic Somalis report that they are sometimes mistaken for African American. One ethnic Bantu male respondent explained that "When we are first seen, people think we are African American" and another concurred "For me, from far away, people think you are African American." Similarly, among older ethnic Bantu male respondents, we were told: "Some people might think we are the same when they look at us but our culture is different"; younger ethnic Bantu female participants concurred: "Most of them think we are Black but we are Somali Bantu."

Ethnic Somalis sometimes echoed this sentiment. The older ethnic Somali male participants claimed that "the white man sees you as a Black man", "In mainstream America, we are Black men. There is only Black and white. That is it. Do you get it? You are a Black man." Older ethnic Somali female participants concurred: "For most of the white people they are unable to distinguish them, Black is Black," as did younger ethnic Somali male participants: "when I'm out by myself I'm just a Black guy."

At the same time, however, ethnic Somalis – but, importantly, not ethnic Bantus – raised numerous examples of also being mistaken for other identities. One older ethnic Somali woman claimed that "for us adults, they may think we are from other countries such as the Middle East." Another mentioned being asked if she is from India, while a younger ethnic Somali woman who wears a headscarf said she has been mistaken for an Arab. One young ethnic Somali male respondent remembers being identified as mixed-race: "I think they kinda assume that I was mixed. Maybe cause of my hair, you know." One older ethnic Somali man recounted a story of another participant being stopped by a police officer while they were together. He said, "You remember what he wrote? He wrote that you were white." In fact, one ethnic Somali explicitly noted the ethnic difference at the heart of our research strategy, saying, "There is also differences in the Somali community. So, you're obviously gonna be able to tell that an [ethnic Somali clan name] is not African American, you know. But then if you meet a Bantu Somali maybe, or a darker ethnic Somali person, then there's a chance that they pass as African American." These differences confirm that ethnic Somalis have a wider repertoire of identities ascribed to them in the US context, including non-African American identities, than do ethnic Bantus.

Second, when discussing what drives their visibility as immigrants or foreigners, ethnic Bantu respondents consistently referred to factors such as language, dress, and culture, while ethnic Somalis added other more exogenous characteristics, such as the color of their skin, the shape of their face, the texture of their hair, or more generally their features. One respondent put it clearly: "Even though we are all Black, there [are] a lot of characteristics that distinguish us. For us Somalis, we look alike and we have the same color, even if some are lighter than others, but it is clear that we are Somalis and clearly distinguishable from other Blacks. " One respondent claimed "I think a lot of the differences that people might

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see would be physical features like hair texture for the most part," and another echoed that Somalis looked different due to, "regular facial features, the nose maybe, the the size of a forehead, the the hair texture and all that." Someone else agreed unequivocally: "I don't have to tell them where I am from, they already know from my face." When asked if this was because of the way he dressed, the participant emphasized that it was "from the face."

Our choice to study the experience of ethnic Somalis and ethnic Bantus allows us to isolate the effects of an immigrant's perceived phenotypic overlap while holding other characteristics constant: both groups come from the same country, both are Muslim, both migrated as refugees. At the same time, as evidenced by the above discussion, these groups face different risks of being mistaken for African Americans, allowing us to analyze the extent to which this drives resistance to assimilation. In so doing, our research design closely follows those of Laitin (1986) and Adida, Laitin and Valfort (2016), which compare two groups that are similar in a number of potentially confounding ways, but differ on the key variable of interest.[22]

We leverage the difference in phenotypic overlap with African Americans among the ethnic Somali and Somali Bantu of Columbus to better understand how the risk of being mistaken for African American is related to cultural assimilation. We conceptualize cultural assimilation, and investment in ethnic markers, with a focus on endogamy (marriage within one's ethnic group) and naming practices. We follow a rich literature in the social sciences that considers endogamy and naming to be indicators of assimilation (Abramitzky, Boustan and Eriksson, 2017; Biavaschi, Giuletti and Siddique, 2017; Fouka, 2019; Kalmijn, 1998; Qian and Lichter, 2007; Saavedra, 2018). It is worth noting that these measures capture the maintenance or loss of markers of recent foreign heritage, rather than which specific facets of American culture (e.g., white or Black culture) are adopted in their stead. We also create an aggregate measure of resistance to assimilation using the mean of standardized components. Table A.4 of the appendix reports summary statistics for each of the three variables and the index measure of resistance to assimilation.

We first report simple differences-in-means between ethnic Somalis and ethnic Bantus on three measures of cultural markers: whether the respondent is married to a coethnic, whether the respondent prefers that their children marry a coethnic, and whether the respondent prefers to give their child a first name that signals their ethnicity. Our preliminary results are striking: on all three measures of investment in cultural markers, ethnic Bantu respondents score significantly higher than do ethnic Somali respondents. Ethnic Bantus are more likely to have a coethnic spouse (97% vs. 89%, $\chi^2 = 10.36$, $p < 0.01$), to value the importance of their child marrying a coethnic (2.72 vs. 2.01 on a four-point scale, $t = 11.83$, $p < 0.001$), and to prefer that their children have an ethnically-distinct first name (91% vs. 59%, $\chi^2 = 66.16$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, we also see a large ethnic difference for the index of resistance to cultural assimilation (0.37 vs. –0.38, $t = 12.22$, $p < 0.001$).

[22]However, these two groups differ beyond just their perceived phenotypic overlap with African Americans. Thus, our research design relies on the claim that most of the confounding ways in which the groups differ are observable and measurable: the Somali Bantu are, on average, less educated, poorer, and more likely to have immigrated to the US later than many ethnic Somalis. We can account for these differences at the individual level, comparing ethnic Somalis to Somali Bantus *conditional* on education, income, and time in the US.

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To gauge the differences in cultural assimilation and ethnic markers by ethnic group, controlling for the potentially confounding differences between the two groups, we estimate the below model for each measure of cultural assimilation:

$$y_i = \beta_1 Bantu_i + \beta_2 X_i + \in_i$$

where i is the survey respondent, Y is a measure of resistance to assimilation, β_1 captures the difference between ethnic Bantus and ethnic Somalis, and $\mathbf{X}$ is a vector of controls, including a respondent's age, sex, education level (primary education completed or not), household income, employment status, and immigrant generation (second generation or not).

The results, presented in Table 1, illustrate patterns that are consistent with our theoretical expectations.[23] Controlling for potential confounds, we observe that ethnic Bantus invest in cultural markers more than do their ethnic Somali counterparts. In particular, married Somali Bantu are significantly more likely to have a coethnic spouse, to say that they prefer that their children marry a coethnic, and to prefer ethnic names for their children. Model 4 of Table 1 confirms that ethnic Bantus score significantly higher on the overall index of resistance to cultural assimilation.

The results above provide evidence that ethnic Bantus, who are more likely to be misidentified as African American than are ethnic Somalis, are more likely to resist assimilation: they choose more ethnically distinct names for their children, and prefer endogamy. But are these differences really driven by efforts to avoid race-based discrimination? We recognize that immigrants may resist assimilation for a host of different reasons; this section provides evidence consistent with our argument that differential racism avoidance is likely to account for at least some of the observed difference in assimilation across the two groups.

First, because the theorized mechanism of racism avoidance is driven by exposure to race-based discrimination in the US, we expect that ethnic differences in assimilation resistance increases with time in the US. In Figure 1 below, based on Models 1 and 2 of Appendix Table A.7, we show patterns of resistance to assimilation by immigrant generation and by years in the US.[24] Consistent with expectation, these results show that while resistance for ethnic Somalis decreases with generation and remains stable over time among the first generation, resistance to assimilation actually increases over time among ethnic Bantu immigrants and does not decline in the second generation. These results bolster our claim that it is something about the experience in the United States – which we argue is the systemic discrimination faced by African Americans – that puts these two Somali ethnic groups on divergent paths of assimilation.[25] These results also help rule out the possibility

[23]Results for these estimations with non-imputed control variables are reported in Table A.6, while Table A.5 of the appendix presents our main results using pre-specified control variables. Our main specification includes only a subset of these variables, in an attempt to exclude variables likely to be outcomes of assimilation themselves, but we note here that our results are robust to using the pre-specified set of controls.

[24]Results using non-imputed data are reported in Table A.8.

[25]Forces within the US other than racism could of course also shape the assimilation choices of immigrants. For example, frustration with the lack of economic opportunity within the American workforce could drive a retrenchment in ingroup identification that increases over time. However, resistance to assimilation among Somali Bantu is in fact stronger among more economically advantaged

that the ethnic differences that we document are driven by pre-emigration group differences in cultural investment. Even if ethnic Bantus bring stronger ethnic attachments with them from Somalia – a doubtful claim given accounts of the creation of the ethnic Bantu identity – we observe increased investment in ethnic markers that is unique to the ethnic Bantus *since* their migration to the United States.

Second, if differential risk of racism is indeed what is driving ethnic differences in assimilation, then ethnic Bantu should report a greater perceived threat of racial discrimination. Our qualitative data corroborates such a pattern. When asked explicitly about whether their Somali heritage protected them from racial discrimination, ethnic Bantu focus group participants were more likely than ethnic Somali to report that it did. For example, an older Somali Bantu man told us, "Yes. I am not Black American. With my Bantu origin, I have not had anything bad done to me." Another ethnic Bantu emphasized the protective importance of their cultural identity, explaining, "we want our children to get education, and to learn the culture of our people…we have some kids that want to be gangsters; we want them to be protected."[26] Our quantitative data also reveal ethnic differences in perceived risk of racial discrimination. In particular, Somali Bantu survey respondents perceive their ethnic identity to be more protective relative to African Americans than do ethnic Somali: while 64% of Somali Bantu respondents believe that African Americans face more discrimination than do their own coethnics, only 20% of ethnic Somali think the same ($\chi^2 = 66.9$, $p < 0.001$).[27] In addition, when asked to rank the degree to which four different identities expose each respondent to discrimination, Somali Bantu respondents ranked their racial identity significantly higher than did ethnic Somali ($t = 4.75$, $p < 0.001$).[28] Together, these results bolster the claim that Somali Bantu resist assimilation more than ethnic Somali because of their heightened concern about race-based discrimination.

Third, if Somali Bantu immigrants invest more in ethnic cultural markers than do ethnic Somalis in order to avoid being misidentified as African American, then we should also observe concerted efforts by ethnic Bantus to distance themselves – both attitudinally and behaviorally – from African Americans. Our focus group data suggest that Somali Bantus enact such distancing more strongly than ethnic Somalis. When asked whether they identified as African American, all four ethnic Bantu focus groups said no with full consensus, while three of the four ethnic Somali focus groups responded affirmatively, with only a few dissenters. An older Bantu woman exclaimed, "we cannot be like those people! We want peace in our household and protection for our kids so that they may get education and be in high positions." We observe a similar pattern in two behavioral measures we

immigrants, as shown in Table A.9 and Figure A.7: this casts doubt on this mechanism. It is difficult to understand the causal order of these factors: it could be that resistance to assimilation among Somali Bantu has economic returns or that the economically advantaged have the most to lose from being misidentified as African American, both of which are consistent with our theory.

[26]Research shows that the expression of stereotypes about African Americans by Black immigrants often accompanies – or even constitutes – efforts to mark themselves as distinct (e.g., Habecker, 2012; Waters, 1999). It is challenging to empirically disentangle the relative impact on assimilation of immigrants' own stereotypes about African Americans from their fear of being subjected to them by others.

[27]This gap is robust to controlling for age, sex, education, household income, employment status, and immigrant generation, as shown in Model 1 of Table A.10 of the appendix.

[28]The four identities were racial (Black), national (Somalia), religious (Muslim), and foreign heritage (immigrant). The higher ranking of racial identity by Somali Bantu is robust to controlling for age, sex, education, household income, employment status, and immigrant generation, as shown in Model 2 of Table A.10 of the appendix.

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obtain from our survey. The first looks at the make-up of the respondent's five closest friends. We find that Somali Bantu respondents are much less likely to report having at least one African American friend than are ethnic Somali respondents (10% vs. 43%, $\chi^2 = 67.03$, $p < 0.001$).[29] The second measure looks at where respondents live within the Columbus, Ohio area with respect to African Americans. Respondents reported their residential zip code, which we then linked to US census data to calculate the proportion of residents who are African American (see Figure A.6 of the appendix). We find that Somali Bantu live in areas of the city with much smaller African American populations than do ethnic Somali (15% vs. 39%, $t = 15.41$, $p < 0.001$).[30] The greater propensity for Somali Bantu to distance themselves both socially and physically from African Americans is consistent with our interpretation that their resistance to assimilation is driven by fear of being misidentified as African American.

Discussion

We have drawn from insights in the literature on immigrant assimilation and resistance to assimilation to develop an argument that explains variation in Black immigrant assimilation in the racialized American landscape. We advance theoretical expectations of immigrant assimilation by challenging the assumption of a homogenous Black immigrant experience, and thinking through factors of differentiation. In particular, we build on theoretical understandings of marginality, and resistance to assimilation, by proposing one mechanism to explain some of this variation: groups differ in their likelihood of being miscoded as members of certain groups in the host community; when their proximal hosts are themselves a marginalized community, this creates incentives for them to reify the ethnic boundary they believe protects them from discrimination.

We use a variety of empirical approaches and original data sources, and find that Black immigrants who are likely to be ascribed an African American identity based on their physical appearance invest more in distinct ethnocultural markers. These results corroborate the intuition that not all immigrants seek to assimilate, and that incentives to resist assimilation derive, at least in part, from the racialized social and economic hierarchy in the US. Immigrants from the same country of origin, but with differing risk of being categorized as African Americans, therefore respond differently to the prospect of assimilation into this marginalized community. As such, our study has identified one key condition under which resistance to assimilation is a preferred strategy for immigrants: when immigrants are at risk of being classified as members of a marginalized host community, they rationally resist assimilation.

The power of this design is that it allows us to isolate one immigrant characteristic – phenotypic overlap with a marginalized host population – while holding many others constant (Sen and Wasow, 2016). However, the gains in empirical leverage come at the expense of some generalizability. As a result, these findings raise a number of empirical

[29]This difference is robust to controlling for age, sex, education, income, employment, and immigrant generation, as shown in Model 1 of appendix Table A.11. Model 2 shows that the gap also holds when we consider the overall number of African American friends.
[30]This gap is robust to controlling for age, sex, education, income, employment, and immigrant generation, and clustering standard errors by zipcode, as shown in Model 3 of appendix Table A.11.

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questions. First, among the Somali population we study, many of the markers of recent immigrant heritage – including clothing, names, and cultural practices – are associated with the Islamic faith. A large body of research demonstrates that visible symbols of Islam are associated with perceptions of being foreign-born and racialization beyond the Black-white dichotomy (e.g., Selod and Embrick, 2013; Garner and Selod, 2014; Husain, 2019; D'Urso, 2021). Given that signals of being Muslim introduce an additional category of discrimination, their employment for the aim of reducing race-based discrimination may depend on the relative severity or con-textual relevance of stereotypes based on race and religion. In future research, assessing the activation of these two dimensions of discrimination will be important, as will a comparison of the assimilation strategies of Muslim and non-Muslim Black immigrants. Second, our study setting is a large urban center with sizable populations of both African immigrants and African Americans. In contexts with fewer African immigrants, in which the broader host community has less exposure to Black immigrants, signals of foreign heritage may be less effective at countering race-based discrimination. In contrast, in localities with very few African Americans – such as Lewiston, Maine, which has a proportionally large Somali population (Besteman, 2016) – both the risks and consequences of being mistaken for African Americans are likely to be lower, which could also reduce incentives to resist assimilation. While the present study cannot evaluate such claims, the theoretical argument herein generates expectations about the ways in which demographic contexts condition assimilation outcomes, which should be evaluated in future research.

Our research also calls for more studies of stereotype formation and content among the broader American public. A central driver of our argument is expectation by Black immigrants that they face less discrimination when perceived to be foreign than when perceived to be African American. While immigrants' belief in what Greer (2013) calls an "elevated minority status" is well documented (e.g., Chako, 2003; Foner, 1998; Guenther, Pendaz and Makene, 2011; Imoagene, 2017; Mensah and Williams, 2015; Ogundipe, 2011; Portes, 2004; Rogers, 2006; Trietler, 2013), it is an open question as to whether such expectations are actually borne out (although, see Schachter, 2021, for a first cut at this question). Thus, future research should seek to identify whether white Americans systematically perceive Black immigrants and African Americans differently.

Finally, our findings raise new questions about how the changing racial landscape of the US will shape politics into the future. While race has always been a central feature of American political discourse, recent citizen mobilization has pushed discussions of racial inequality to the forefront. As immigration continues to diversify the population of Black Americans, it is important to understand whether and how race-based coalitions can address common aims of racial justice despite increased intra-racial diversity (Austin, 2019; Greer, 2013; Rogers, 2006; Smith, 2014). Our research suggests that, rather than shaping a sense of shared experience and solidarity, the realities of racial discrimination in the US – and some Black immigrants' ability to mitigate it through investments in ethnic distinctiveness – could actually form a barrier to race-based political coalitions that include Black immigrants. Our research also raises questions about the political trajectories of Black immigrants themselves. In particular, future research should address the degree to which the

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resistance to *cultural* assimilation documented in this paper has implications for the *political* integration of Black new Americans.

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Appendix to:

Why (some) immigrants resist assimilation: US racism and the African immigrant experience

Figure A.1:
Example of Stimuli

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Table A.1:

Lab-based measures of immigrant visibility by African region of origin.

	African immigrants (n = 27)		
	Horn (n = 8)	**Not Horn** (n = 19)	**Difference** ($\|H - NH\|$)
Correctly ID'ed as African immigrant (photo)	0.754	0.508	0.246
Correctly ID'ed as African immigrant (name)	0.790	0.801	0.012
Correctly ID'ed as African immigrant (video)	0.735	0.757	0.022

Table A.2:

Resistance to assimilation (No imputation)

	(1) Photo Correct ID	(2) Name Correct ID	(3) Video Correct ID
Horn of Africa Origins	0.261 (0.111)	−0.024 (0.130)	0.026 (0.088)
Muslim	−0.023 (0.111)	0.068 (0.131)	−0.022 (0.088)
First Generation Imm.	0.110 (0.089)	−0.004 (0.105)	0.037 (0.071)
Male	0.084 (0.090)	0.113 (0.106)	0.205 (0.071)
Constant	0.421 (0.068)	0.730 (0.080)	0.627 (0.054)
Observations	27	27	27

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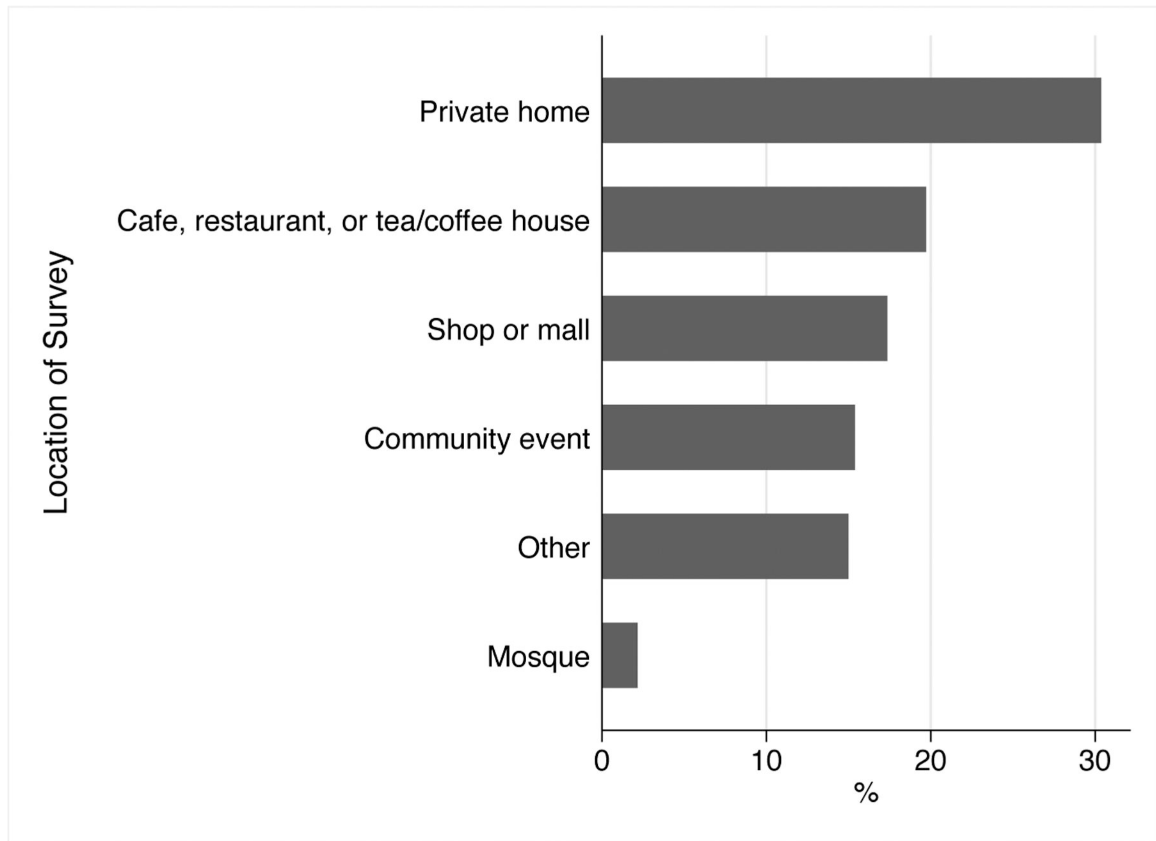

Figure A.2:
Location of Interview

Note: $n = 528$

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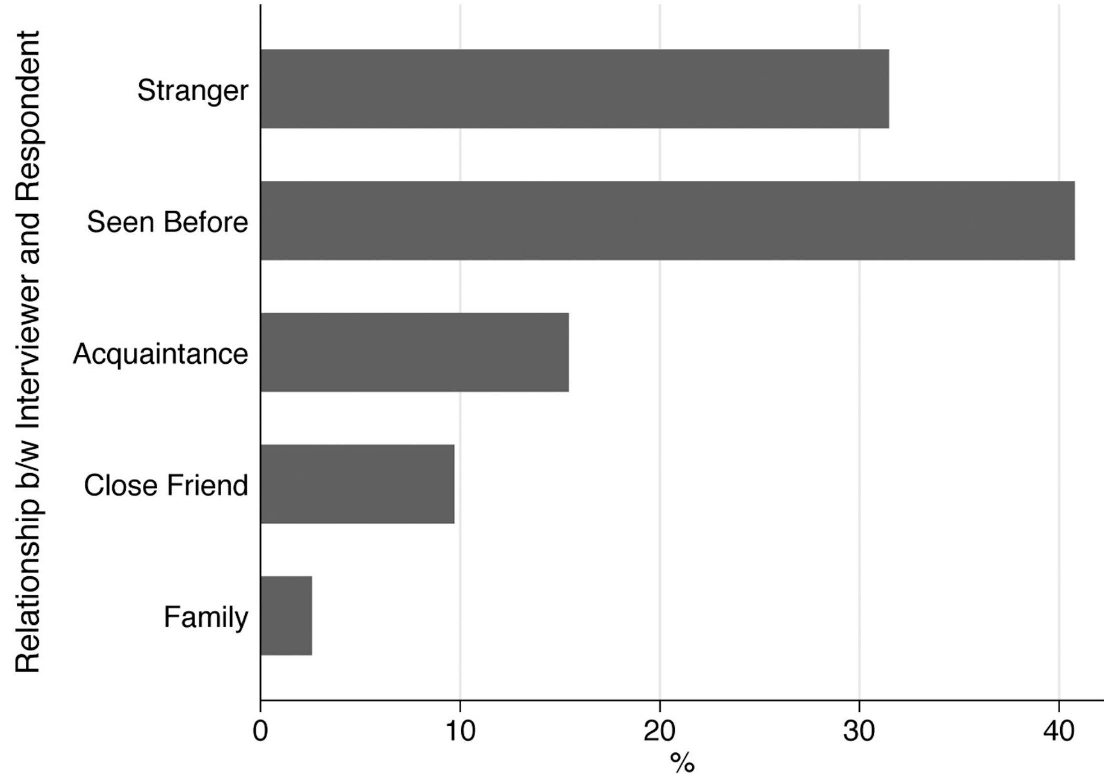

Figure A.3:
Interviewer-Respondent Relationship
Note: $n = 526$

Table A.3:

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
Bantu	0.437	0.496	0.000	1.000	520
Female	0.329	0.470	0.000	1.000	520
Age	38.642	11.902	19.000	72.000	514
Number of Children	3.120	3.095	0.000	10.000	516
Muslim	0.994	0.076	0.000	1.000	519
Employed	0.606	0.489	0.000	1.000	518
Education Completed					
Primary Education	0.708	0.455	0.000	1.000	514
Secondary Education	0.599	0.491	0.000	1.000	514
Household Income					
Less than 20,000	0.233	0.423	0.000	1.000	485
20,000–39,999	0.588	0.493	0.000	1.000	485
More than 40,000	0.179	0.384	0.000	1.000	485

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
Immigrant Generation					
First Generation	0.862	0.346	0.000	1.000	520
1.5 Generation	0.081	0.273	0.000	1.000	520
Second Generation	0.058	0.233	0.000	1.000	520
Born in the US	0.046	0.210	0.000	1.000	520
Age at Arrival in the US	25.749	11.248	2.000	59.000	486
Years in US	13.689	5.598	1.000	70.000	492

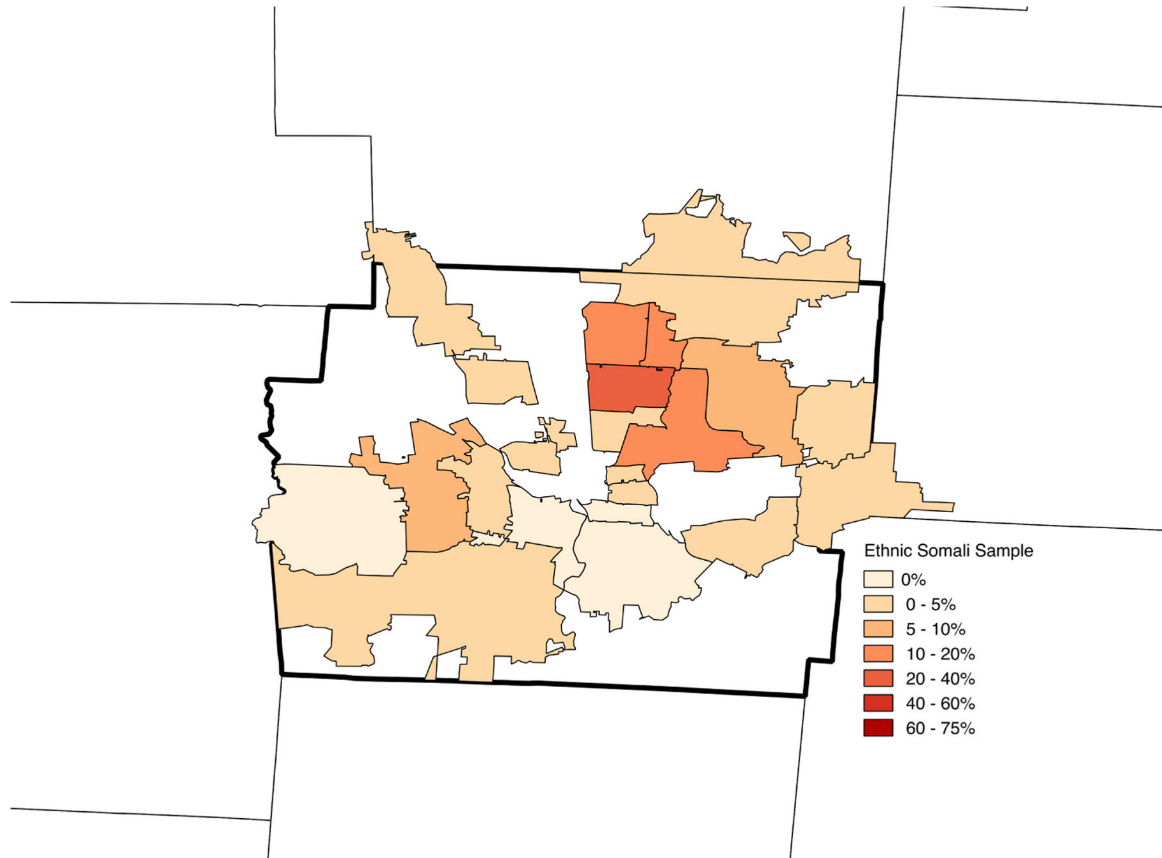

Figure A.4:
Zipcodes of Ethnic Somali respondents
Note: $n = 291$

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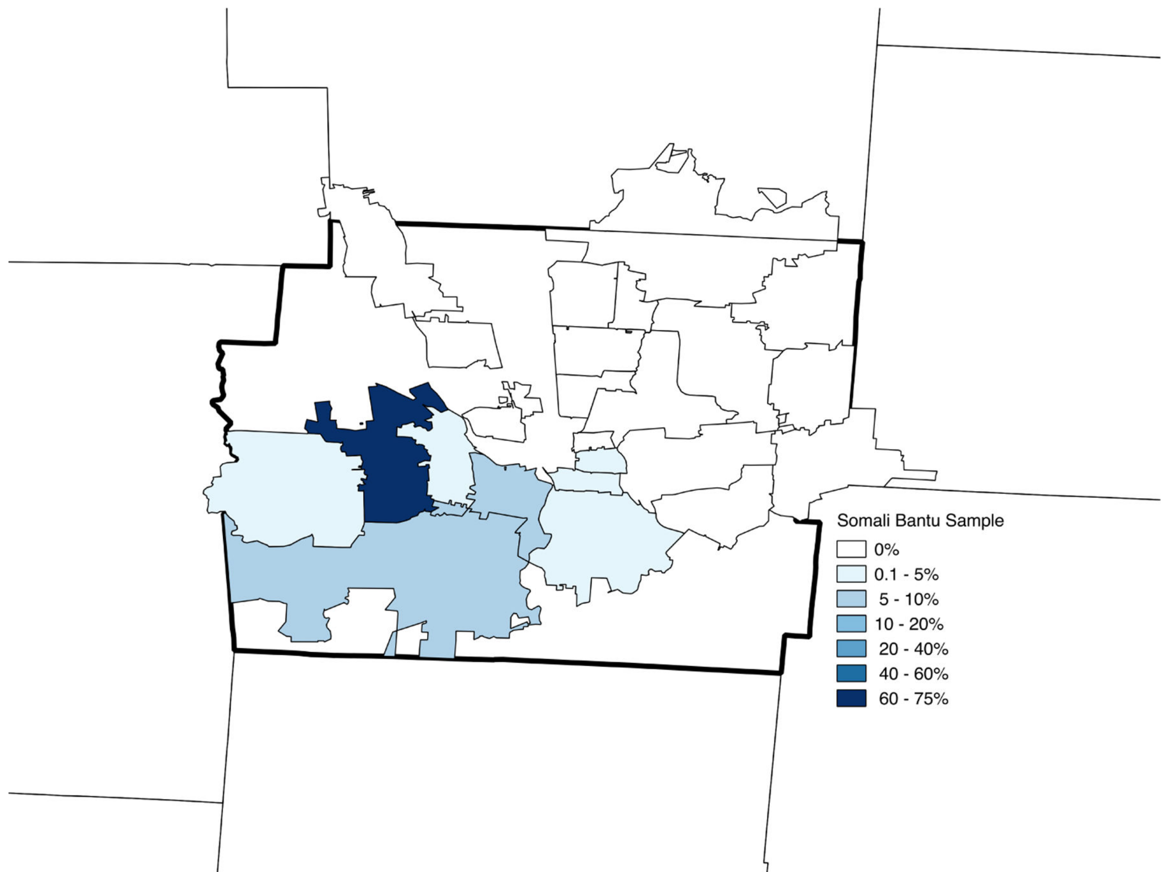

Figure A.5:
Zipcodes of Somali Bantu respondents
Note: $n = 242$

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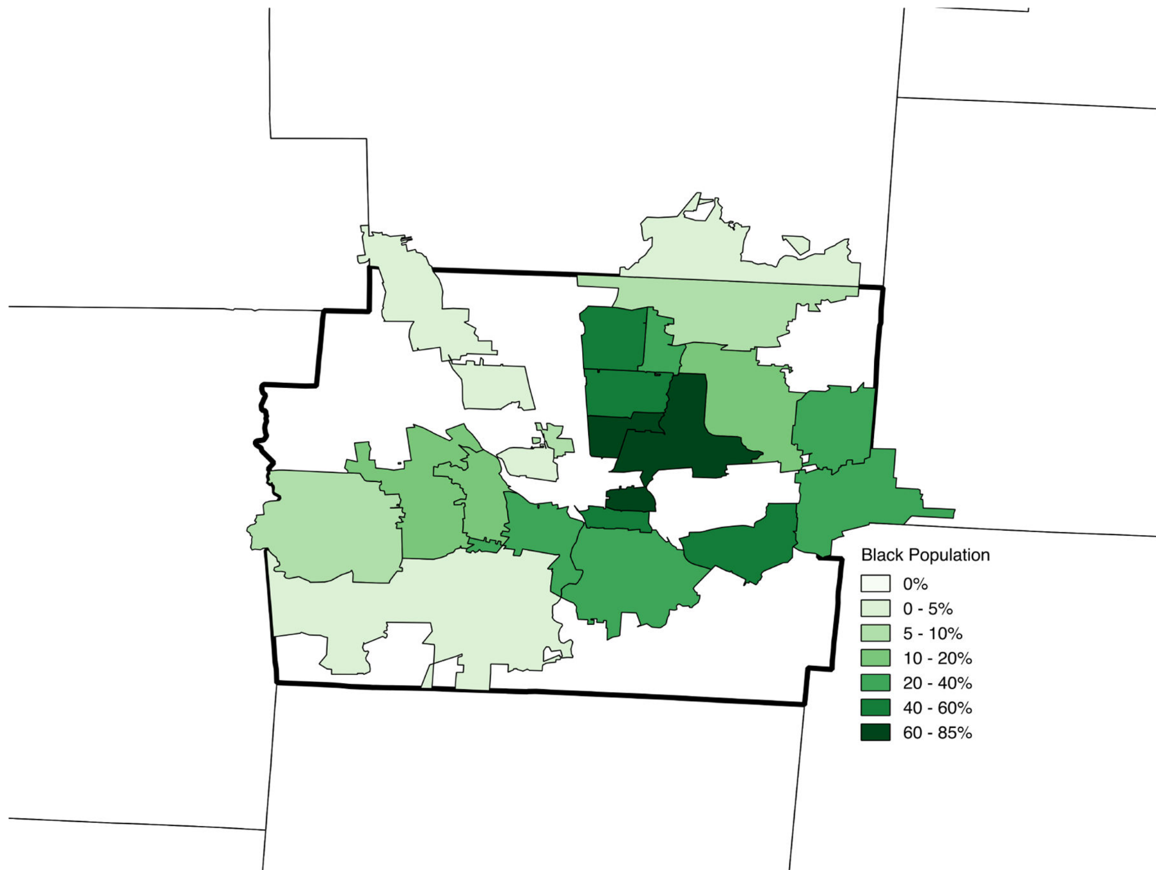

Figure A.6:
Black Population in Zipcodes Represented among Respondents
Source: 2010 US Census

Table A.4:

Summary statistics for resistance to assimilation

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
Endogamy					
Coethnic Spouse	0.927	0.261	0.000	1.000	396
Import of Coethnic Spouse for Child	2.335	0.753	1.000	3.000	501
Prefer Ethnic Name for Child	0.734	0.442	0.000	1.000	511
Index					
Resistance to Cultural Assimilation	−0.052	0.787	−2.606	0.742	515

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Table A.5:

Resistance to assimilation (PAP controls)

	(1) Coethnic Spouse	(2) Child Coethnic Spouse	(3) Child Ethnic Name	(4) Resist Assim. Index
Bantu	0.008 (0.083)	0.477 (0.133)	0.325 (0.082)	0.565 (0.131)
Female	−0.092 (0.040)	−0.038 (0.083)	−0.030 (0.049)	−0.120 (0.086)
Age	0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.004)	0.004 (0.002)	0.004 (0.003)
Second Generation	−0.057 (0.093)	0.004 (0.122)	−0.018 (0.071)	−0.015 (0.133)
Education	0.010 (0.020)	−0.061 (0.040)	0.030 (0.026)	0.015 (0.042)
Household Income	0.003 (0.008)	0.061 (0.022)	0.030 (0.013)	0.070 (0.023)
Employed	0.005 (0.033)	−0.136 (0.073)	−0.097 (0.043)	−0.203 (0.073)
Fluent in English	−0.050 (0.033)	−0.101 (0.095)	−0.144 (0.059)	−0.261 (0.091)
No. of Coethnic Close Friends (of 5)	0.018 (0.021)	0.083 (0.032)	0.019 (0.019)	0.088 (0.033)
Democrat	0.067 (0.033)	0.101 (0.066)	0.094 (0.039)	0.203 (0.070)
Constant	0.844 (0.105)	1.795 (0.233)	0.331 (0.138)	−0.827 (0.227)
R^2	0.08	0.31	0.20	0.32
Observations	352	440	449	451

Table A.6:

Resistance to assimilation (No imputation)

	(1) Coethnic Spouse	(2) Child Coethnic Spouse	(3) Child Ethnic Name	(4) Resist Assim.
Bantu	0.043 (0.033)	0.832 (0.094)	0.350 (0.052)	0.845 (0.092)
Female	−0.100 (0.039)	0.046 (0.081)	−0.019 (0.049)	−0.065 (0.087)
Age	0.001 (0.002)	0.004 (0.003)	0.007 (0.002)	0.011 (0.004)
Employed	0.032 (0.034)	−0.114 (0.072)	−0.077 (0.044)	−0.143 (0.074)
Household Income	−0.002 (0.009)	0.048 (0.020)	0.026 (0.012)	0.056 (0.021)
Primary Education	0.023 (0.028)	−0.028 (0.093)	0.045 (0.051)	0.080 (0.084)
Second Generation	−0.075 (0.082)	−0.069 (0.113)	−0.008 (0.070)	−0.040 (0.127)

	(1) Coethnic Spouse	(2) Child Coethnic Spouse	(3) Child Ethnic Name	(4) Resist Assim.
Constant	0.857 (0.113)	1.713 (0.242)	0.239 (0.151)	−0.997 (0.254)
Observations	371	462	471	474

Table A.7:

Resistance to assimilation by time in the US

	Resist Assim. Index	Resist Assim. Index
Bantu	0.758 (0.084)	0.429 (0.210)
Second Generation	−0.200 (0.161)	
Bantu × Second Generation	0.375 (0.196)	
Years in US		−0.002 (0.007)
Bantu × Years in US		0.033 (0.015)
Female	−0.055 (0.076)	0.007 (0.080)
Age	0.010 (0.003)	0.010 (0.003)
Employed	−0.110 (0.068)	−0.122 (0.070)
Household Income	0.052 (0.020)	0.060 (0.020)
Primary Education	0.031 (0.078)	0.072 (0.079)
Constant	−0.901 (0.238)	−0.951 (0.237)
Observations	515	489

Table A.8:

Resistance to assimilation by time in the US (No imputation)

	(1) Resist Assim. Index	(2) Resist Assim. Index
Bantu	0.764 (0.094)	0.382 (0.278)
Second Generation	−0.227 (0.183)	
Bantu × Second Generation	0.426 (0.216)	
Years in US		−0.002 (0.009)
Bantu × Years in US		0.037 (0.021)
Female	−0.052 (0.086)	−0.002 (0.088)

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	(1) Resist Assim. Index	(2) Resist Assim. Index
Age	0.011 (0.004)	0.010 (0.004)
Employed	−0.135 (0.074)	−0.128 (0.075)
Household Income	0.058 (0.021)	0.067 (0.021)
Primary Education	0.022 (0.084)	0.068 (0.087)
Constant	−0.930 (0.256)	−0.975 (0.253)
Observations	474	456

Table A.9:

Resistance to assimilation by houshold income and time in the US

	Resist Assim. Index	Resist Assim. Index
Bantu	0.933 (0.099)	0.490 (0.333)
Lower Income	0.180 (0.139)	0.270 (0.254)
Bantu × Lower Income	−0.729 (0.146)	−0.562 (0.507)
Second Generation	−0.162 (0.189)	
Bantu × Second Generation	0.378 (0.223)	
Second Genderation × Lower Income	−0.109 (0.526)	
Bantu × Second Generation × Lower Income	−0.291 (0.580)	
Years in US		−0.003 (0.010)
Bantu × Years in US		0.040 (0.024)
Lower Income × Years in US		−0.002 (0.013)
Lower Income × Years in US Somali Bantu × Lower Income × Years in US		−0.015 (0.037)
Somali Bantu × Lower Income × Years in US		
Female	−0.029 (0.082)	−0.001 (0.085)
Age	0.011 (0.004)	0.011 (0.003)
Employed	−0.250 (0.083)	−0.223 (0.086)
Household Income	0.048 (0.027)	0.063 (0.026)
Primary Education	−0.046 (0.076)	−0.005 (0.078)
Constant	−0.827 (0.265)	−0.885 (0.267)
Observations	484	465

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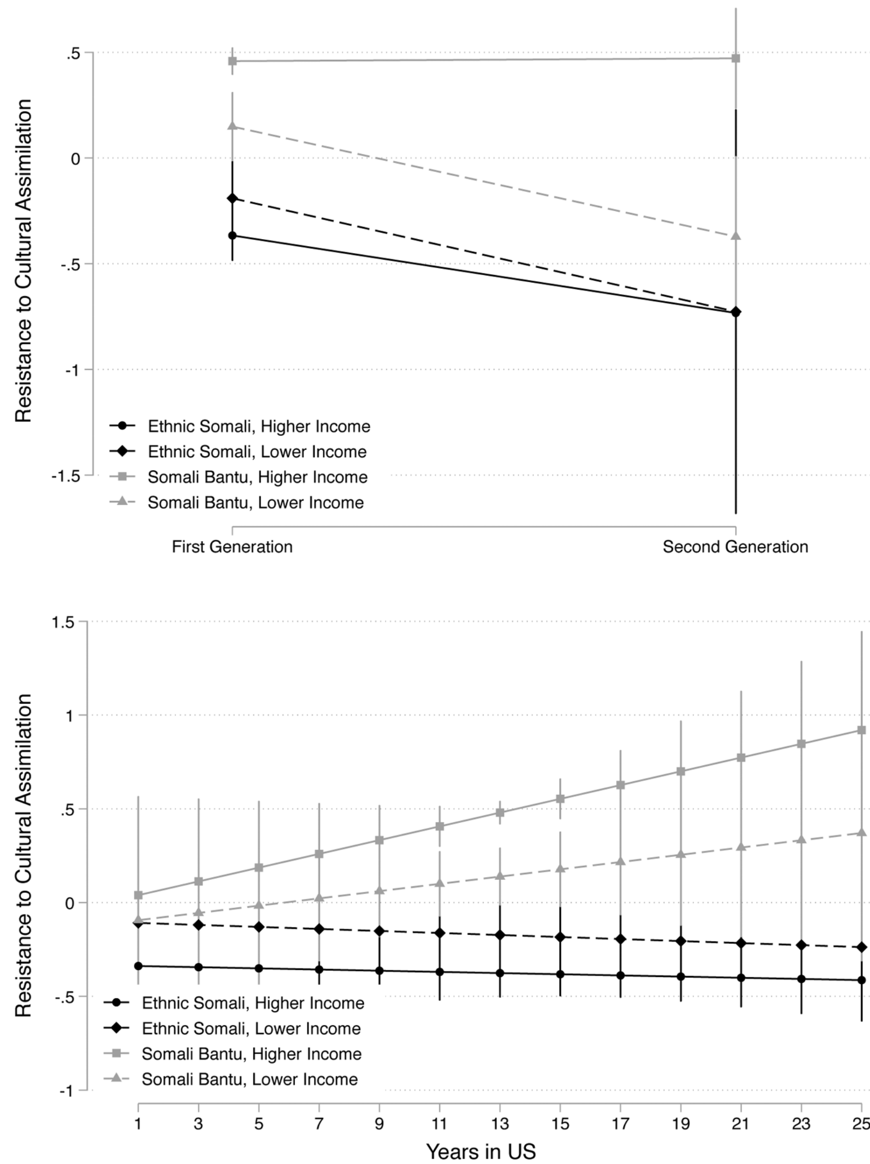

Figure A.7:

Degree of resistance to cultural assimilation over time in the US by socioeconomic status and ethnic group.

Table A.10:

Perceived severity of racial discrimination by ethnic group

	(1)	(2)
	Black More Ethnic	**Rank of Race**
Bantu	0.432 (0.060)	0.269 (0.129)
Female	0.072 (0.045)	0.043 (0.103)

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	(1) Black More Ethnic	(2) Rank of Race
Age	−0.009 (0.002)	−0.015 (0.005)
Employed	−0.168 (0.042)	−0.290 (0.093)
Household Income	0.012 (0.014)	−0.026 (0.026)
Primary Education	−0.122 (0.073)	−0.335 (0.147)
Second Generation	−0.076 (0.070)	0.170 (0.145)
Constant	0.685 (0.163)	2.867 (0.325)
Observations	475	501

Table A.11:

Distancing from African Americans by ethnic group

	(1) Any Black Friend	(2) No. of Black Friends	(3) Percent Black Zipcode
Bantu	−0.289 (0.047)	−0.287 (0.095)	−24.927 (7.265)
Female	−0.037 (0.046)	−0.075 (0.076)	1.479 (2.026)
Age	0.002 (0.002)	0.003 (0.004)	−0.066 (0.110)
Employed	0.032 (0.045)	−0.020 (0.077)	1.525 (1.911)
Household Income	0.025 (0.014)	0.038 (0.022)	−1.538 (0.769)
Primary Education	0.051 (0.050)	0.091 (0.093)	−0.581 (2.033)
Second Generation	0.116 (0.068)	0.317 (0.139)	−0.872 (2.222)
Constant	0.178 (0.147)	0.207 (0.240)	46.608 (10.270)
Observations	499	499	502

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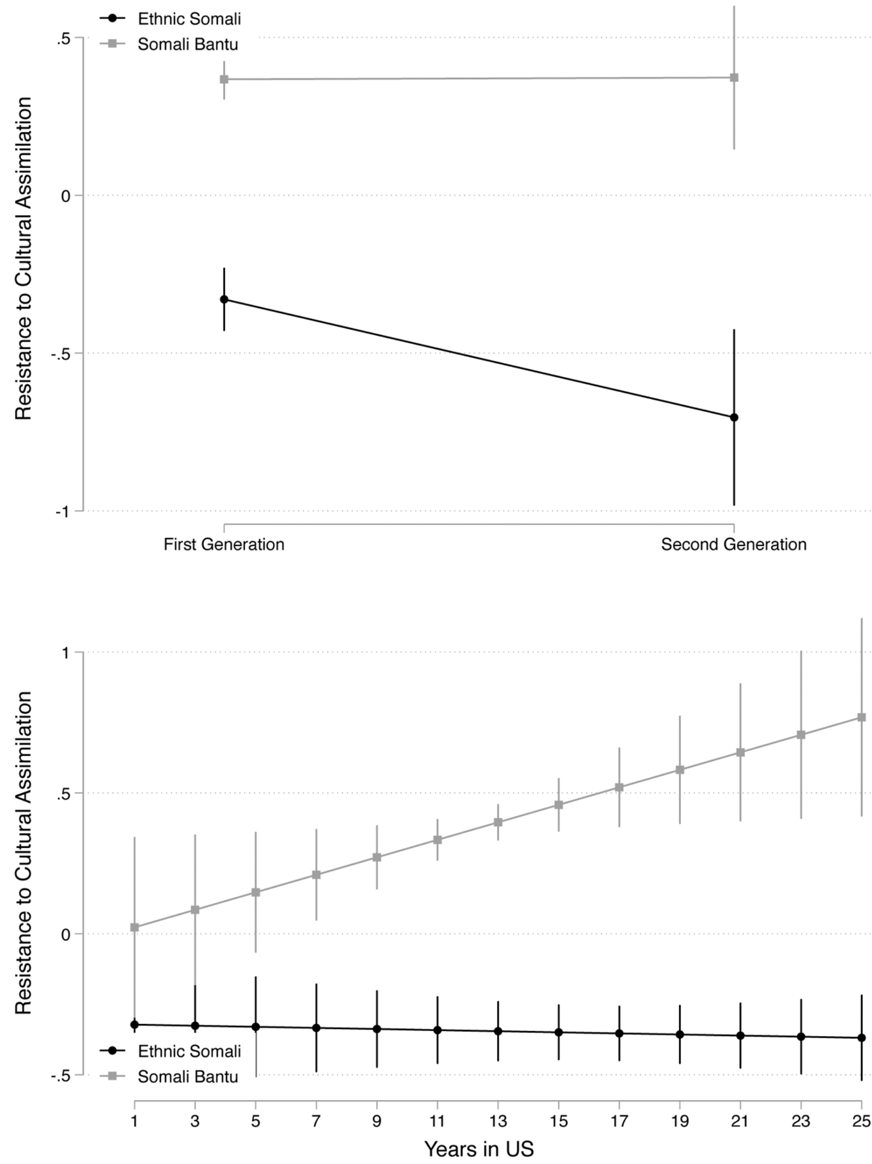

Figure 1:
Degree of resistance to cultural assimilation over time in the US by ethnic group.

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Table 1:

Resistance to assimilation

	(1) Coethnic Spouse	(2) Child Coethnic Spouse	(3) Child Ethnic Name	(4) Resist Assim. Index
Bantu	0.093 (0.038)	0.702 (0.089)	0.378 (0.049)	0.833 (0.081)
Female	−0.048 (0.037)	−0.040 (0.075)	−0.018 (0.045)	−0.066 (0.077)
Age	0.002 (0.002)	0.003 (0.003)	0.007 (0.002)	0.011 (0.003)
Employed	0.025 (0.031)	−0.066 (0.069)	−0.077 (0.041)	−0.118 (0.068)
Household Income	0.004 (0.009)	0.030 (0.020)	0.026 (0.012)	0.049 (0.020)
Primary Education	0.036 (0.033)	−0.059 (0.093)	0.063 (0.051)	0.085 (0.079)
Second Generation	−0.046 (0.076)	−0.032 (0.109)	−0.038 (0.066)	−0.052 (0.118)
Constant	0.771 (0.127)	1.880 (0.240)	0.213 (0.146)	−0.963 (0.236)
Observations	396	501	511	515