

Structural Racism & Rigorous Models of Social Inequity: **Novel Approaches to Survey Data**

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Longitudinal social surveys are well-suited for interrogating the mechanisms underlying production of racialized health inequities drawing on the life course perspective

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent & Adult Health (Add Health)
- Fragile Families & Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS)
- National Longitudinal Study of Youth (NLSY79, NLSY97)
- Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID)
- Midlife in the United States (MIDUS)
- Health and Retirement Study (HRS)
- National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project (NSHAP)



- ✓ Health & aging as a life-long processes
- ✓ Timing & duration of exposures
- ✓ Past shapes future
- ✓ Linked lives

Still, limitations & challenges

- *Race* (typically) operationalized as a *static individual-level trait*, rather than understood as a proxy for *complex, dynamic, relational processes*
- Can promote methodological individualism, emphasizing *studying people* living & dealing with racist systems, rather than centering the *racist systems* generating & maintaining inequities
- Conventional regression estimators dominate, but can be misaligned with *relational theories* of race & racism

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Moving beyond race as a static individual-level variable

The Superior Race

(An Essay)

By W. E. Burghardt Du Bois

(Author of "The Suppression of the Slave Trade," "The Souls of Black Folk," "The Negro," "Darkwater," Etc.)

I

WHEN the obsession of his race consciousness leaves him, my white friend is quite companionable; otherwise he is impossible. He has a way of putting an excessive amount of pity in his look and of stating as a general and incontrovertible fact that it is "horrible" to be an Exception. By this he means me. He is more than certain that I prove the rule. He is not a bright person, but of that famous average, standardized and astonished at anything that even seems original. His thesis is simple: The world is composed of Race superimposed on Race; classes superimposed on classes; beneath the whole thing is "Our Family" in capitals, and under that is God. God seems to be a cousin, or at least a blood relative of the Van Diemens.

"I recognize it quite easily and with full legal sanction: The Black man is a person who must ride the 'Jim Crow' in Georgia."

Some paths forward

- 1) Data that better capture the relational structural & institutional processes producing racialized health inequities
- 2) Methods that better align with our critical & dynamic theories of race, racism, & the life course

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- 2) **Methods** that better align with our **critical & dynamic theories of race, racism, & the life course**

Data

- Understanding individual-level measures as proxies for *complex systems of social relations*
 - Examples:
 - “Race” as a function of historical & contemporary processes of racialization & racism
 - “Socioeconomic status” as the product of exploitation, theft, & extraction
- Data linkages to *more directly capture* structural, sociopolitical, & institutional processes & exposures
 - Priorities:
 - Incentivizing (*funding, publishing*) policy, institutional, contextual data
 - Reducing administrative barriers to linking existing data sources

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One example:
Crimmigration, legal violence, & racialized health inequities



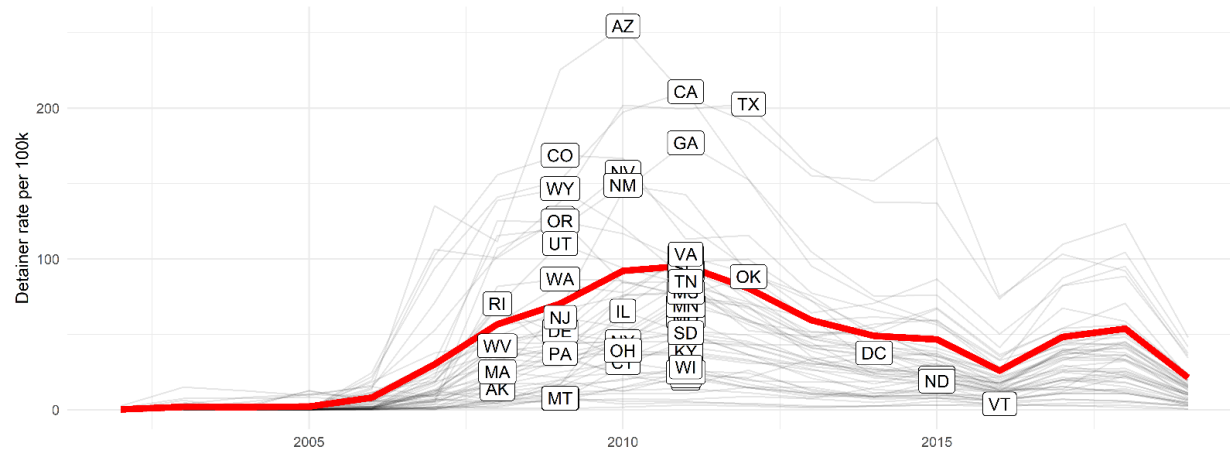
"SB1070 Immigration Reform March 16" by SEIU



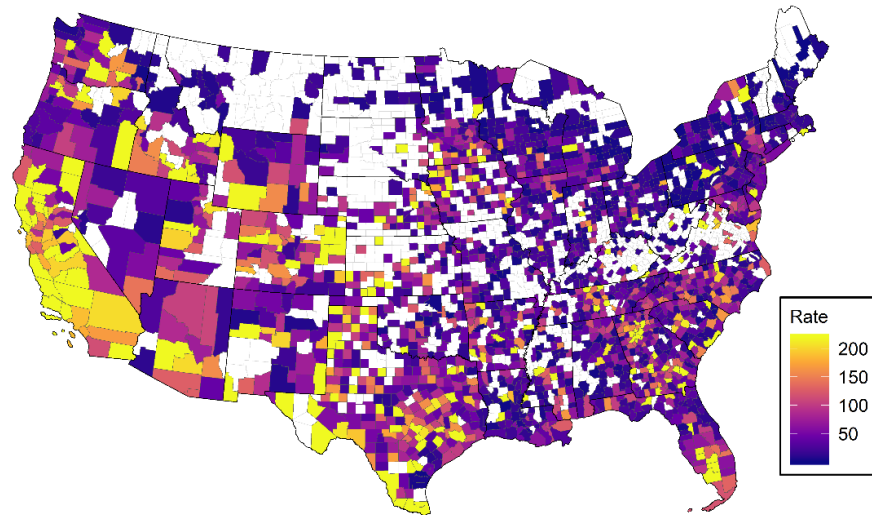
"Stop Juan Crown SB1070" by C. Sessums

Increases in county-level ICE detainer rates linked to increased health risks among foreign-born Latinx adults

ICE detainer rate per 100k by state, 2002-2019



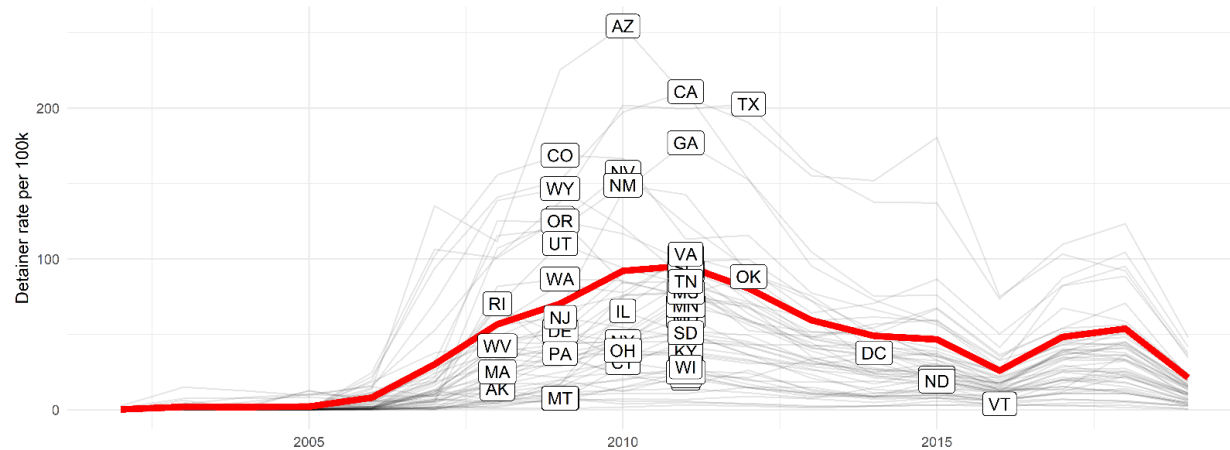
ICE detainer rate per 100k, 2011



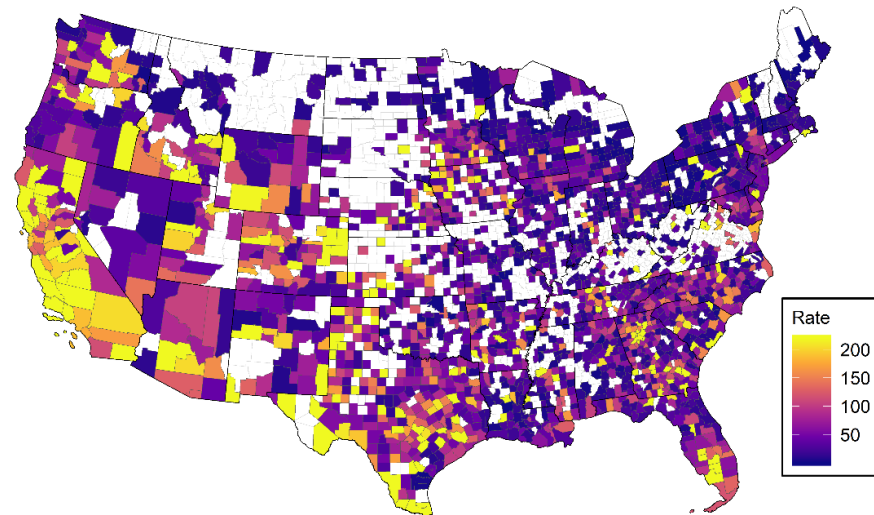
Source: Courtney Boen, Nick Graetz, Morgan Peele, Atheendar Venkataramani, and Robin Ortiz. “The Scars of Legal Violence: Immigration policy, surveillance, and enforcement and population health inequality.” Survey: HRS. Policy & enforcement data: TRAC (Syracuse); Reich (2017, 2019).

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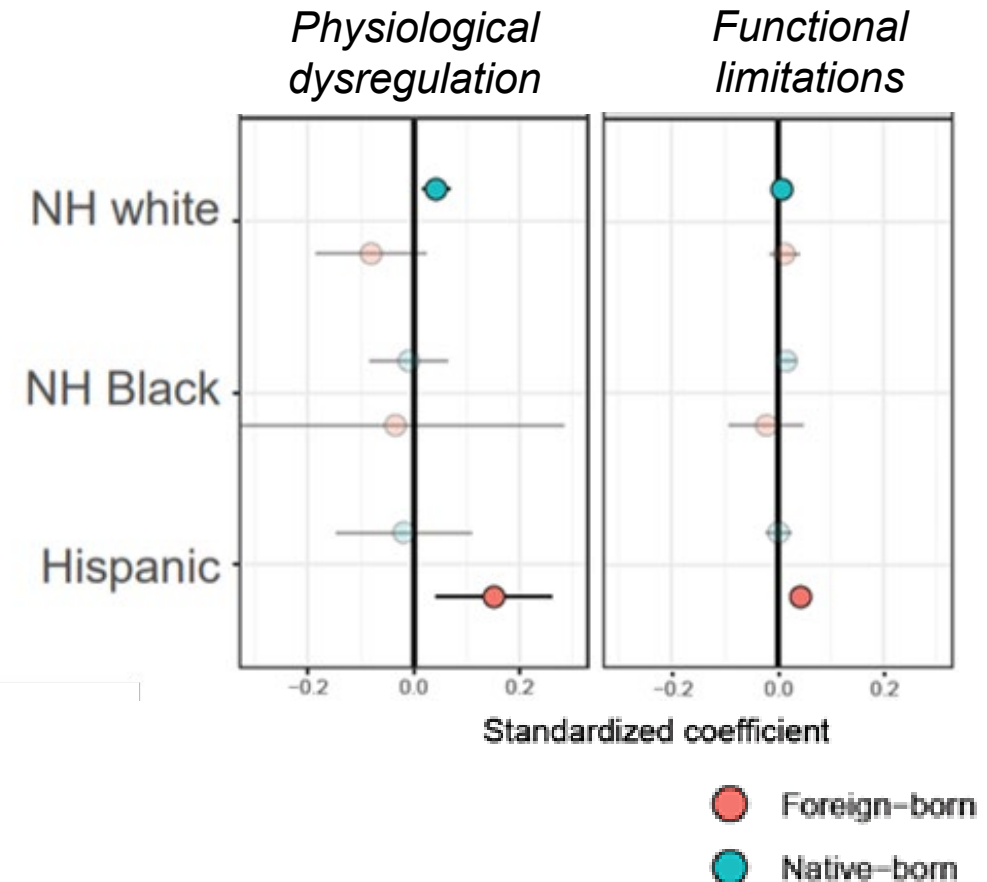
ICE detainer rate per 100k by state, 2002-2019



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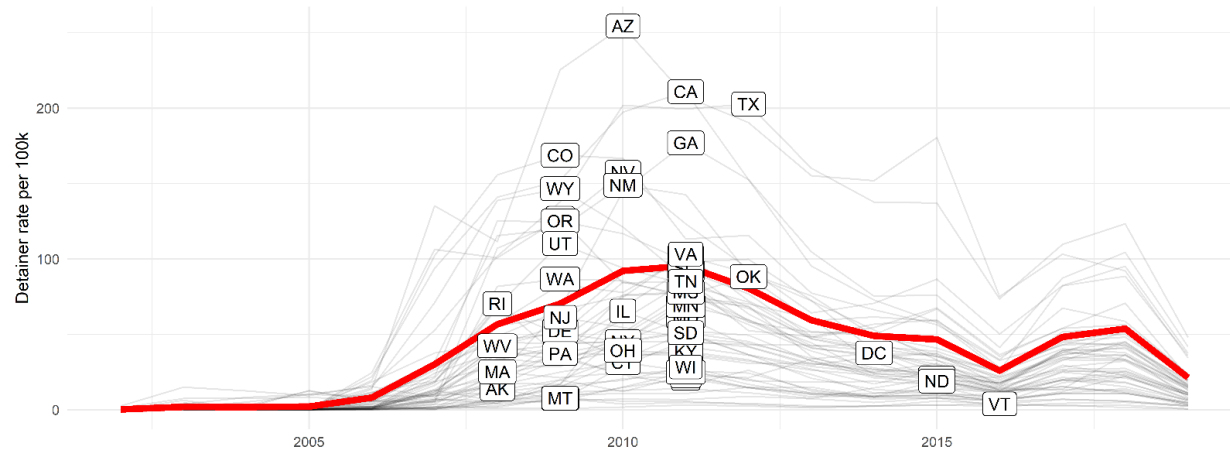
Results of interacted difference models with time, state-county, individual fixed effects: HRS



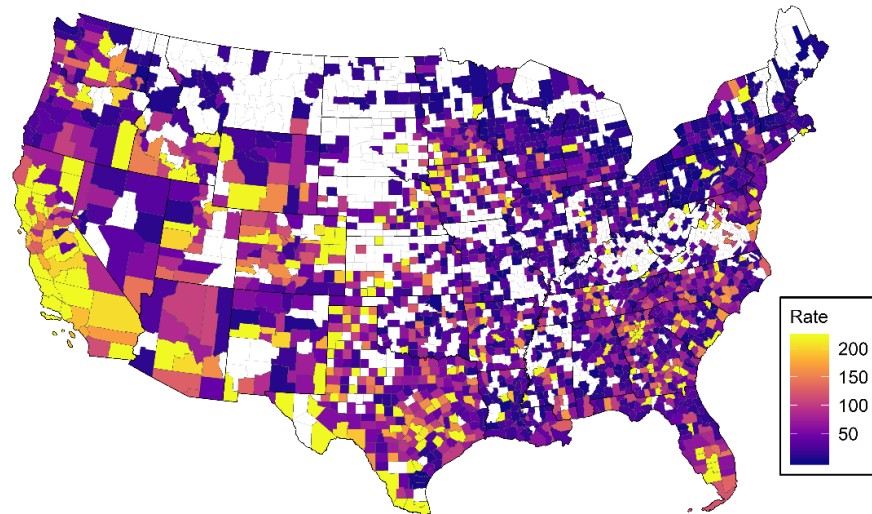
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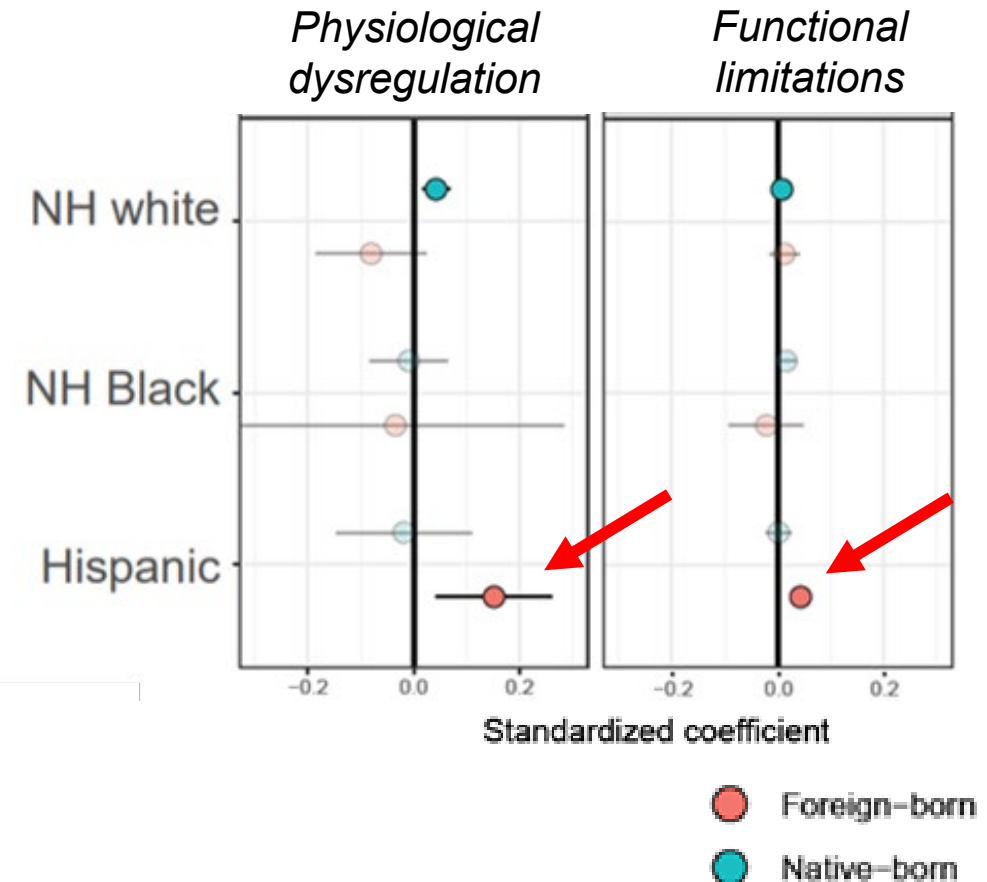
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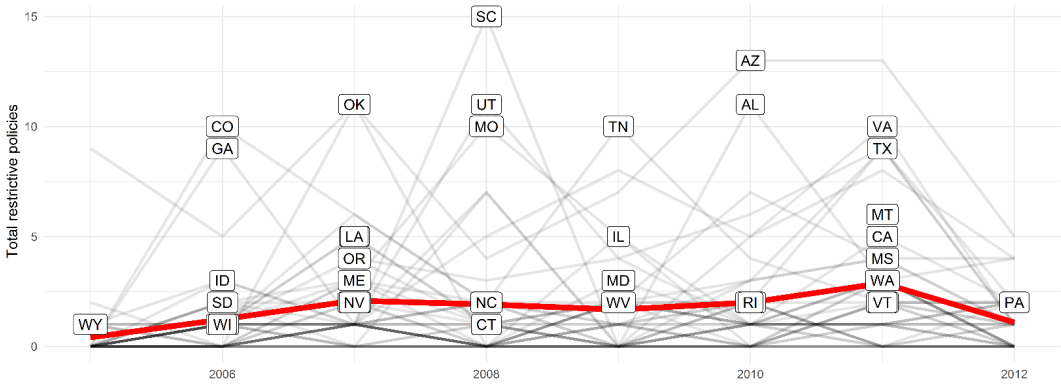
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Restrictive immigration policy contexts shape racialized legal status inequities in health care seeking: National Agricultural Workers Survey

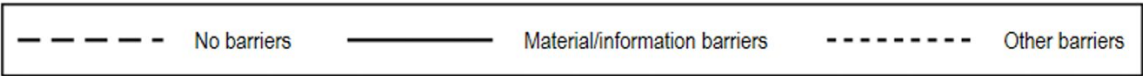
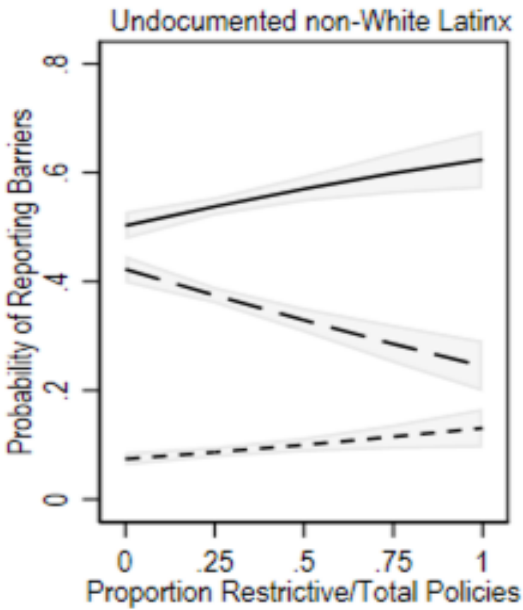
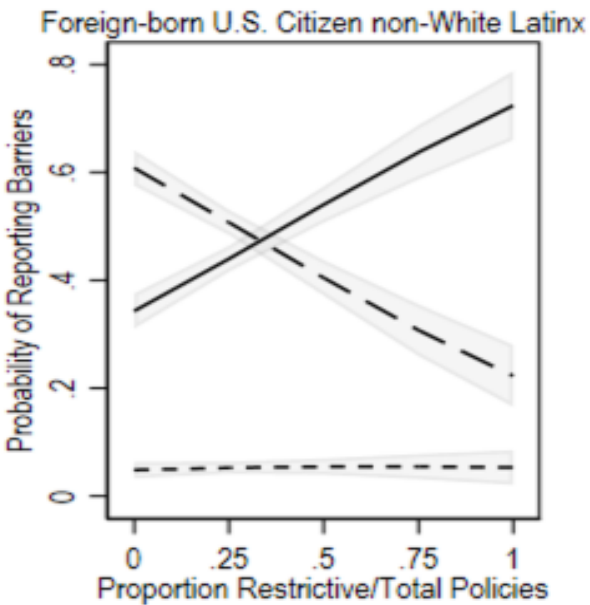
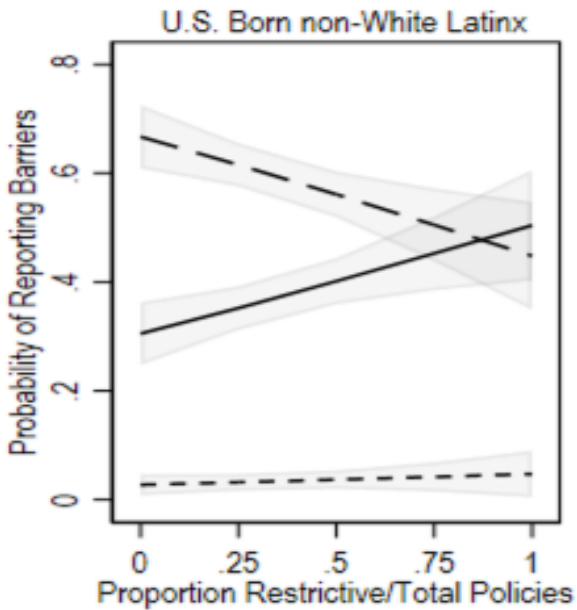
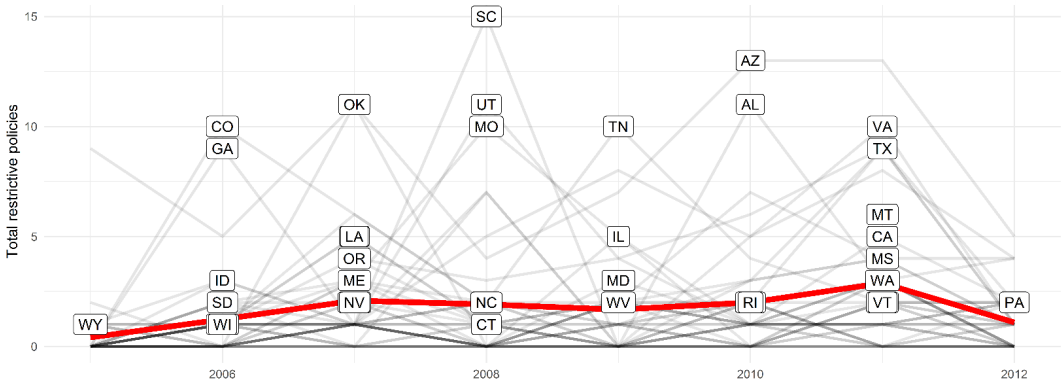
Total restrictive policies passed by US states, 2005-2012



Source: Rebecca Anna Schut & Courtney E. Boen “State Immigration Policy Contexts and Racialized Legal Status Disparities in Healthcare Utilization among U.S. Agricultural Workers”; survey: NAWS; policy data: Reich (2017, 2019)

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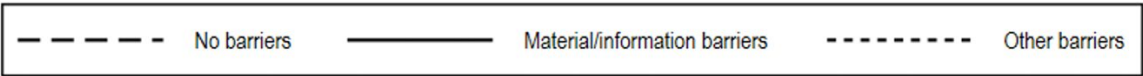
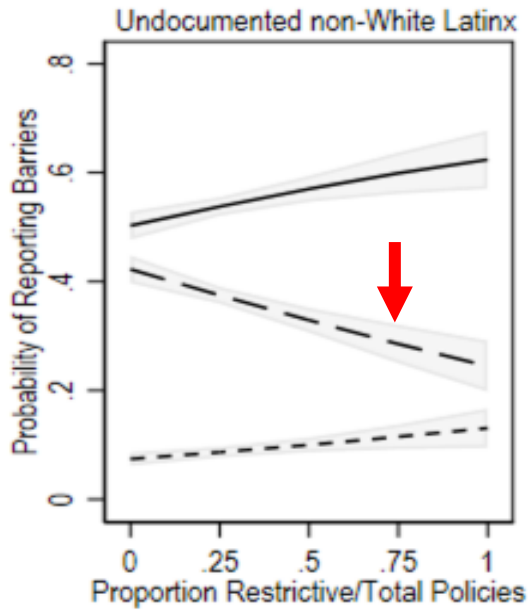
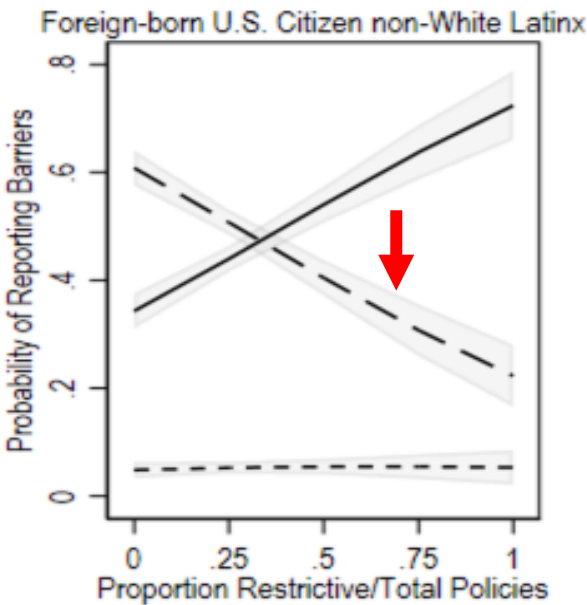
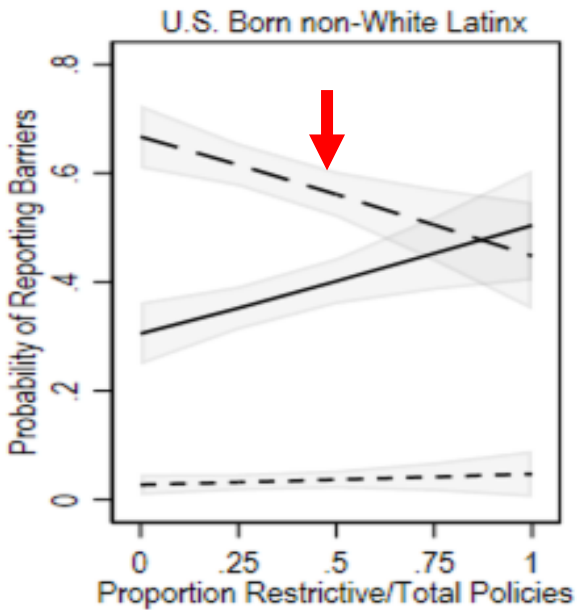
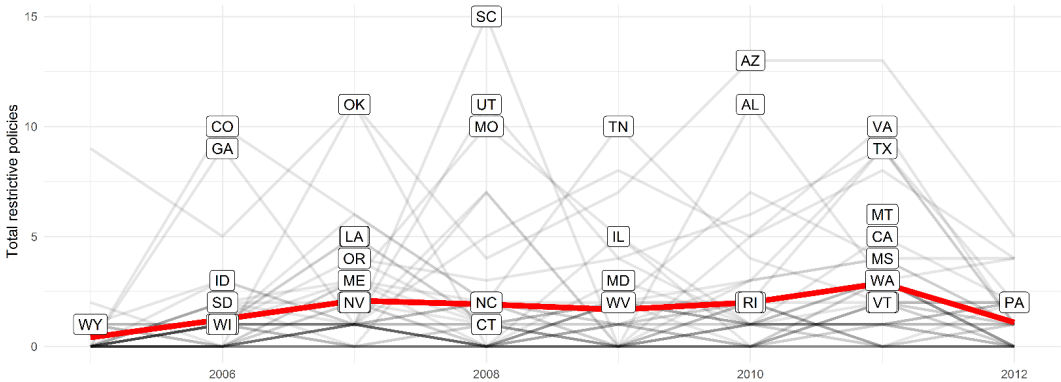
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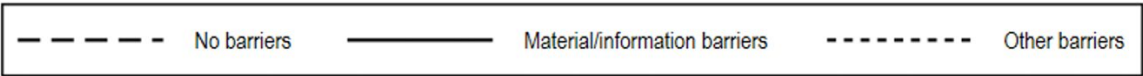
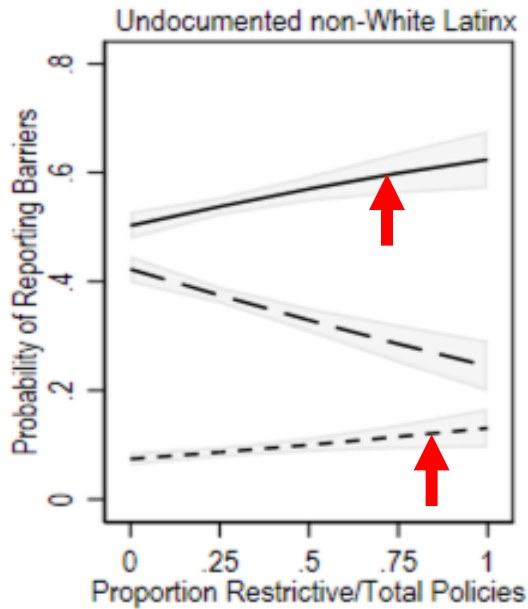
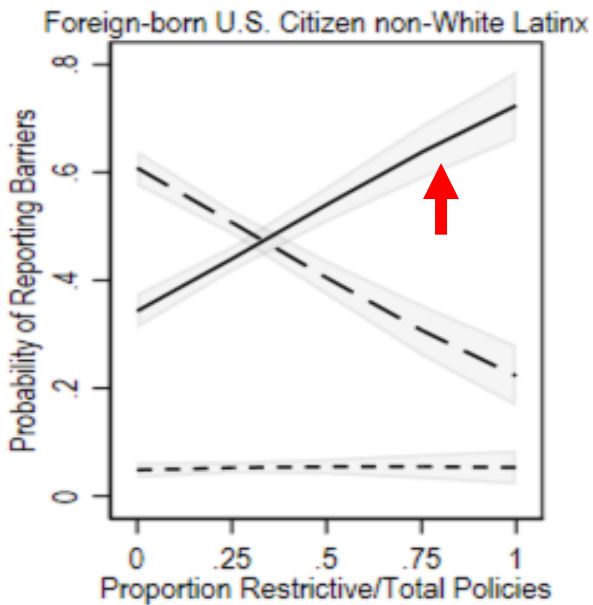
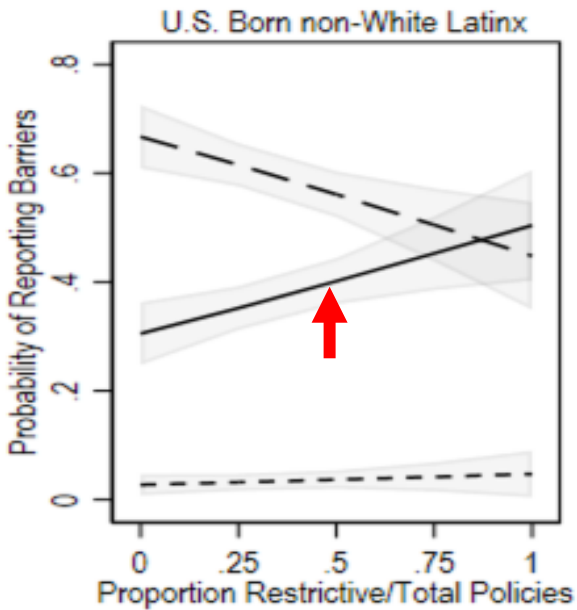
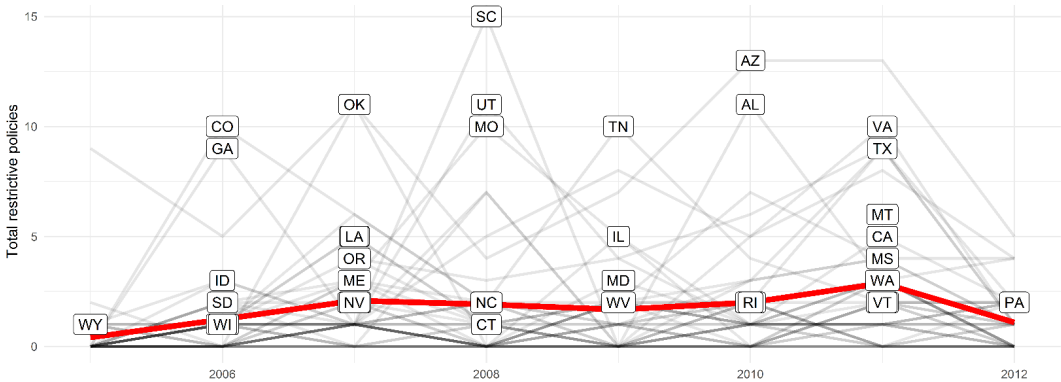
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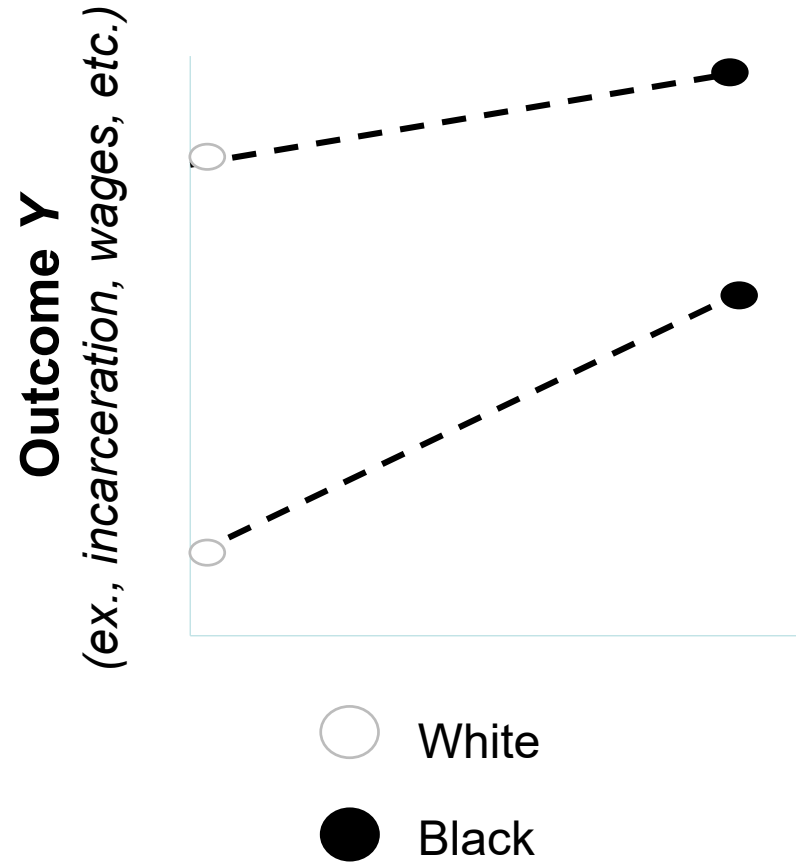
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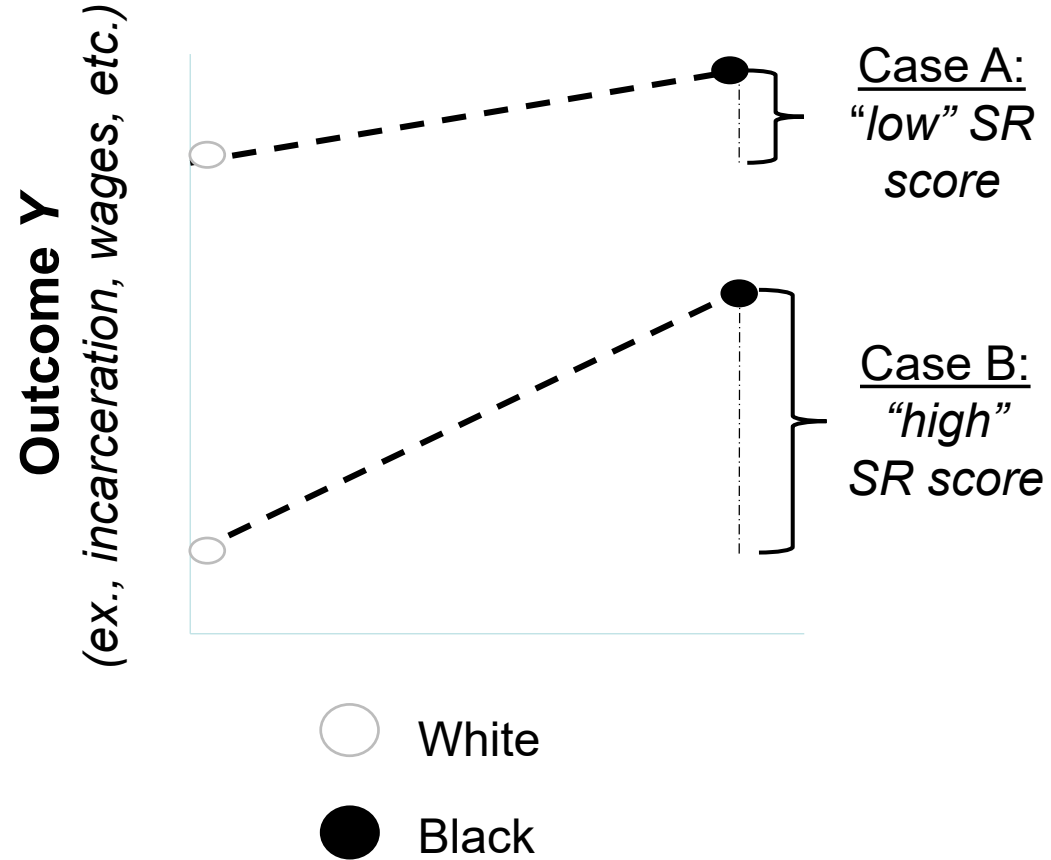


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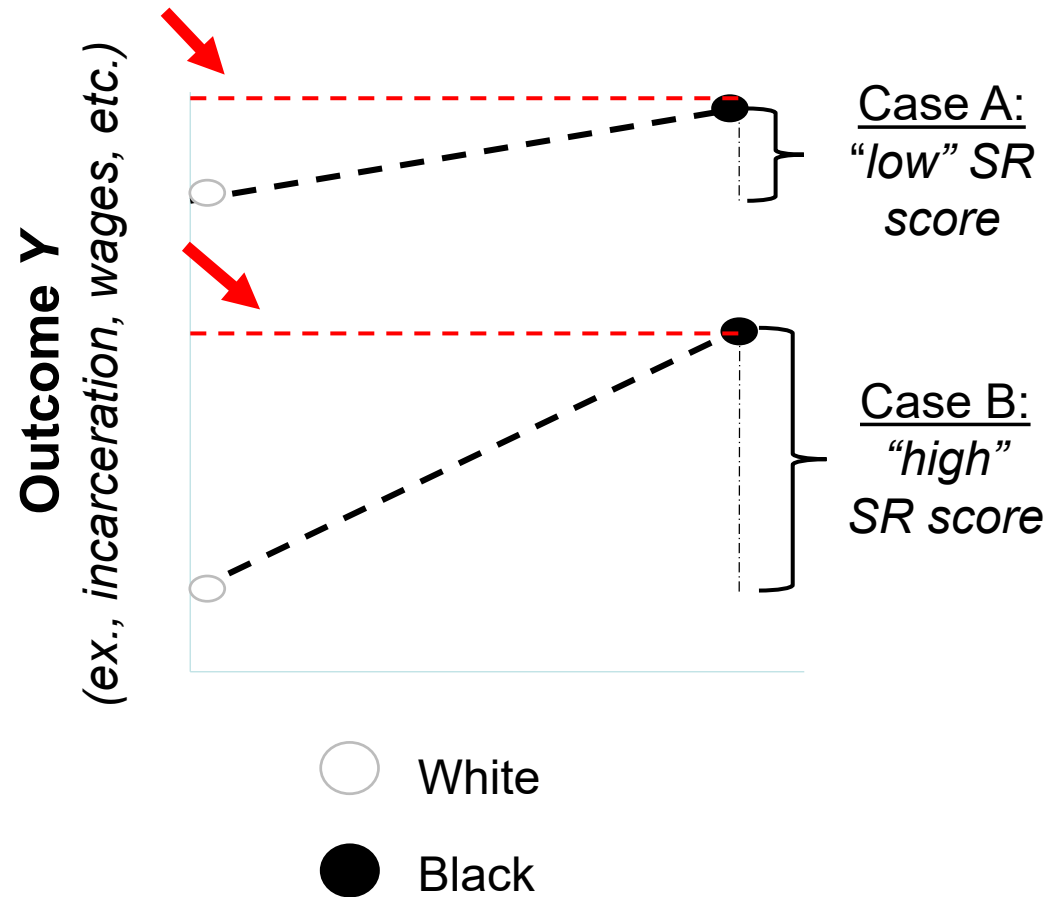
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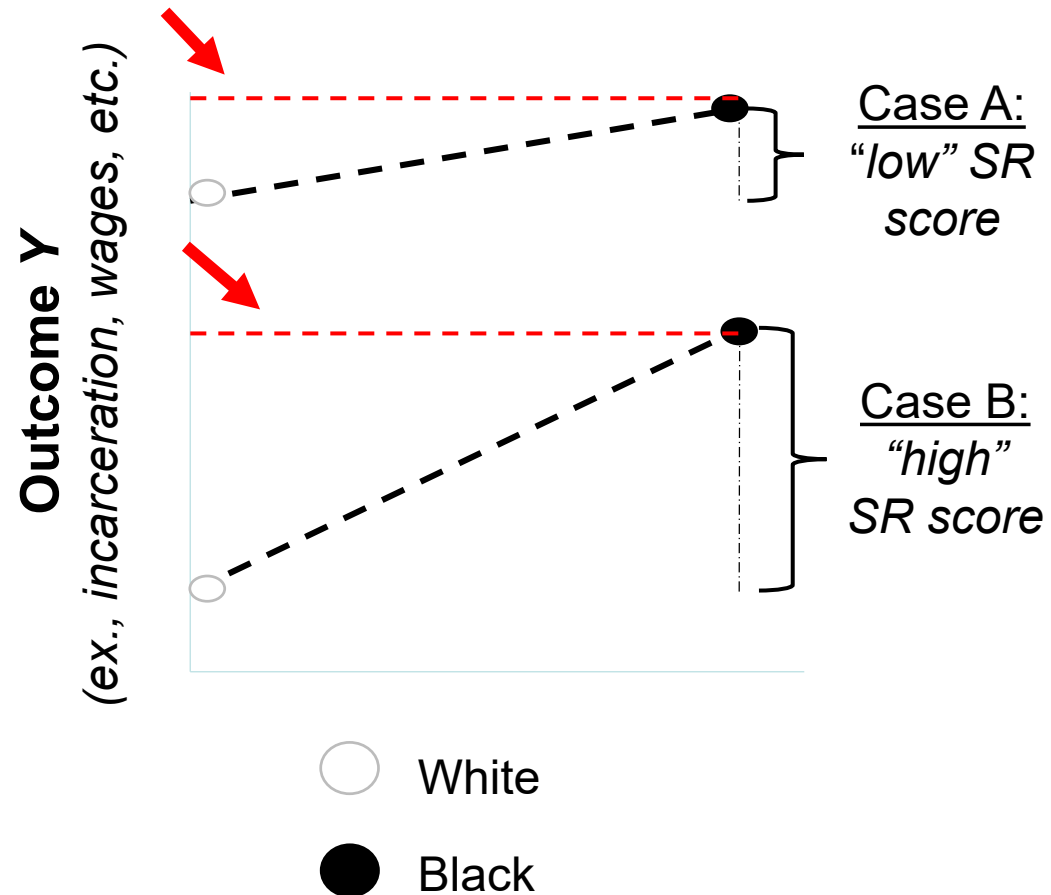


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Overall levels of exploitation, violence, exclusion, & social control (not just relative disparities) can be manifestations of structural racism that matter for social inequities

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Overall levels of exploitation, violence, exclusion, & social control (not just relative disparities) can be manifestations of structural racism that matter for social inequities

Some examples

A punitive, violent, & pervasive criminal legal system

- ex., work by Dorothy Roberts; Loïc Wacquant; Nicholas Eubank & Adriane Fresh

A privatized, commodified health care system

- ex., work by Jamila Michener; Johnathan Metzle; Berkeley Franz, Adrienne Milner & R. Khari Brown

A comparatively weak social welfare system with high poverty penalties

- ex., work by Cybelle Fox, Rachel Wetts & Robb Willer; David Brady

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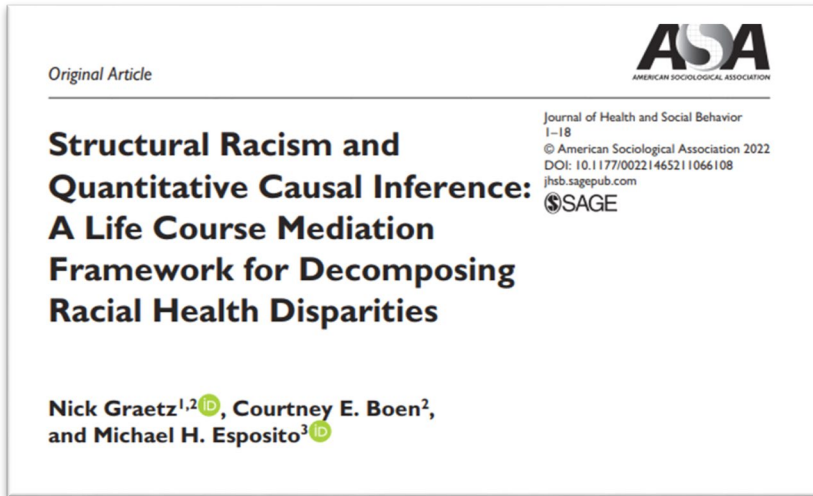
Better matching theory to methods

- Conventional regression dominates, as does focus on “causal effect” of “discrimination”
- But can we really separate “*non-race*” variables from “*race*” (which is a proxy for processes of racialization and structural & institutional racism)?
 - Example: is exposure to the criminal legal system a “non-race” variable? What about wealth? Or wages? Or stress?

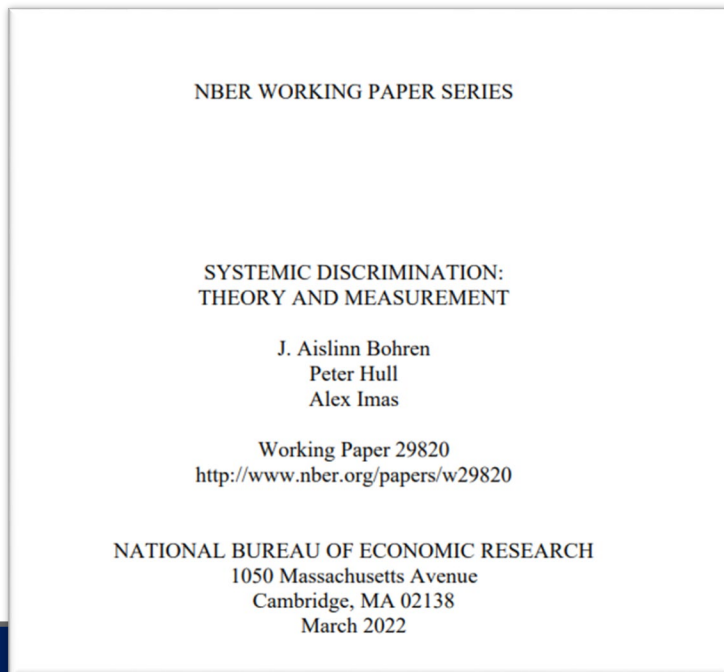
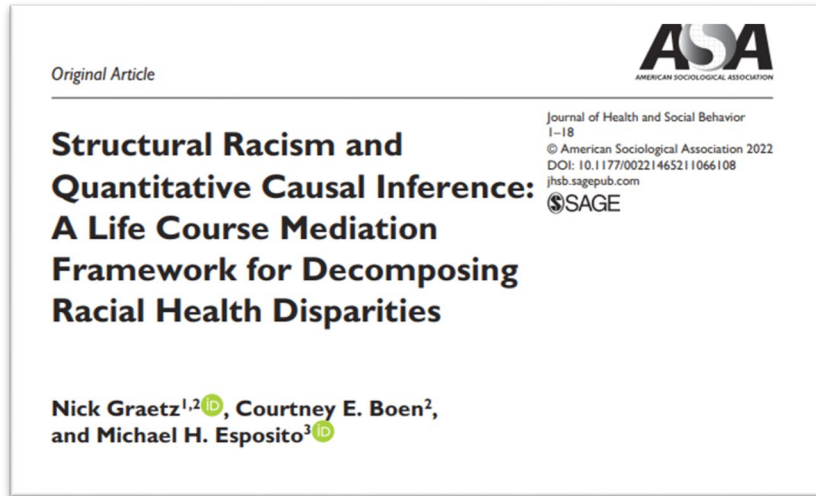
$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 race + \beta_2 X + \dots + \varepsilon$$

- When applied to longitudinal data, conventional regression assumes an absence of time-varying relationships among variables, which is inconsistent with theories of race, racism, and the life course

G-formula approach for effect decomposition



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Original Article



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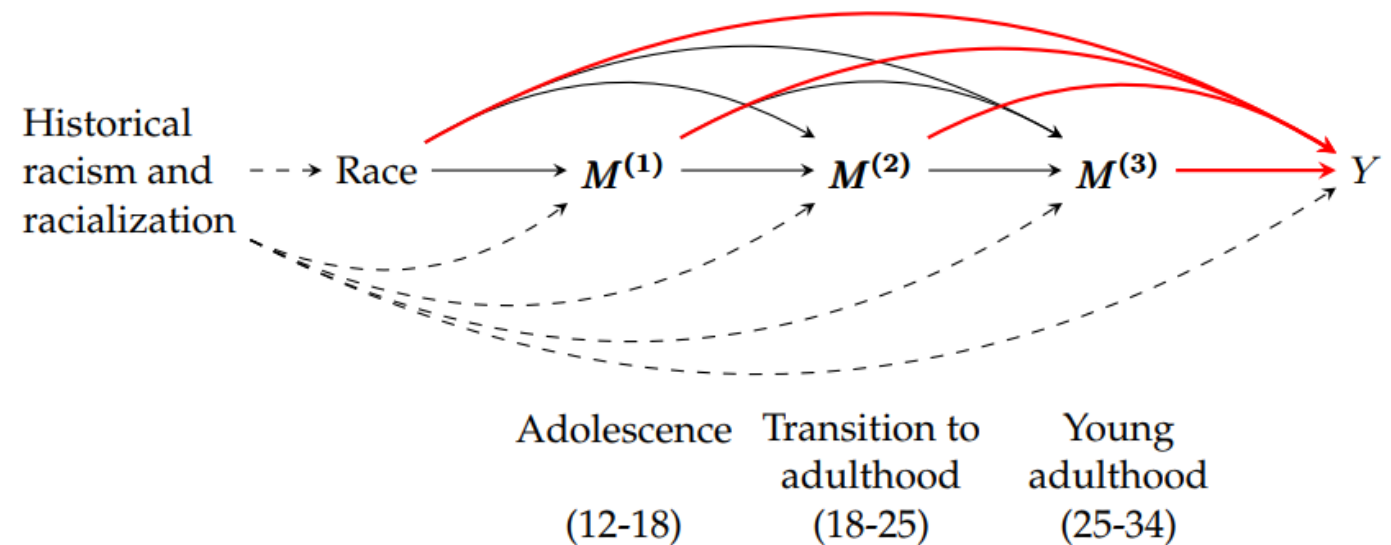
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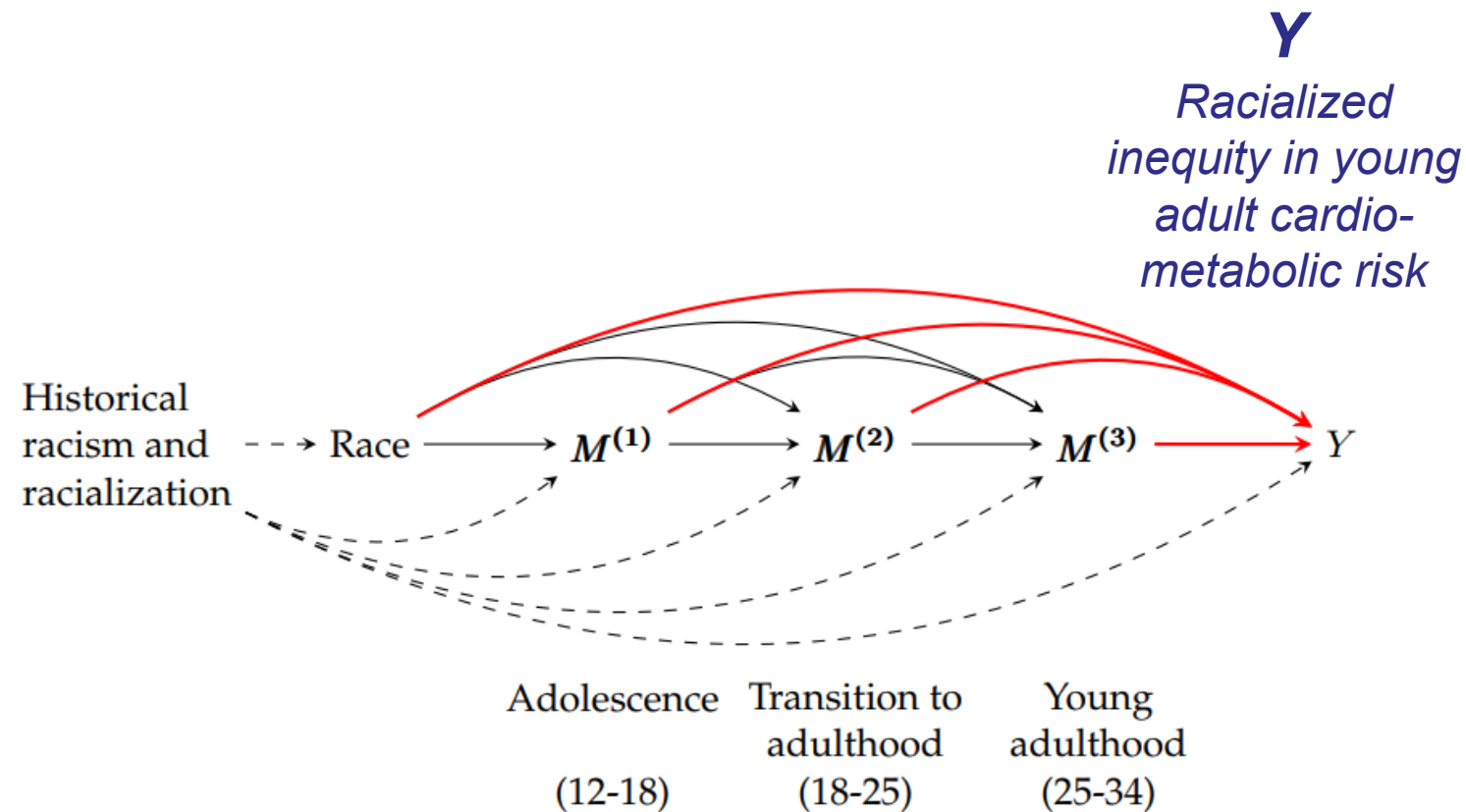
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The controlled direct effect (CDE)

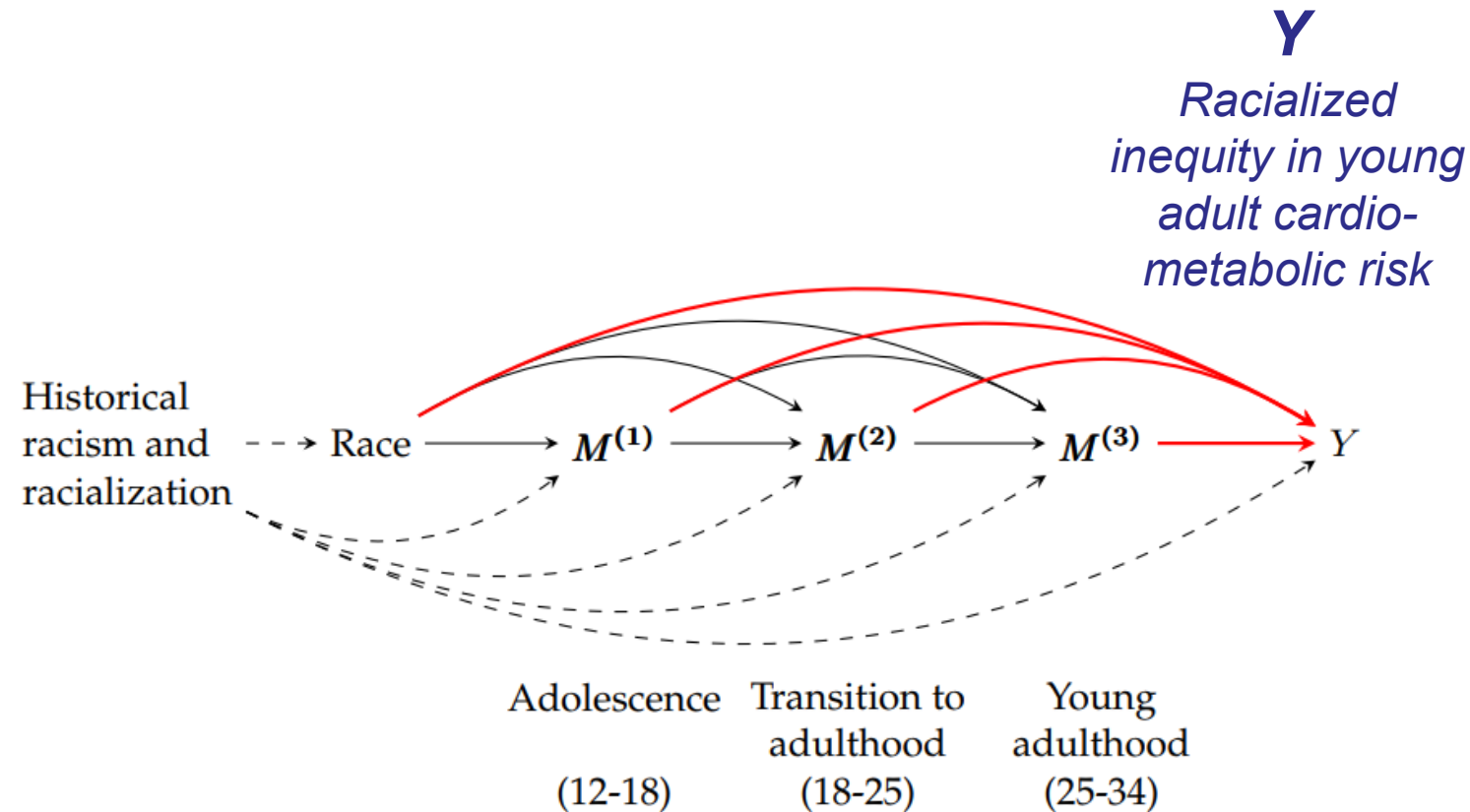
(“unobserved racism,” or
“unobserved mediation”)

The proportion attributable to interaction (PAI)

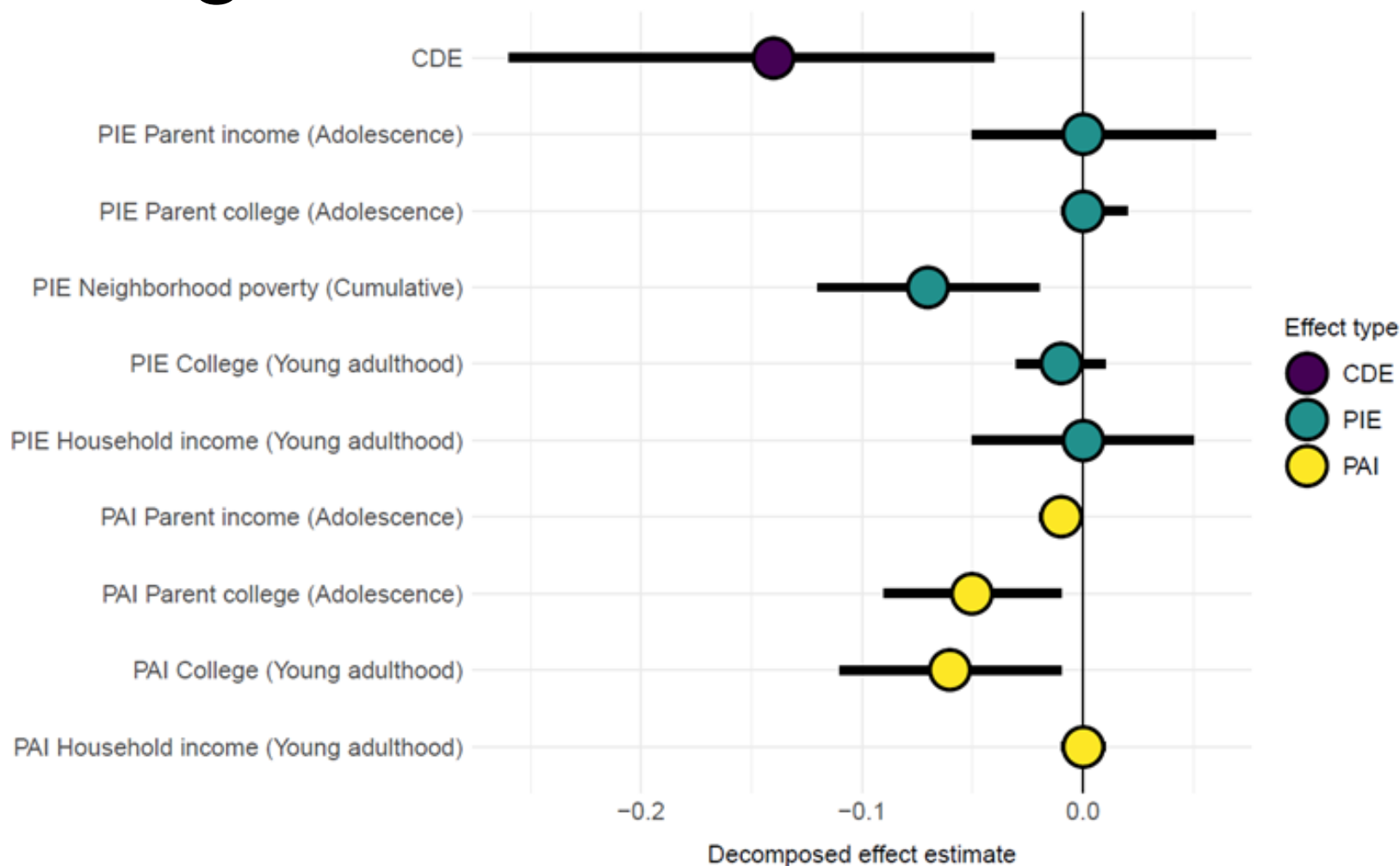
(“racial discrimination”)

The pure indirect effect (PIE)

(“emergent discrimination”)



Decomposing the Black-White gap in young adult cardiometabolic risk



Where do we go from here?

- Identifying the **life course processes** undergirding the production of racialized disparities can push science, intervention, & policy forward, and social surveys are well-suited for this agenda
- We needn't be content with data or methods that serve to **essentialize race** or ignore the **structural & institutional processes** generating inequities
 - Data linkages
 - Expanding beyond approaches that separate “race” from “not race”
- Causal inference research using survey data needn't push us towards identifying **marginal effects** that inform “**well-defined interventions**” (Schwartz et al. 2016, *Social Science & Medicine*)