

# Time in residence and entitlement to resources: A neglected dimension of migration politics

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## Abstract

Do people favor the long-time residents of a place over newer arrivals—even if the context is not international migration? Public opinion on immigration can only partially illuminate favoritism based on time-in-residence because access to residence is controlled via nationality. I turn to domestic mobility in the US to investigate whether US adults value residence independent of shared nationality or ethno-racial identity. Respondents split a college scholarship pool between hypothetical US citizens, whose profiles varied in terms of the duration of their in-state residence and race/ethnicity. Respondents favor in-state students over out-of-state students and, among in-state students, favor those who have been in-residence longest. Pro-resident discrimination appears across every ethno-racial and ideological sub-group. Respondents rewarded racial out-groups for longer residence even at the expense of students from their own race. Favoritism toward residents of one's own state was present regardless of respondents' own domestic migration history, feelings of closeness to their state, or affinity for the US. In-state favoritism is strongly related to opinions about immigration. People who wanted large cuts to immigration were also the most biased in favor of long-time residents of their state over Americans from elsewhere. Theories of migration politics should incorporate the belief that time-in-residence creates entitlement, a dynamic that is not reducible to well-known biases favoring co-nationals and co-ethnics.

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How common is the belief that the long-time residents of a place have a special claim to the resources of that place? An avalanche of survey data tells us that public opinion in hundreds of countries acquiesces to the premise that national governments should control and curate immigration, which is a *de facto* bias in favor of countries' existing residents. Immigration laws, however, turn on nationality, which is not perfectly correlated with individuals' length-of-residence in a country. Thus it is nationality, as well as ethno-racial identity, that are most often referenced in scholarship on immigration attitudes.

The focus on in- and out-group identity shifts attention away from what political philosopher Elizabeth Cohen (2018) calls “the political value of time.” That is, the possibility that people assign value to elapsed residence, even if the interaction of time and location is not a simulacrum of shared nationality or ethnicity. As a legal matter, residence does matter. Many polities offer some rights—denizens' rights—to all residents.<sup>1</sup> Elapsed residence is a common hurdle in naturalization processes.<sup>2</sup> Political party platforms draw distinctions between levels of new immigration and treatment of in-country immigrants, suggesting residence has political salience.<sup>3</sup> Some of the most common arguments made by advocates for regularizing the status of unauthorized immigrants stress entitlement to membership based on *de facto* residence,<sup>4</sup> accrued time in the labor force,<sup>5</sup> and past pro-social behavior.<sup>6</sup>

Public opinion research likewise hints that people assign value to time-in-residence. Y. Margalit and Solodoch (2022) find that people in the US are more positively disposed toward non-nationals living in the US compared to would-be immigrants. In an ethnography of Texas policymakers' and undocumented Texas residents' definitions of belonging, Perry (2006) reports that individual and family residence history was the most consistently-cited criteria. Magni (2024) finds welfare chau-

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<sup>1</sup>Hammar 1990; Joppke 1999.

<sup>2</sup>Vink et al. 2021.

<sup>3</sup>R. Dancygier and Y. Margalit 2020; Givens and Luedtke 2005; Tichenor 2002.

<sup>4</sup>Corrunker 2012; Swerts 2017; Unzueta Carrasco and Seif 2014.

<sup>5</sup>Bloemraad, Voss, and T. Lee 2011; Gonzales 2013; Kemp and Kfir 2016.

<sup>6</sup>Menjívar and Lakhani 2016.

vinism is ameliorated by immigrants' time in the workforce. Kustov (2022) documents negative views of emigration and argues that an "aversion to human mobility" may unite immigrant-sending and receiving societies.<sup>7</sup>

Nonetheless, in the context of international immigration, where nationality influences individuals' legal right to be in a country, there is no way to fully isolate an affinity for residence.<sup>8</sup> This article uses internal migration in the United States to pose a hard test for the possibility that time-in-residence carries normative weight. The US has the highest rates of internal migration among large, wealthy countries.<sup>9</sup> Many forms of discrimination against internal migrants are unconstitutional.<sup>10</sup> Domestic migration is rarely politically salient in the US. The most famous counterexample, backlash against the Great Migration of African-Americans in the early 1900s, suggests that the public cares about policing identities rather than mobility per se.

I conducted a survey-based experiment in which US residents were asked to divide higher education scholarships between fictitious student profiles. The profiles specify that both students are US citizens; students' ethno-racial identities were randomized. The key manipulation was varying how long the fictitious students had been state residents, randomizing between non-residence, 3-year, and 18-year residence. Respondents rewarded more resources to students who had longer in-state residence. Respondents in every ethno-racial subgroup showed a preference for longer-term state residents, which did not reduce to shared ethnicity. Respondents discriminated among their own coethnics based on time-in-state. They also rewarded ethno-racial outgroups for longer in-state residence even if that meant allocating resources away from a member of their own ethno-racial group.

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<sup>7</sup>See also Berens and Deeg (2024) and H. K. Lee (2018).

<sup>8</sup>On the other hand, for some important questions, time-in-residence is irrelevant—e.g., residence history cannot explain why people have preferences for some not-yet-arrived migrants over others (Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2016; Clayton, Ferwerda, and Horiuchi 2021; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015; Mayer et al. 2023).

<sup>9</sup>Bell et al. 2015; Molloy, C. L. Smith, and Wozniak 2011.

<sup>10</sup>In *Shapiro v Thompson* (1969) the Supreme Court struck down length-of-residence requirements for state welfare benefits. *Toomer v. Witsell* (1948) ruled against differential fees for fishing licenses based on state residence. McCann (2017) argues that the widespread use of differential in- and out-of-state tuition fees for public higher education is also unconstitutional.

Respondents' discrimination versus domestic migrants is not related to strong sub-national identities or weak attachment to the United States. People living outside the state where they were born were no less likely to discriminate in favor of in-state students than people who were not domestic migrants. Rates of discrimination were similar among people who reported feeling close to the state where they lived and those who did not. Pro-local favoritism was, if anything, most pronounced among the strongest nationalists. People who were proud to be US nationals, felt close to the US, and felt closer to the US than their state had equal-to-greater levels of pro-resident discrimination compared to other respondents, even though this discrimination penalized other Americans. Thus, people who identified strongly with the US did not show undifferentiated solidarity with co-nationals. Instead, they used elapsed time in-state to discriminate even amongst co-ethnics and co-nationals.

Finally, there is a strong correlation between individuals' views on international immigration and their willingness to discriminate among Americans based on migration. People who favored increasing levels of immigration to the United States were the least likely to allocate resources based on in-state residence. People who had the most hawkish immigration preferences gave the largest additional allocations to students who had lived in state longer. These results suggests that individuals' views on immigration reflect valorization of time-in-residence, a bias that is distinct from favoritism toward co-nationals and co-ethnics.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to establish why some people equate time-in-residence with entitlement to resources or to give a full demographic profile of the population that most values residence. I refer to a "bias" in favor of longer-term residents to avoid implying that favoritism toward state residents reflects well-considered beliefs. This pattern might only be a matter of taste. There are philosophical arguments that residence or prolonged residence creates rights or that assigning rights and membership via waiting periods has desirable egalitarian features.<sup>11</sup> Even if those arguments are sound, this paper does not establish that people valorize residence for sound

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<sup>11</sup>Cohen 2018; Pippenger 2024; Sandel 2012; Walzer 1983.

reasons. I also leave open the possibility that valorization of residence is applied in inegalitarian ways, such as valuing coethnics' time more heavily. Finally, whatever rationale US adults have for valuing time-in-residence, it presumably leaves them enough moral flexibility to accommodate other values and self-interest. Respondents who especially value authority might, for instance, only assign value to government-authorized elapsed residence.<sup>12</sup>

I proceed as follows. First, I review the role of national and ethno-racial identity in public opinion on immigration. Second, I argue that in the study of migration politics as a whole, there is a strong presumption that ordinary people do not object to migration per se but only to migration that transgresses lines around national and ethno-racial identity. A key alleged piece of evidence for this view is lack of political conflict around domestic migration in wealthy democracies.<sup>13</sup> Third, I argue that higher education in the US is a useful test of whether discrimination based on time-in-residence is normative. Then, I present original descriptive and experimental data. Pro-resident discrimination is not taboo among US adults; respondents mostly endorsed such discrimination in response to a direct question. In an experimental setting, US adults show a pro-residency bias that is not reducible to shared national or ethno-racial identity. I conclude by comparing the incidence of pro-resident discrimination to measures of national identity and views of immigration. People who wanted to cut immigration to the US have a particularly pronounced tendency to discriminate among Americans based on residence history. Immigration liberals mostly disregarded residence in the experimental task. Opinions about immigration may reflect differences in the degree to which people equate time-in-residence with entitlement to resources, in addition to well-known biases in favor of co-nationals and co-ethnics.

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<sup>12</sup>Cohen 2018, pp. 143–4.

<sup>13</sup>The economic qualifier is important; domestic migration is more frequently controversial in developing countries compared to industrialized countries (Bhavnani and Lacina 2019).

# 1 Identities, nations, and residence

In the study of immigration attitudes, national, ethnic, racial and cultural identities are the star variables.<sup>14</sup> In surveys, people who say they strongly identify with their nationality tend to have more restrictive attitudes toward immigration and are more likely to support anti-immigration parties and politicians. The same is true of people who define their national identities in ethnic terms and people who endorse racist and xenophobic attitudes.<sup>15</sup> For instance, the General Social Survey in the United States asks respondents if characteristics like speaking English, being Christian, and having American ancestors make someone a “true American.” Respondents who have a longer list of hurdles for defining true Americans are more opposed to authorized and unauthorized immigration, to hosting refugees, and to international trade. They are also less supportive of unrestricted birthright citizenship.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, the strongest opposition to immigration is directed at newcomers who are “visibly different in appearance, customs and values.”<sup>17</sup> Survey-takers show a consistent preference for immigrants from their own ethno-racial group. That pattern has been documented in Jordan<sup>18</sup> and Morocco<sup>19</sup> as well as Europe and North America.<sup>20</sup> Audit experiments reveal that people discriminate more readily against ethnically-distinct immigrants and their descendants.<sup>21</sup>

This study does not overturn the vast evidence that national, ethnic, racial and cultural identities are central to how people view immigration. Instead, the goal of this paper is to investigate the normative weight of time-in-residency on its own, distinct from national and ethno-racial identity.

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<sup>14</sup>Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014.

<sup>15</sup>Card, Dustmann, and Preston 2012; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Creighton, Fahey, and McGinnity 2022; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Matos 2023; Wallace and Zepeda-Millán 2020.

<sup>16</sup>Thompson 2022; Wong 2010, pp. 128–136.

<sup>17</sup>Sides and Citrin 2007, p. 479.

<sup>18</sup>Alrababa’h et al. 2021.

<sup>19</sup>Buehler and Han 2021; Dennison and Nasr 2020.

<sup>20</sup>Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015; Herda 2015; Koukal, Schafer, and Eichenberger 2021; Morgül and Savaşkan 2021; Pepinsky, Reiff, and Szabó 2024; Stutzer and Slotwinski 2021.

<sup>21</sup>Auspurg, Lorenz, and Schneck 2023; R. M. Dancygier and Laitin 2014.

It is fair to ask why that investigation is interesting from the point-of-view of immigration politics, since country of residence and nationality are highly correlated. We need to know if people valorize residency because that possibility speaks to core assumptions in the study of immigration politics: opposition to mobility is puzzling and only national and/or racialized national identities can explain why ordinary people would care who has lived where and for how long. In other words, it is a paradigm that public opinion on immigration has almost nothing to do with physical migration.

## **1.1 Domestic migration: A critical test**

In this section, I make two points. First, much of the literature on migration politics assumes regular people—or at least, people living in wealthy democracies—do not assign value to migration or time-in-residence per se. Instead, they only care about mobility that transgresses national and/or ethno-racial lines. Second, a recurrent strategy for defending this premise is to point to domestic migration. Democratic citizens would not tolerate restrictions of internal migration or discrimination against internal migrants. Therefore, only state-sponsored national and racialized national identities can explain why regulating immigration seems permissible.

Why, scholars ask, do so many people seem to accept that states may legitimately regulate international immigration?<sup>22</sup> It is only since the rise of territorial nation-states, that “international migration constitutes a deviance,”<sup>23</sup> different in kind from domestic migration.<sup>24</sup> “State-centric taxonomies like ‘unauthorized arrival’ and ‘asylum seeker’ are only a possibility because of a prevailing assumption of the border as a legitimate institution of governance.”<sup>25</sup> Thus:

If the principle of immigration restriction has become an unquestioned assumption of contemporary politics, we need to ask how it got to be that way and to consider its place in the historical construction of the nation.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Benton-Cohen 2018, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup>Zolberg 1981, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup>Carlotti 2021.

<sup>25</sup>Walia 2021.

<sup>26</sup>Ngai 1999, p. 4.

Nation-states convince ordinary people to be skeptical of mobility by manufacturing a distinction between citizens with a right of mobility and foreigners denied that right:

When it comes to immigration, the most important tool of control is to persuade the population that it is warranted to treat some people—outsiders—differently: to treat them as less than equals. Those who do not belong may have some rights, but not the same rights or as many rights as those who do. On the face of it this may look like an innocuous move, for surely there is no harm in saying that those who are foreign to us are not our equals—or at least, not within our territory.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, “it would be considered unthinkable for people from Manchester not to be allowed to travel to Oxford unless they were very rich or skilled, or unless the authorities of Oxford decided that they had been so severely persecuted by the authorities in Manchester that their lives and liberty were in danger there.”<sup>28</sup>

Only the social construction of the foreign Other convinces citizens that discrimination against migrants is permissible. That difference reflects the salience of national identity over sub-national identity: “although [the sub-national] is the focus of people’s experience, few of them would declare their allegiance at this scale: Bostonians are Americans, Liverpudlians are Englishmen.”<sup>29</sup> Local identities can be a source of political opinions,<sup>30</sup> expose people to different levels of migration,<sup>31</sup> and shape material interests with respect to migration.<sup>32</sup> However, citizens in democracies do not believe sub-national communities have a right to restrict migration:

The people of California wanted to keep out poor Oklahomans during the Depression. Now the people of Oregon would like to keep out the Californians. . . . Despite

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<sup>27</sup>Kukathas 2021, pp. 123–4.

<sup>28</sup>Hayter 2000, p. 151.

<sup>29</sup>Taylor 1981, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup>Cramer 2016; N. Lee, Morris, and Kemeny 2018; Nuamah and Ogorzalek 2021; Rogers 2014; Ternullo 2024; Vasilopoulos, McAvay, and Brouard 2022.

<sup>31</sup>Flores 2014; Hangartner et al. 2019; Hopkins 2010; Kawalerowicz 2021; Laurence, Igarashi, and Ishida 2021; Tolsma, Laméris, and Savelkoul 2021.

<sup>32</sup>Cochrane and Poot 2021; Ferwerda, Flynn, and Horiuchi 2017; Ottaviano and Peri 2005.



all this, we do not think these political communities should be able to control their borders.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, Higham's (2002) classic definition of nativism is antipathy to an "internal minority on the grounds of its foreign" (4) character. Nativism specifically devalues residence—the objectionable minority is, after all, already internal. Nativists code some people as foreign no matter where they live.

The literature on racialized immigration politics proposes an amendment here: people may only believe in mobility for specific ethno-racial groups. Ethno-racial hierarchy limits both cosmopolitan and nationalist notions of equality.<sup>34</sup> European cosmopolitanism is a whites-only political project.<sup>35</sup> In the EU, "the only 'foreigners' who pose a problem are those from non-Western countries."<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Black mobility in the US was legally restricted long after Whites' rights to mobility were recognized.

In sum, then, some combination of nationalism and racialized nationalism underpin the legitimacy of immigration restrictions. People do not object to mobility per se, especially not co-ethnics' and co-nationals' mobility. We know because we can observe the contrast between the unquestioned acceptance of immigration enforcement and the public's belief in equal rights to domestic spaces.

## **2 Residence and entitlement in US higher education**

The role of nationalism and ethnocentrism in immigration politics is indisputable. However, the wider scholarship on immigration is shaped by a much stronger assumption: without national and

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<sup>33</sup>Carens (1987, p. 267). Note that Carens' larger argument is that nation-states similarly have no right to control their borders. See Kymlicka (2009) and A. Margalit and Halbertal (1994) for the argument that states may be entitled to restrict sub-national mobility on behalf of people that are sufficiently culturally distinct or indigenous. See Orgad (2015) for the corresponding argument on behalf of nation-states.

<sup>34</sup>Hage 2000.

<sup>35</sup>Mau et al. 2015; Rosenberg 2023.

<sup>36</sup>Fassin 2012, p. 154.

ethno-racial identities people would reject government discrimination on behalf of prior residents and against migrants. We allegedly know this because ordinary people in democracies do not believe governments may control domestic migration or use domestic migration history to prioritize among citizens—or at least not among citizens from the ethno-racial majority.

Domestic migration is far less controversial and less regulated in wealthy democracies than international migration. But is that because people do not assign any value to elapsed residence? Do most people believe it would be inappropriate for a government to discriminate against domestic migrants in favor of people who had been in a jurisdiction for a longer period of time? If people do assign value to domestic residency, is that value conditional on shared ethno-racial identity?

I asked US adults to divide scholarship money for higher education between hypothetical student profiles, varying the profiles' length of in-state residence and race/ethnicity, while holding US citizenship constant. Both the US context and the focus on higher education make this a hard case for finding a pro-resident, anti-domestic migrant bias.

The US is an unlikely place to find people endorsing discrimination against domestic migrants, at least compared to other industrialized democracies. The US has the highest rates of domestic migration of all large, rich countries.<sup>37</sup> It is unconstitutional for state or local governments to discriminate based on domestic migration in many arenas. Immigration scholarship describes the US as one of the countries where migration is valorized: a country “in which immigration is part of the founding national ideal.”<sup>38</sup> It is also a country where most people believe they do not have indigenous ancestors. The founding ideologies of the US devalued indigenous peoples' mere residence in favor of Europeans' supposed industriousness,<sup>39</sup> divine favor,<sup>40</sup> or racial superiority.<sup>41</sup>

Higher education is also a less-likely context to find willingness to sanction sub-national dis-

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<sup>37</sup>Molloy, C. L. Smith, and Wozniak 2011.

<sup>38</sup>Hollifield et al. (2022). See also: Boucher and Gest (2018), Dauvergne (2016), Freeman (1995), Joppke (2005), and Motomura (2007).

<sup>39</sup>Murray 2022.

<sup>40</sup>A. D. Smith 2003.

<sup>41</sup>Dunbar-Ortiz 2021.

crimination. Length-of-residence preferences in some other domains—e.g., political office, government contracting, and public hiring—are arguably functional. Candidates with more time-in-residence may have specialized knowledge of local conditions or a broader personal networks in the area. Those qualities might make them more effective as public servants, contractors, or employees. Traits like local knowledge or a bigger in-area network might also make it more likely that a student will have a successful academic career. However, the benefit of their success to other residents is comparatively indirect.

Discrimination based on length of residence is especially ethically problematic in the context of education for young adults. An older adult's residence history might signal commitment to the community. However, people do not typically have the chance to pick where they spend their childhood. That consideration carries weight in jurisprudence on immigration. In *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), the US Supreme Court ruled that undocumented, non-national children could not be excluded from public education:

Of particular concern to the Court was the fact that children—rather than their parents—were involved. The Court believed that denying undocumented children access to education punished children for their parents' behavior. Such an action, the Court noted, did not square with basic ideas of justice.<sup>42</sup>

The intuition that people are less likely to approve discrimination against young adults and/or in the context of higher education is why Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and the proposed Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) were supposed to be politically easier immigration reforms than legalization for older adults.<sup>43</sup>

Pro-local preferences in funding for adolescent education are also difficult to defend with arguments about previously invested labor and tax payments.<sup>44</sup> Entitlement to some social services,

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<sup>42</sup>Perry 2006, p. 23.

<sup>43</sup>Corrunker 2012; Gonzales 2013; Unzueta Carrasco and Seif 2014, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup>Pevnick 2011.

such as public pensions, is arguably earned through individuals' past contributions to a pool of funds. Adolescent educational subsidies, by contrast, always go to people who have paid little or no taxes to date. Favoring local adolescents on the grounds that their parents have paid more taxes would violate the supposed taboo on punishing young people for their parents' choices.

### 3 Pro-resident discrimination is normative

The heart of this study is an experiment to gauge whether longer state residence and resource entitlement go together in some peoples' minds. The results below suggest that they do. After respondents completed the experimental task, I also asked a random subset of survey-takers (n=7240) whether their state's existing scholarship program should discriminate in favor of in-state students:<sup>45</sup>

Now we would like you to consider general guidelines for scholarships. [PROGRAM NAME]<sup>46</sup> gives financial aid to students planning to attend colleges and universities in that state. If you were advising this award program, what requirements would you recommend? Please indicate for each of the criteria below whether you would recommend it be a requirement for a student to receive a scholarship, should be preferred but not required, or should not be considered.

Criteria included "US citizenship or legal permanent residence," "Member of a historically underprivileged racial or ethnic group" and "Attending or attended high school in the state." The in-state high school requirement is on the strict side of actual states' policies.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>All fifty states have a state-administered pool of funds for higher education that is targeted at high schoolers and recent high school graduates/GED recipients. In some cases, the funds can be used at any in-state public school; other states, such as Illinois, allow the funds to be used at any in-state school. In practice, all of the programs require state residence but the required duration of residence is minimal in some states. The more stringent formulation requires a student to be a graduate of an in-state high school, which rules out students establishing state residence after they have finished grade 12.

<sup>46</sup>See the appendix for the full list of program names.

<sup>47</sup>All the mentioned programs require state residence. Only a few require graduating from an in-state high school, eliminating the possibility of establishing eligibility after finishing twelfth grade. My survey also asked whether state

Figure 1 shows the survey results in aggregate, by respondent's race/ethnicity, and according to respondent's self-reported political ideology (conservative, moderate or liberal). Most respondents saw discrimination based on state residence as reasonable. Forty percent recommended that only in-state high schoolers should be eligible for funding and 35% indicated these students should have preference. Just a quarter of respondents said that attending an in-state high school should not be a criteria. Disaggregating respondents by race or ideology, a majority in every subgroup endorsed a requirement or preference for students from in-state high schools.

Discrimination in favor of in-state high schoolers was slightly less normative than a nationality requirement but more popular than a preference for historically underprivileged ethno-racial groups. Just over half of respondents (51%) thought their state's scholarship program should require US citizenship or permanent residence. Only 16% thought this criteria should be disregarded. The in-state high school guideline eclipsed ethno-racial criteria in popularity. Just 14% of respondents wanted their state's scholarship program to be limited to underprivileged ethno-racial groups and a majority (54%) thought this consideration should not be weighed.

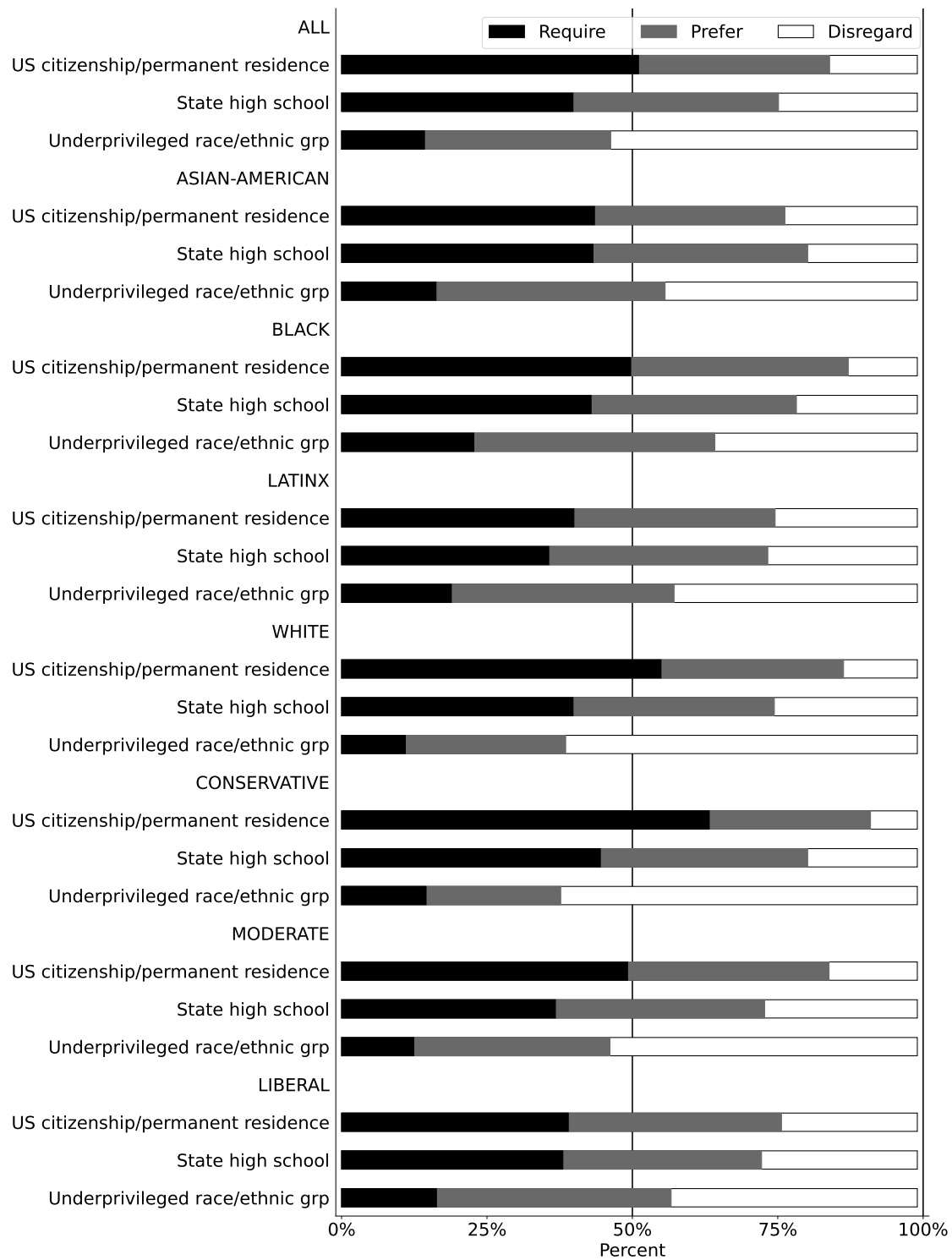
Favoritism for in-state high schoolers was less polarizing across demographic cleavages than either the citizenship requirement or the ethno-racial criteria. When respondents are grouped by race/ethnicity, there is only a six percentage point gap between Latinx respondents, who were the most likely to recommend disregarding attendance of an in-state high school (28%), and Asian-American respondents, who were the least likely to say that in-state high school should not be a criteria (22%). Gaps in ethno-racial groups' endorsement of the citizenship requirement were much larger, up to 22 percentage points. Citizenship criteria were least likely to be endorsed by Latinx respondents, a quarter of whom said these should not be considered. At the other extreme,

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scholarship programs should consider "state residency." This more lax requirement was slightly more popular than the stricter, high school-based standard. 43% of respondents said state residency should be required, 35% wanted preference for state residence and 22% said it should be disregarded.

Legally, there is a link between citizenship requirements and state-residence requirements in US higher education. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) "provides that if a state offers in-state tuition or any other higher education benefit to undocumented students, the state must provide the same benefit to out-of-state U.S. citizens" (Perry 2006, p. 23).

Figure 1: Respondent reactions to possible criteria for state-administered higher education scholarships



only 13% of Black respondents and 14% of non-Hispanic Whites wanted their state to disregard this factor. Ethno-racial criteria were likewise more polarizing than the state high school requirement. 62% of Whites thought membership in an under-privileged group should not be a factor in scholarships, 26 percentage points above the share of Black respondents who said the same (36%).

Americans with different ideologies were also closer together in their views of state residency criteria than on citizenship and ethno-racial identity. The share of conservatives who said in-state high school should not be a factor was 17%, compared to 24% of moderates and 26% of liberals, for a range of nine percentage points. That spread was smaller than the 15 percentage point difference between the rate at which conservatives said citizenship should not matter (9%) and the 24% of liberals who said the same. There was likewise a wide gap—19 percentage points—between the 62% of conservatives versus 43% of liberals who wanted their state to ignore membership in an underprivileged race or ethnic group.

Pro-resident discrimination does not seem to be particularly taboo in the United States. Survey experiments are often meant to circumvent bias social desirability and self-censorship, such as survey-takers' tendency to disavow racial discrimination. Favoritism toward residents may have an unconscious or socially-undesirable dimension, which is why the experiment below is useful. However, it is also telling that most US adults say states should favor long-time residents in response to a straight question.

### **3.1 Experimental design**

In the experimental portion of the survey, respondents divided scholarship money for higher education between hypothetical student profiles (see Table 1). The prompt was: “Imagine you are on a scholarship committee giving merit scholarships for a nearby university. Please read the following descriptions of high school seniors carefully and then make a recommendation on how to allocate a tuition scholarship between them.” Note that this experiment appeared in the survey *before* the question about scholarship criteria for a specific state program, which was the question summa-

rized in Figure 1. Here, the question does not specify a state or other proper place name. The scholarship is only to a “nearby” university.

The profiles were intended to be nearly identical in terms of academic merit and evidence of extra-curricular activities. The profiles specify that both students are female (the modal category) and US citizens. Both students intend to major in STEM fields, following the conventional wisdom that social returns to education are higher in these fields.<sup>48</sup> The overall pattern in allocations suggests that the profiles seemed nearly interchangeable to respondents. Sixty percent of survey-takers split the money evenly between the students, with a slight preference for student one, who had a marginally higher GPA but somewhat lower class rank. The mean allocation to student one was 51% of the scholarship fund ( $\sigma = 13$ , 95% CI: [50.9, 51.2]).

Within the student profiles, the key manipulation was the relative length of students’ residency in the state: 18 years, 3 years, or non-residence. If a respondent consciously or unconsciously favors coethnics, state residency might proxy for that consideration. West Virginia, for instance, has a higher White population share (89%) than all of its neighbors—actually, a higher White population share than any other state except Maine. Giving a scholarship to a West Virginia resident over someone from another state increases the probability funds go to a White student. To ensure that state residence is not construed as a proxy for race/ethnicity, student profiles were randomly assigned to be Asian-American, Black, Latina, or White.

The experiment is similar in set-up to a conjoint experiment, a very popular research design in the study of immigration politics. However, there are only 36 treatment conditions (9 x 4), making it possible to analyze this as a factorial design, which is a more conservative data strategy.<sup>49</sup>

This survey was fielded through the Civic Health and Institutions Project (CHIP50) between November 9, 2024 and January 10, 2025. IRB approval for research on human subjects was obtained in cooperation with CHIP50. A pre-analysis plan was filed with OSF.org in July 2024.<sup>50</sup> The

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<sup>48</sup>Gunderson and Oreopolous 2020.

<sup>49</sup>In a conjoint analysis, I would instead estimate the effect of students’ residence averaged across all possible combinations of the coethnicity treatment. Table 9 in the appendix shows the results of such an analysis.

<sup>50</sup>The pre-analysis plan had to be modified to account for a discrepancy between the planned experiment and the



survey was administered by PureSpectrum, an online panel management platform. PureSpectrum builds its panel using quota sampling accounting for gender, race/ethnicity, age, and region.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.2 The value of time-in-residence

Table 2 estimates the effects of the residency manipulation using an ordinary least squares model:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta X_i + \gamma Z_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

- $y_i$  is the allocation to student 1 by respondent  $i$ , 0–100.
- $X_i$  is a matrix of indicator variables  $A$ – $H$  capturing the state residency condition assigned to  $i$
- $Z_i$  is a matrix of indicator variables  $a$ – $c$  capturing the co-ethnicity condition assigned to  $i$

The results of interest are (i) the differences in the average allocations to student 1 when she has different lengths of state residence, holding constant student 2’s residence history and the coethnicity treatment and (ii) the differences in the average allocations to student 1 when student 2 has a different residence history, holding constant student 1’s residency and the coethnicity treatment.<sup>52</sup>

The pre-analysis plan included 28 hypotheses capturing these differences. Adjusting for multiple comparisons, the critical value for one-sided hypothesis tests becomes 0.0018 ( $\alpha = 0.05/28$ ).<sup>53</sup>

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experiment as implemented by the vendor. The planned experiment had 8 possible residence treatment conditions, rather than nine. In the unplanned treatment condition, respondents were told that neither student was a state resident (Condition I in Table 1). Hypotheses involving that treatment were not pre-registered.

<sup>51</sup>The vendor provided survey weights that allow me to approximate national representativeness on the quota sampling variables as well as whether respondents live in urban, suburban, or rural areas. I took those weights into account in constructing Figure 1 but not in the analysis of the scholarship division experiment.

<sup>52</sup>The experiment constrains respondents to allocate the entire scholarship fund, so that the allocation to student 2 is always 100 minus the percent allocated to student 1. Therefore, there is no need to also test hypotheses about differences in allocations to student 2. Such tests would reverse of the direction of the differences in allocations to student 1 and have the same standard errors.

<sup>53</sup>As noted above, the survey-administering vendor included an additional, unplanned treatment condition in which neither student was a state resident. The 18 hypothesis tests included in Figure 2 include four hypotheses that use this unplanned treatment condition; in other words, only fourteen of these hypothesis were preregistered. For simplicity,

Table 1: Scholarship division experiment

Imagine you are on a scholarship committee giving merit scholarships for a nearby university. Please read the following descriptions of high school seniors carefully and then make a recommendation on how to allocate a tuition scholarship between them.

	Student 1	Student 2	
High school grade point average (0 to 4)	3.65	3.55	
Rank in high school class	Top 5	Top 3	
Extra-curricular activities	Track team, band, yearbook	Drama club, soccer team, student council	
Intended college major	Engineering	Biology	
Sex	Female	Female	
US citizen	Yes	Yes	
State residency	<i>Randomly assigned 1 of 9 conditions</i>		<i>Condition</i>
	18 years	18 years	<i>A</i>
	18 years	3 years	<i>B</i>
	18 years	Non-resident	<i>C</i>
	3 years	18 years	<i>D</i>
	3 years	3 years	<i>E</i>
	3 years	Non-resident	<i>F</i>
	Non-resident	18 years	<i>G</i>
	Non-resident	3 years	<i>H</i>
	Non-resident	Non-resident	<i>I</i>
Race/ethnicity	<i>Randomly assigned 1 of 4 conditions</i>		
	Respondent's race/ethnicity	Respondent's race/ethnicity	<i>a</i>
	Respondent's race/ethnicity	¬Respondent's race/ethnicity*	<i>b</i>
	¬Respondent's race/ethnicity*	Respondent's race/ethnicity	<i>c</i>
	¬Respondent's race/ethnicity**	¬Respondent's race/ethnicity**	<i>d</i>

What percent of the available scholarship funds (0-100%) would you recommend giving to student 1? The remainder will be allocated to student 2. (The funding for student 1 and student 2 below should sum to a total of 100%)

\*Selected randomly from Asian-American, Black, Latino, and White, excluding the category chosen by the respondent in a question about their own race/ethnicity

\*\*In this treatment condition students 1 and 2 always had the same race/ethnicity, selected randomly from Asian-American, Black, Latino, and White after the respondent's race/ethnicity

Table 2: OLS model of treatment effects

	Model 1
S1 is 18-year resident, S2 is 18-year resident (A)	0.15 (0.32)
S1 is 18-year resident, S2 is 18-year resident (B)	1.37* (0.32)
S1 is 18-year resident, S2 is non-resident (C)	3.64* (0.32)
S1 is 3-year resident, S2 is 18-year resident (D)	-1.95* (0.32)
S1 is 3-year resident, S2 is 3-year resident (E)	-0.17 (0.32)
S1 is 3-year resident, S2 is non-resident (F)	3.10* (0.32)
S1 is non-resident, S2 is 18-year resident (G)	-3.00* (0.32)
S1 is non-resident, S2 is 3-year resident (H)	-2.31* (0.32)
Both students coethnic (a)	0.70* (0.21)
Only S1 coethnic (b)	1.21* (0.21)
Only S2 coethnic (c)	0.10 (0.21)
Intercept	50.41* (0.26)
Num. obs.	28893

\*  $p < 0.05$

The left column in Figure 2 shows the differences in average allocation to student 1 depending on her length of residency, holding student 2's residency constant. The right column shows differences in average allocations to student 1 depending on student 2's length of residency, holding student 1's residency constant. The top left figure shows the increased allocations to student 1 when she is an 18-year state resident compared to a non-resident. The top right figure shows the increased allocations to student 1 when student 2 drops from 18-year-residency to non-residence. The middle row of figures shows the differences in allocation when student 1 has three instead of zero years of residency (left column) or student 2 changes from three to zero years of residency (right column). The bottom row is comparisons between 18 and 3 year residency for student 1 (left) and student 2 (right).

Respondents rewarded residency and preferred more residency to less. Student 1 received three to five percent more of the scholarship fund when she was an 18-year-resident rather than a non-resident (1.1–1.3); that increase mirrors the three-to-five percentage point gains to student 1 if she is competing with a non-resident student 2 compared to an 18-year resident (1.10–1.12). Student 1 received one to four percent more when she was a three year resident compared to a non-resident (1.4–1.6) and two to three percentage points more of the fund if her competitor was a non-resident instead of a three-year resident (1.13–1.15). Finally, the increase in allocations to student 1 when she was an 18-year resident compared to a three-year resident is one-half to two percentage points (1.7–1.9), about the same as the increase when student 2 dropped from 18 to three years in residence (1.16–1.18).

The differences in allocations to student 1 are largest when she leapfrogs from less residence

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I used the critical value of 0.0018 to calculate confidence intervals throughout Figure 2. The insignificant tests are pre-registered hypotheses.

The preanalysis plan proposed that in case there were null effects of the residence treatments in the general population, the hypotheses would be retested in the population of US adults who are not domestic migrants—i.e., people who live in the state where they were born. The contingency plan accounts for the 14 pre-registered hypotheses not shown in the main text. Table 3 and Figure 7 in the supplemental results show this subset analysis.

The stars in Table 2 reflect two-sided tests of the null hypothesis that the regression coefficients are equal to zero. These significance levels are provided per convention but are not otherwise of interest.

than student 2 to more residence (1.2 and 1.11). For instance, when student 1 is a three-year resident she receives 5 percentage points more of the scholarship fund going up against a non-resident student 2 versus an 18-year resident student 2 (1.11). Student 1's residency is held constant in this comparison but she receives more of the scholarship when competing with someone with relatively less time in-state.

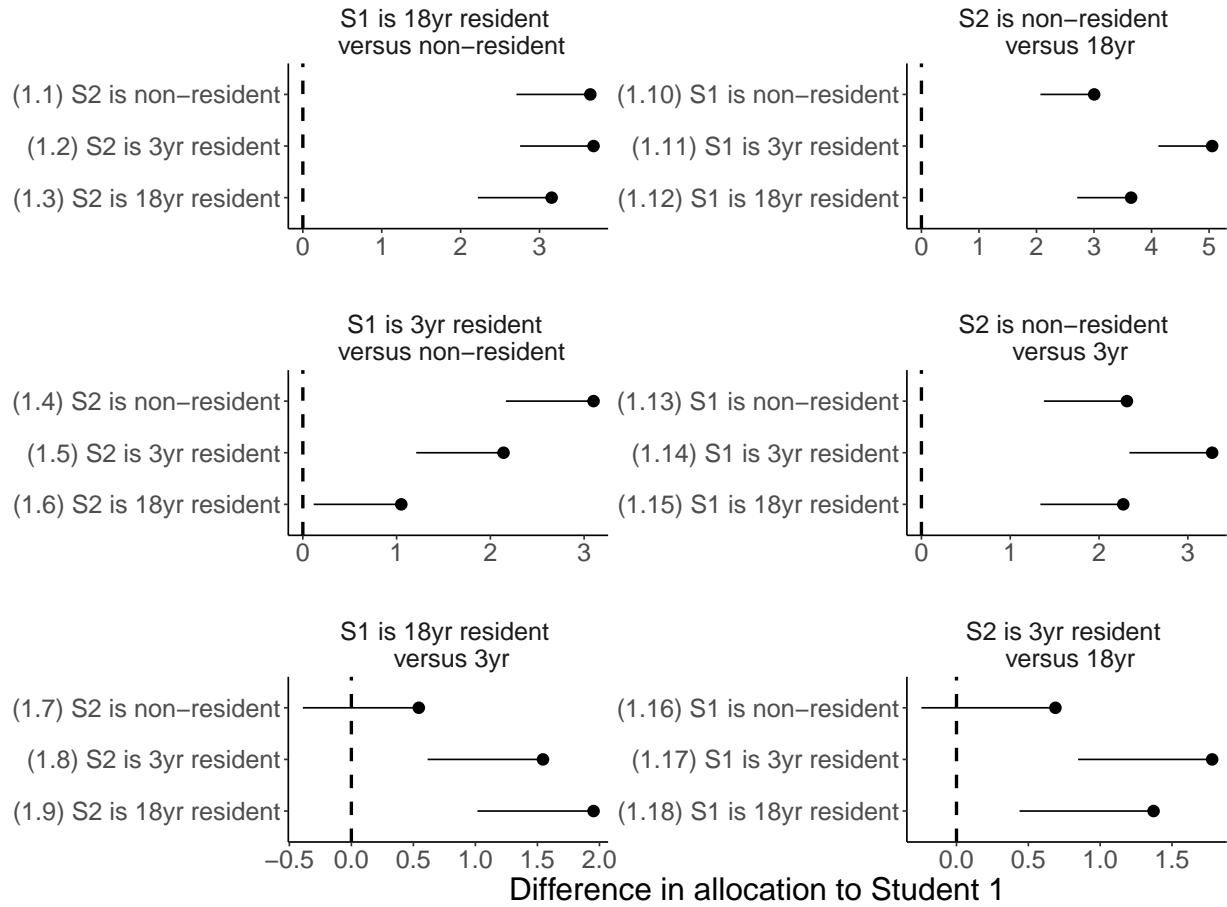
Student 1's gains are smallest—and at times statistically insignificant—when the change in residency does not alter which student is more local. The estimates numbered 1.6, 1.7, 1.15, and 1.16 compare treatments in which the changes in residency do not create a reordering or a tie in the two students' relative length of time in-state. For example, estimate 1.7 shows that, if student 2 is a non-resident, the difference in student's 1 advantage as an 18-year resident is not that much bigger—plus half a percentage point—than her bonus from being a three year resident. That half percent difference cannot be distinguished from zero. Similarly, estimate 1.6 implies that if student 1 is a non-resident, she is similarly disadvantaged against a three-year or an 18-year resident student 2.

How substantive are the differences in scholarship allocations due to students' relative length of residency? We can benchmark the size of the effects by comparing the allocations to student 1 when she is in the most favorable residency comparison—i.e., if student 1 is an 18-year-resident and student 2 is a non-resident—versus the allocation when Student 1 is in the least favorable residency condition—i.e., when student 2 is the 18-year resident and student 1 is out-of-state. That difference in average allocation to student 1 is 6.7 percentage points. That is one-half of a standard deviation in the dependent variable. The size of the residency treatment effect can also be benchmarked against the size of the differences between coethnicity treatments. As shown in Table 2, there was a bump in allocations to student 1 of 1.2 percentage points when she moved from the least to most favorable coethnicity condition.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the gain to student 1 if she is the

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<sup>54</sup>Contrary to intuition, the lowest average allocation to student 1 was in the condition in which neither student was the respondents' coethnic. The allocation to student 1 in that condition was statistically indistinguishable from the allocation in which only student 2 was the respondent's only coethnic.

Figure 2: Pro-local discrimination in scholarship allocations



respondent's sole coethnic is just over one-fifth the size of the boost she receives if she moves from the least to the most favored residence condition. Thus, pro-residence bias is on par with other socially salient characteristics and/or less shrouded by social desirability bias.

## 4 Residence and coethnicity

To what extent is the influence of the state residency treatment conditioned by information about coethnicity? Figure 3 breaks down the differences in allocations to student 1 according to which

ethnicity treatment a respondent received.<sup>55</sup> The shape of the estimate corresponds to the coethnicity treatment. For reference, circles plot estimates combining all coethnicity treatments.

Triangles are the differences in allocations to student 1 among respondents who were told that both students shared their ethno-racial identity. If people put no value on residence apart from its relationship to identity, we would expect respondents to treat these students identically. Instead, favoritism toward residency was pronounced. The differences in allocations are larger than the pooled results in all 18 comparisons and are statistically significant except in comparison 2.7, a comparison that is also insignificant in the pooled data (see comparison 1.7 in Figure 2).

The squares in Figure 3 plot differences in allocations when respondents were shown profiles of two non-coethnic students—note that student 1 and student 2 always had the same out-group identity in this treatment arm. If people only value coethnics' time-in-residence or feel special disaffinity for non-coethnics in-state, there should be null to negative effects of longer residence in this treatment condition. Instead, the results are in-line with the pooled estimates and not distinguishable from the estimated differences among respondents who were told both students were their coethnics. Together, the estimates in these two conditions confirm that even when co-nationality and coethnicity are constant, respondents give weight to in-state residency.

The + and x signs in Figure 3 show differences in allocations among respondents who were told only student 1 was their coethnic (+) or only student 2 was their coethnic (x). The changes in allocations to student 1 due to greater relative time-in-residence are positive throughout the treatment arm where she is also the respondent's sole coethnic. These differences are statistically significant in most comparisons, although not in three of the four comparisons in which more residency for student 1 does not create a tie or reranking of the students (2.6, 2.7, 2.16). There are

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<sup>55</sup>These estimates are plotted with 95% standard confidence intervals from 1-sided hypothesis tests—i.e., without correction for multiple hypothesis testing. They should be considered exploratory. I argued in the pre-analysis plan that because the existence of a general effect was not established by any prior studies, it would be premature to preregister expectations about sub-group comparisons.

Note that Figure 3 is created by differencing averages of treatment groups; i.e., it is not necessary to estimate a regression to find the results. Table ?? in the Supplemental Materials provides the average allocation to student 1 in each treatment arm, along with standard deviations and number of responses.

two additional statistically insignificant comparisons in this treatment arm—the estimates labeled 2.5 ( $p = 0.11$ ) and 2.17 ( $p = 0.096$ )—which I will return to momentarily.

Did respondents reward non-coethnic, in-state students at the expense of coethnic students? The estimates marked with an x show differences in allocations to student 1 in the treatment in which student 2 shares the respondent's race but student 1 does not. Student 1 received a bonus for residency in most of these comparisons, despite the unfavorable coethnicity treatment. However, there was no statistically significant no boost to student 1 from living in-state longer than student 2 when both students were state residents (see comparisons 2.8 and 2.18). Respondents were more willing to reward non-coethnics for residency at the expense of out-of-state coethnics compared to in-state coethnics.

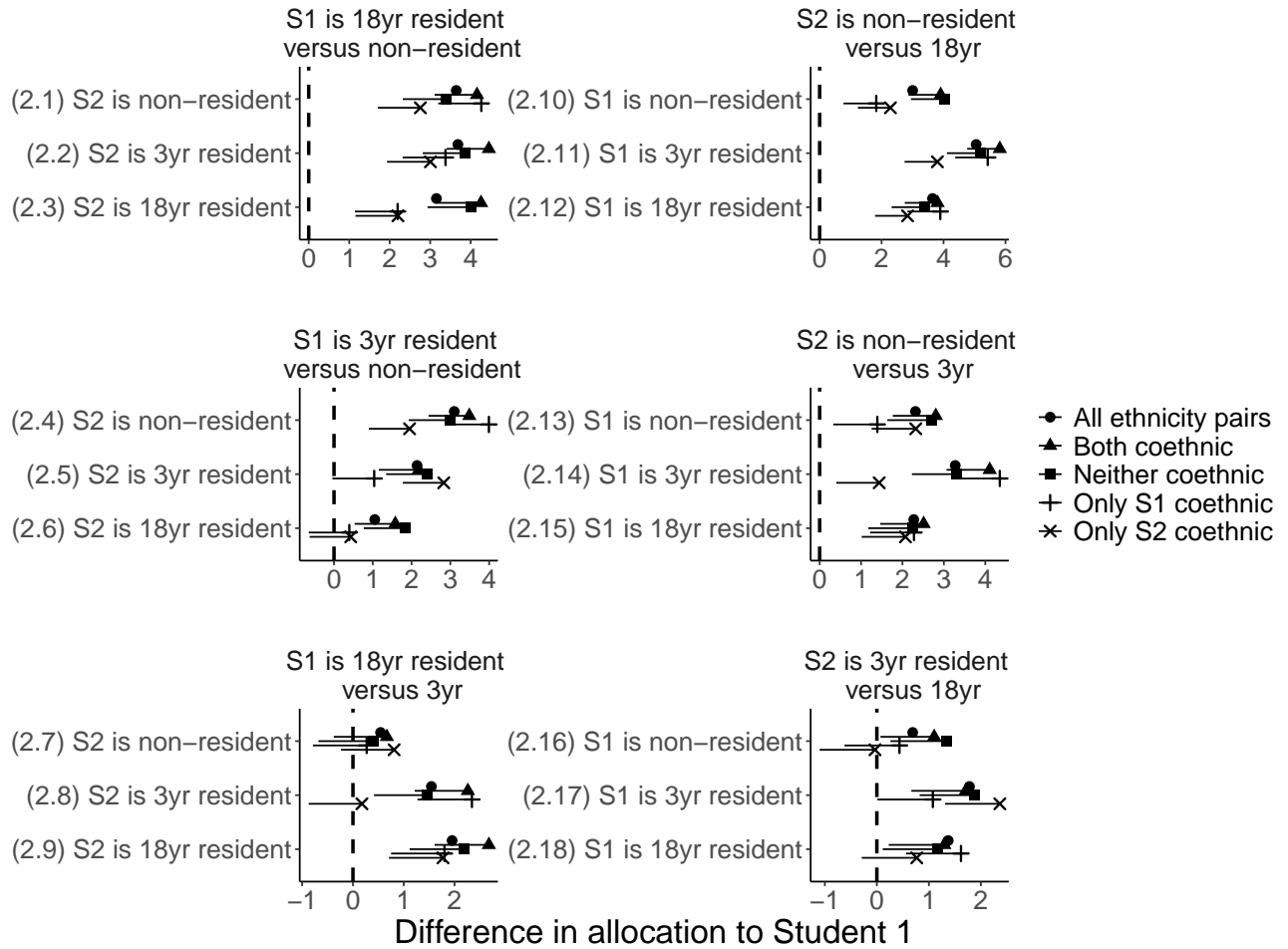
Respondents were cross-pressured when pro-resident and pro-coethnic considerations did not favor the same student. To see that cross-pressure more clearly, notice that the comparisons which re-rank the students fall into three categories: student 1 can move from having less residency than student 2 to having more (estimates 2.2, 2.11); move from the same length of residency to more (2.1, 2.4, 2.8, 2.12, 2.14, 2.18); or she can move from having less residency than student 2 to having the same length of residency (2.3, 2.5, 2.9, 2.13, 2.17).

In comparisons that move student 1 from having shorter residency to having same-to-more residency, the bonus to student 1 is larger when she is the respondent's sole coethnic compared to when student 2 is the respondent's sole coethnic. To see this, note that the estimates marked + are greater than the estimates marked x in these eight comparisons (2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.8, 2.11, 2.12, 2.14, 2.18).

On the other hand, consider the comparisons that move student 1 from having less residence time than student 2 to being in residence the same amount of time. Here, differences due to changes relative residency are similar in size (2.3, 2.9) or smaller (2.5, 2.13, 2.17) if student 1 is the respondent's sole coethnic compared to when student 2 is the only coethnic. These smaller-or-equal differences include the two statistically insignificant results noted above (see estimates



Figure 3: Pro-local discrimination and ethnicity treatments



marked + in 2.5 and 2.17). Respondents are penalizing student 1's relative non-localness a little less when she is their sole coethnic compared to when she is from an out-group. Therefore, the difference in allocations to a coethnic student 1 when she moves from less to equal residence is comparatively small because she was being docked slightly less to start with. In sum, respondents put a little less weight on coethnics' relative deficits in time-in-residence and put a little more weight on coethnics' relative advantages in time-in-residence.

To further simplify the results, Figure 4 collapses the results into two simple comparisons. The top graph in Figure 4 shows the difference in allocation to student 1 comparing treatments in which

she is the sole in-state student with treatments in which she is the sole out-of-state resident—i.e., it compares the average allocations in treatment arms C and F against the average in treatment arms G and H. The second panel shows the difference in average allocation to student 1 when she is an 18-year resident and student 2 is a 3-year resident compared to the allocation when the reverse is true. This comparison looks for weight assigned to additional years of residence conditional on in-state residence. If respondents favor longer-term residents over shorter-term residents, this creates a gap in entitlement to resources from which migrants can never fully recover, at least relative to people of their own age.

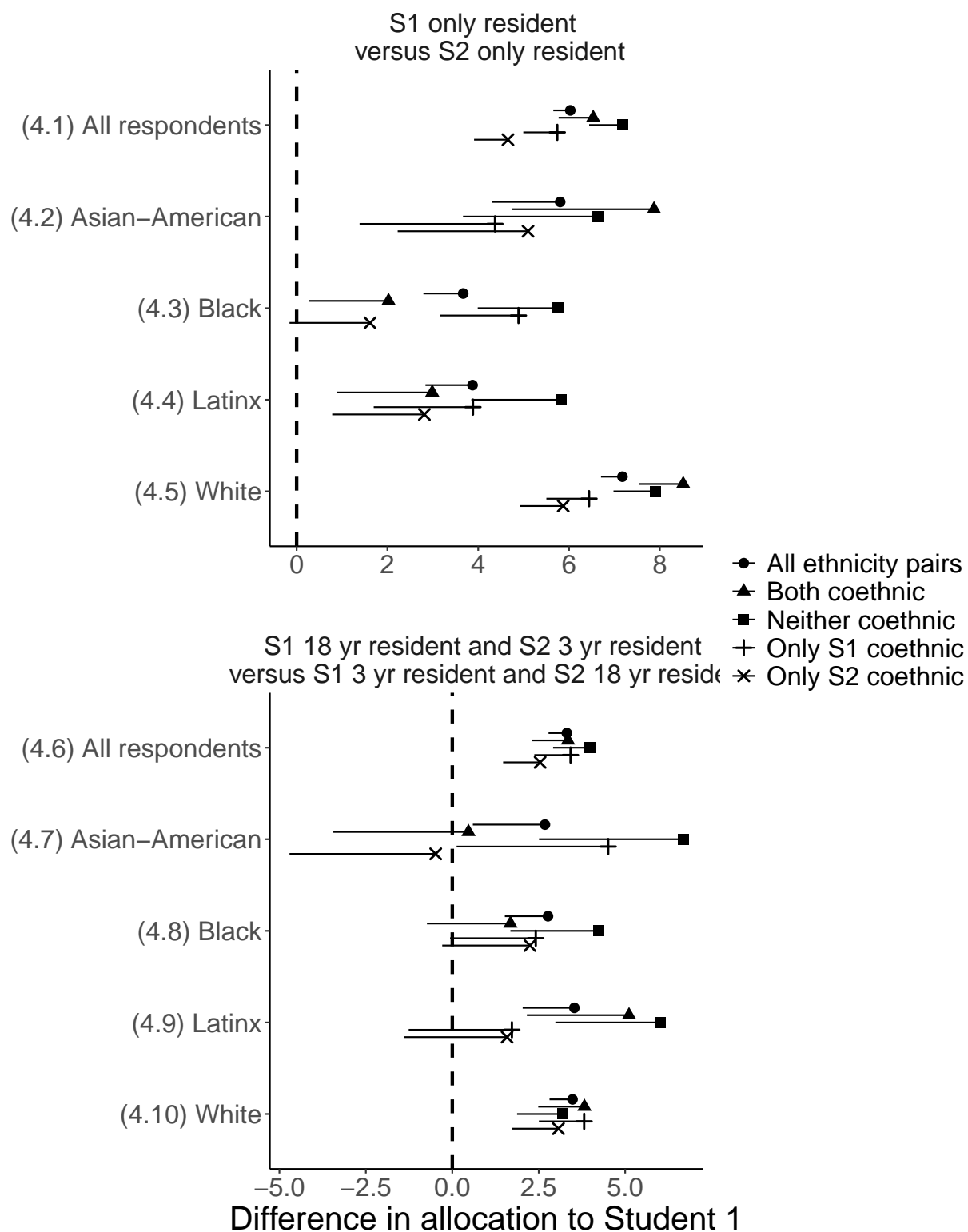
Figure 4 shows these comparisons for all respondents and by respondents' race/ethnicity. In the full sample of respondents, there is pro-resident bias across all race/ethnicity treatment arms (see 4.1, 4.6). Respondents rewarded in-state students over out-of state students (4.1) and 18-year residents relative to 3-year residents (4.6). Thus, entitlement due to residence seems to grow over time. The bonus for student 1's residency is larger if she is coethnic and student 2 is not compared to when the reverse is true (compare estimates marked x and + in 4.1 and 4.6). Nonetheless, the bonus for time-in-state exists even when that means money to a non-coethnic instead of a coethnic (x in 4.1, 4.6).

When respondents are disaggregated by race, rewards for in-state residence (top panel) and longer in state residence (bottom panel) persist. Those bonuses are statistically significant within each ethno-racial subgroup when all coethnicity treatments are pooled (the estimates represented as circles).

White respondents were the least cross-pressured by information about students' ethno-racial identity. The increases in allocation to student 1 due to more residency are positive and statistically significant in all coethnicity treatment arms (see 4.5, 4.10). Whites rewarded White students a little more for residency and penalized them for out-of-state residency a little less. Nonetheless, they rewarded a non-White student's time in residence in both conditions.

Asian-American respondents always gave bonuses for being the sole in-state student (4.2).

Figure 4: Pro-local discrimination and coethnic treatments disaggregated by respondent race



However, when Asian-American respondents were considering two in-state students (4.7), the results were mixed. Longer residence was rewarded if both students were in an ethno-racial out-group (square) and when the student with longer residence was the only Asian-American student (+). The difference in the length of two in-state students' residence was disregarded, however, if giving weight to residence meant penalizing a coethnic—regardless of whether the reward for residency would go to another Asian-American student (triangle) or a non-coethnic (x).

Black and Latinx respondents were the most cross-pressured by information about in-state residence and coethnicity. These respondents gave positive weight to residence. They rewarded in-state residence over out-of-state residence in most treatment arms (4.3, 4.4), although the differences in allocations are not always statistically significant. When both students were in-state, Black respondents only gave weight to relative time-in-residence if neither student was Black (square in 4.8). Latinx respondents also used length of in-state residence to distinguish between in-state non-coethnics (square in 4.9) and, unlike Black respondents, between in-state coethnics (triangle in 4.9). Neither Black nor Latinx respondents rewarded relative length of time in-state when one in-state student was coethnic and the other was not (x and + in 4.8 and 4.9).

Differences in how ethno-racial subgroups responded to information about coethnicity correspond with the guidelines respondents endorsed in direct questions about scholarship criteria (Figure 1). White respondents mostly disagreed with the idea of preferences for historically disadvantaged ethno-racial groups. On the other hand, a majority of each non-White group thought there should at least be preferences for disadvantaged minorities, with the highest rates of endorsement among Blacks and the lowest among Asian-Americans. In the experiment, we see that all groups gave weight to in-state residence and longer in-state residence, even among non-coethnic students. All ethno-racial groups also showed some ethnic favoritism, rewarding coethnics' residence a little more than non-coethnics' residence. However, non-white respondents were the most cross-pressured when co-ethnicity and relative length of residence favored different students.

In the supplemental results, I report differences in allocations by ideology and partisanship.

Members of all parties and ideologies gave some weight to in-state residence. Republicans, independents, conservatives and moderates gave the largest rewards for residency. All respondents seemed to reward coethnics' time-in-residence a little more than non-coethnics' time. However, the cross-pressure of coethnicity and length of residence only led to null rewards for residency in some treatment arms among Democrats and liberals.

## 5 State and national identity

US respondents discriminate among Americans, and even coethnic Americans, based on how long they have lived in-state. That pattern suggests an affinity for shared national or ethno-racial identity is not precisely the same as a belief in entitlement through residence. In this section, I consider sub-groups of respondents defined by differences in state and national identities. If the bias in favor of state residents is limited to Americans with a specific identity repertoire, pro-resident discrimination might belong downstream from national or ethno-racial identity after all. For example, discrimination in favor of in-state residents might be a mark of weak national identity or, at least, weaker attachment to the US relative to one's state.<sup>56</sup> Or perhaps the strength of sub-national identities explain the results above? In countries with ethnically distinct regions or "stateless nations"—such as Quebec or Scotland—a tendency to discriminate based on domestic migration history is arguably a form of nationalism, albeit an attachment to a national identity that does not have the stamp of sovereignty. If that logic is ported to the United States, it may be that people who discriminate the most against domestic migrants feel very close to the state where they now live.

Figure 5 disaggregates survey respondents according to a battery of questions about their own domestic migration history, their identification with the state where they live and their attitudes toward the US. First, I separate respondents living in the state where they were born (estimate 5.1,

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<sup>56</sup>Bhavnani and Lacina (2019) argue that domestic migration is more controversial where national identities are weaker.

5.13) compared to other US residents (5.2, 5.14).<sup>57</sup> Second, survey respondents who felt close to the state where they live (5.3, 5.15) are plotted separately from people who said they did not feel close to their state (5.4, 5.16).<sup>58</sup> The next estimates distinguish between people who felt close to the US and those who did not (5.5, 5.6, 5.17, 5.18). Then, respondents are arranged by whether or not they said they were proud to be of US nationality (5.7, 5.8, 5.19, 5.20).<sup>59</sup> Finally, I compared respondents' answers on questions about closeness to the US and the state where they lived. That comparison identifies people who felt closer to the US (5.9, 5.21), closer to their state (5.11, 5.23), equally close to both (5.10, 5.22) or felt close to neither (5.12, 5.24).

Strong state identities do not correlate with especially pronounced discrimination in favor of in-state students. A tendency to favor in state students over non-residents is present among every sub-group in Figure 5. People living in the state of their birth (5.1, 5.13) look quite similar to domestic migrants (5.2, 5.14), as do people who said they felt close to the state where they live (5.3, 5.15) versus those who did not (5.4, 5.16). If anything, strong *national* identity seems to be most correlated with willingness to discriminate amongst Americans based on internal mobility. People who said they felt close to the US or proud of the US discriminated based on domestic

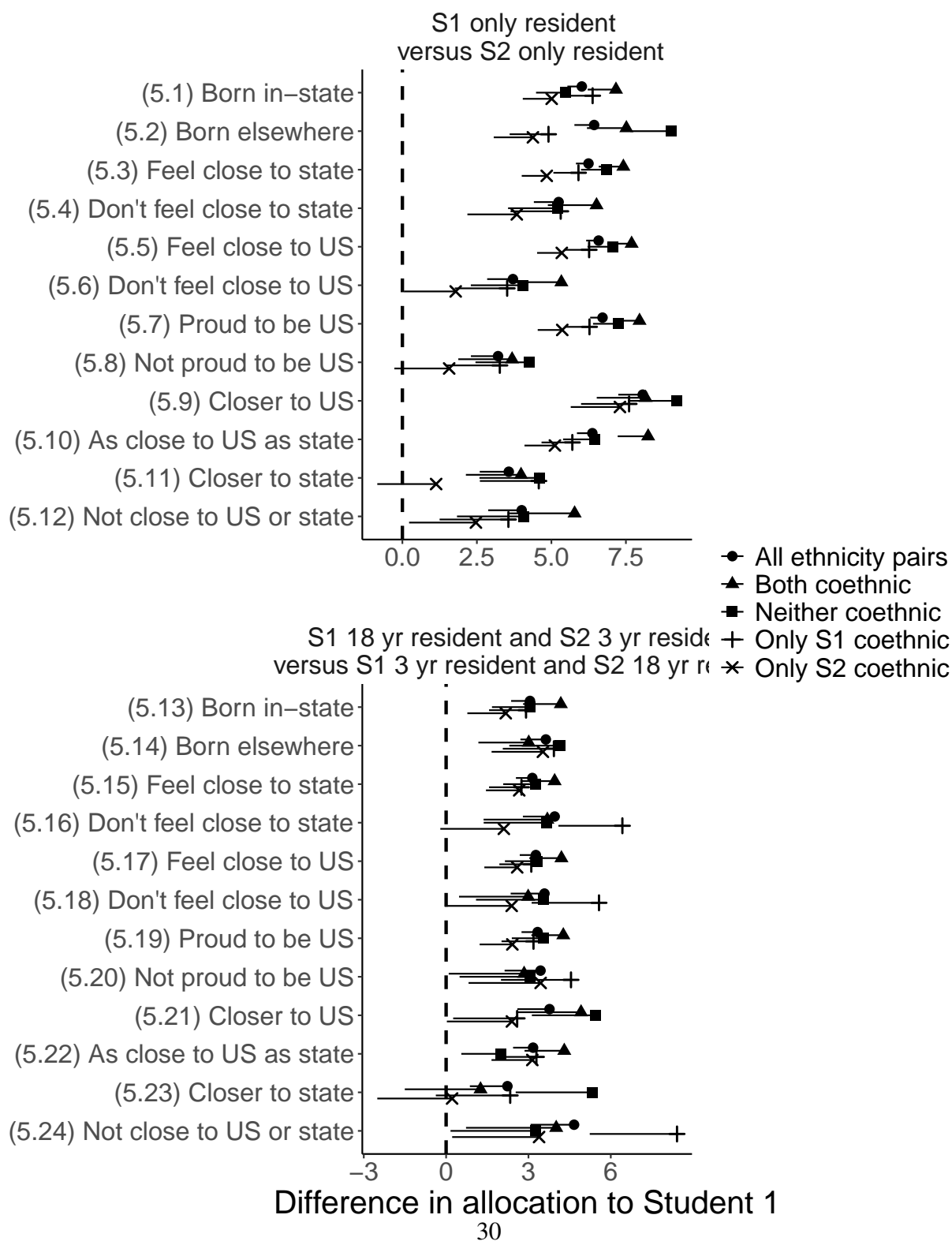
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<sup>57</sup>The survey did not include a question about citizenship status, to avoid chilling effects. However, the responses to the question "In what state were you born" included the option "I was not born in the US." The share of respondents who choose that option was implausibly low, less than 1%, compared to the government estimate that about 14% of US residents were born abroad. The group of respondents who reported being born in the state where they now live likely includes immigrants who are living in the state where they first lived when arriving in the US. The group of respondents who reported being born in another US state may likewise include immigrants who gave their first state of US residence as their birth state but have subsequently moved.

<sup>58</sup>The question wording was "People have different views about themselves and how they relate to the world. How close do you feel to:" (a) "the US" and (b) "the state where you live." The possible responses were (1) "very close," (2) "close," (3) "not very close" and (4) "not close at all." Respondents who said they felt close or very close to the US are coded as feeling close to US, with a parallel coding for feelings of closeness to one's state. Relative closeness is coded as (a) people who "feel closer to the US" chose a 1 or 2 for closeness to the US and a larger number for closeness to state than for closeness to the US; (b) people who "feel as close to the US as state" chose either "very close" for both the US and their state or "close" for both; (c) people coded as "feel closer to state" chose a 1 or 2 for closeness to the state where they lived and a larger number for closeness to the US than for closeness to their state; (d) "close to neither" indicates a respondent who said they felt "not very close" or "not close at all" to the US and felt "not very close" or "not close at all" to their state.

<sup>59</sup>The survey question was "How proud are you to be of US nationality?" The options were "Very proud;" "Quite proud;" "Not very proud;" "Not at all proud;" and "I am not of US nationality." I grouped respondents who chose one of the first two options and compared them to a "not proud" group who said they were "not very" or "not at all" proud. Non-US nationals are omitted from this comparison.

Figure 5: Discrimination against domestic migrants compared to respondents' state and national identities



residency a little more than people who said the opposite (compare 5.5 to 5.6 and 5.7 to 5.8). Thus, there is no evidence that stronger national attachments means that people no longer believe in discrimination based on residence, even among co-nationals.

## **6 Pro-resident discrimination and immigration attitudes**

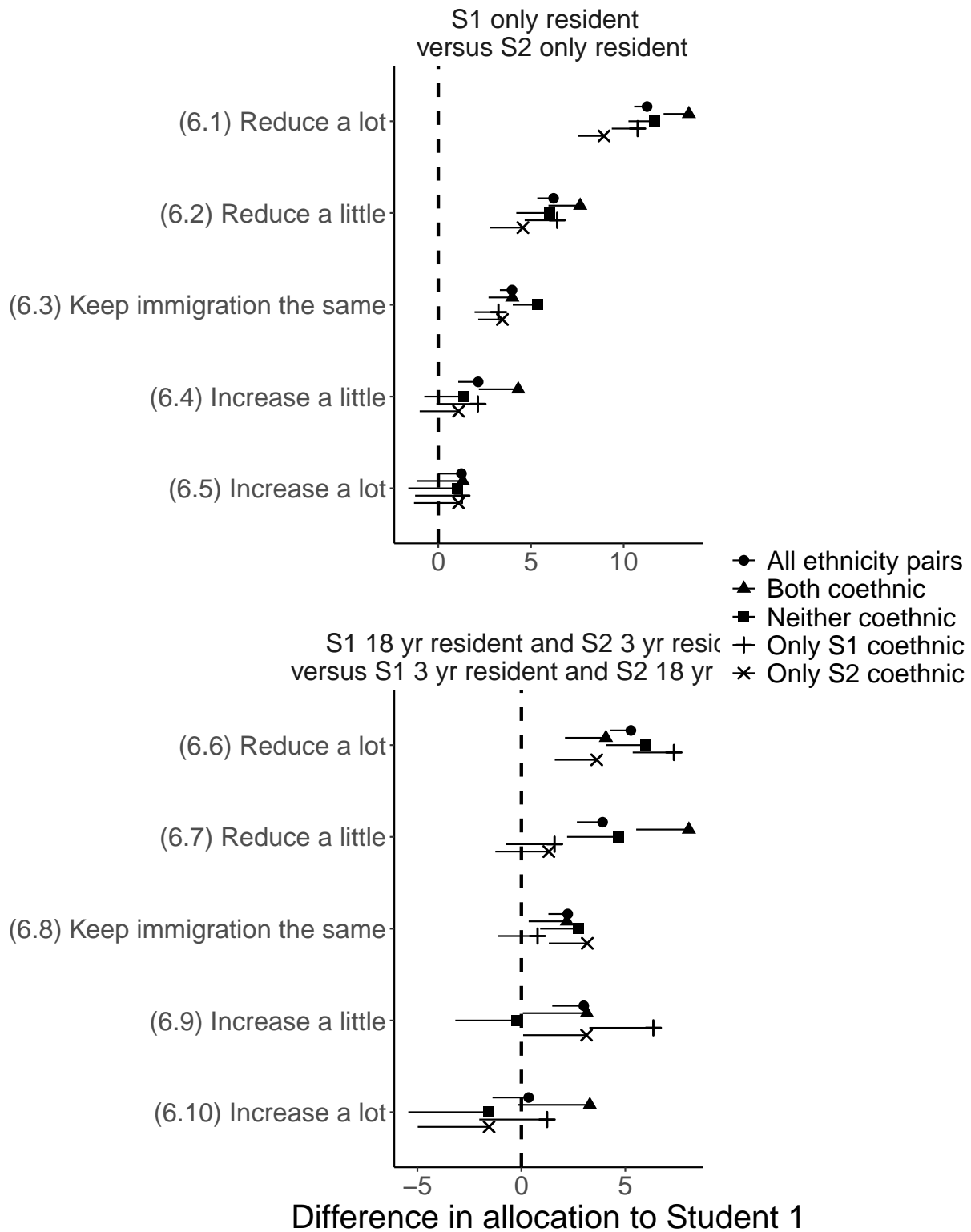
The final question to ask of these data is whether valorization of residence correlates with views about immigration. A paradigm in the immigration literature doubts that people care about who has lived where and for how long except in so far as it relates to policing in- and out-group national and ethno-national identities. In contrast to that assumption, I find that US adults seem to equate time-in-residence with entitlement to public resources even among co-nationals and that their pro-residence bias exists alongside the better-known pattern of coethnic favoritism. On its own, this point challenges the literature's assumptions about why migration matters to people. From an empiricist's point-of-view, it is also interesting to ask if valorization of residence in a domestic context has any correlation to thinking about immigration? If it does, that suggests it is worthwhile to further investigate how valuations of time-in-residence inform public opinion.

Figure 6 sorts respondent according to their views on international immigration. I asked respondents: "Do you think the number of immigrants to the United States nowadays should be: Increased a lot; Increased a little; Remain the same as it is; Reduced a little or Reduced a lot?" The figure shows differences in average allocations to more and less-local students within the set of people who gave each of these answers.

People who said that immigration to the US should be reduced a lot gave the largest bonuses to in-state residents over non-residents (6.1) and to students who had lived in the state longer (6.6). This affinity for time-in-residence was apparent despite the specification that both students were US citizens and regardless of the coethnicity treatment these respondents received. Immigration hawks rewarded domestic residence even when the more-local student was not a coethnic and the



Figure 6: Pro-local discrimination and preferred level of immigration to the US



less local student was a coethnic.

The effects of the residence treatment are diminished among respondents with less restrictive immigration preferences. People who wanted to reduce immigration “a little” gave more funds to in-state students (6.2) and students with more time in state (6.7). These bonuses were smaller and more noisily estimated than the differences among the respondents who wanted more dramatic immigration cuts. People who wanted to maintain current immigration levels had still smaller and noisier responses to the residence treatment (6.3, 6.8). People who wanted a little more immigration to the US gave a small but statistically significant bonus based on residency if we pool all the ethnicity treatments (6.4, 6.9). However, those increases were not significant in some ethnicity treatment arms. Finally, people who thought immigration to the US should be increased a lot were largely indifferent to information about students’ residency in the state. There were no differences in their allocations to in-state versus out-of-state students (6.5). People with the most liberal immigration views also mostly disregarded differences between in-state students’ relative length of residence (6.10).

In sum, US adults’ opinions about immigration may reflect an orientation toward established residents versus newcomers that applies in sub-national as well as international contexts. The higher education experiment measures the degree to which people equate time-in-residence with entitlement to public resources, controlling for co-nationality and co-ethnicity. People with very restrictive immigration preferences tended to reward residence in a domestic context, as well. Immigration liberals seemed least concerned with time-in-residence when they allocated resources among Americans.

## **7 Discussion**

Discrimination in favor of time-in-residence is normative among US adults. Devoting more educational resources to an American who has been in-state longer at the expense of another American

seems reasonable to most people—so reasonable that most people endorse the idea openly. Asked to divide a scholarship fund between high school seniors, US adults discriminate in favor of residents of the state where they live and discriminate among in-state students based on who has been in residence longer. People reward in-state residence even if doing so transfers resources to an ethno-racial out-group at the expense of the in-group. Coethnic favoritism also influenced respondents' scholarship allocations. However, affinity for coethnics and valuation of residence are not identical.

Discrimination in favor of sub-national residency is correlated with views on immigration. People who wanted to greatly reduce immigration to the US were also the most biased in favor of long-time state residents compared to Americans from elsewhere. Attitudes about international immigration may be informed by a general belief about the relationship between time-in-residence and rights, a belief that exists with respect to both sub-national and national spaces.

Additional research is needed to clarify and strengthen the findings reported here. To my knowledge, this is the first experiment measuring how length of domestic residency impacts US adults' perceptions of other Americans' resource entitlements. The experiment here should be replicated, as well as being extended to other contexts and policy choices. For example, my experiment concerns entitlement to public funds. However, elapsed residence may have a different role in other politically-important decisions such as assessment of candidates for public office. It may also be that US adults are atypical in their willingness to discriminate against domestic migrants. In the literature on immigration, the US is often described as relatively pro-migration. It also has very high rates of internal migration in comparison to other wealthy countries. Based on these factors, I argued that the US was an unlikely arena for finding evidence of discrimination against domestic migrants. However, other features of the US, such as fiscal federalism, may incentivize sub-national discrimination. Perhaps the findings above would be null in a unitary state. Or perhaps the value assigned to residency by US adults is specific to immigrant-founded countries and would not exist at all in a country where the founding mythology is of an ethnic homeland. These

possibilities raise empirical questions that should be taken up in further research.

In the context of international immigration, residence history is often redundant with nationality, ethnicity, and race. When it comes to the opinions of ethno-national majorities, valorization of residence may have largely the same observable implications as nationalism, ethnocentrism or xenophobia. Nonetheless, unpacking the normativity of time-in-residence has the potential to develop the literature on migration politics on multiple fronts.

Valorization of residence pushes back against a paradigm that assumes very few people have any preferences about migration and mobility per se, apart from their concern for policing boundaries around identity groups like races and nations. I find here that even when respondents are assured that two people are both their co-nationals and their co-ethnics, they reward resources based on longer local residency. Not migrating is normative, even in a country with very high internal mobility like the United States.

Also, this paper speaks to critical and normative theories of citizenship which argue that valorization of residence encourages pro-migrant notions of belonging<sup>60</sup> and may even support “insurgent” conceptions of citizenship<sup>61</sup> that reject the right of governments to limit mobility.<sup>62</sup> On the one hand, the results above suggest that the belief that residency creates entitlements can be compatible with many points on the ideological spectrum. On the other hand, there seems to be a de facto affinity between valorization of residence and anti-immigration policy preferences.

Finally, understanding how time-in-residence translates into perceptions of entitlement may help explain the limits of solidarity among immigrants and among ethno-racial minorities. Restrictive immigration policy preferences in these populations are often explained as the product of jockeying for position in the racial hierarchy<sup>63</sup> or conformity with racist norms.<sup>64</sup> Those explanations are not incompatible with a belief that residency creates rights. However, the latter offers a

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<sup>60</sup> Appadurai 1996; Holston 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Swerts 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Dadusc, Grazioli, and Martínez 2019.

<sup>63</sup> Beltrán 2020; Mastrangelo and Mugglin 2024; Menjívar 2021.

<sup>64</sup> Dunbar-Ortiz 2021; Lori 2019; Purkayastha and Roy 2023; Treitler 2013; Treitler 2015.

more straightforward explanation for some empirical patterns in public opinion, such as ambivalence about immigration among Black Americans.<sup>65</sup> The conflict between beliefs about residents' entitlements and coethnic solidarity may also explain why survey-takers are often unenthusiastic about coethnic immigration. For instance, every European Social Survey since 2002 has asked Europeans about coethnic and non-coethnic immigration.<sup>66</sup> They always prefer coethnic immigration but they are not thrilled about either type of arrival; the share of Europeans who want "many" of their coethnics to immigrate to their country has never climbed above 28%.

It is beyond question that national, ethnic, and racial identities drive much of the global backlash against international immigration. However, those identities might not be solely responsible for the belief that the existing residents of places have rights that migrants do not. Part of the trouble with migrants might be migration.

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<sup>65</sup>Carter 2019.

<sup>66</sup>See ESS (2023). The questions about migration are: "To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country] people to come and live here?" and "How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people?" The answer options are "Allow many to come and live here," "Allow some," "Allow a few," and "Allow none."

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# Time in residence and entitlement to resources: A neglected dimension of migration politics

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## Supplementary Materials



Government				Opposition					
	Policy record	N	Had position	Anti	Salient anti	Pro	Salient pro	Had position	Anti
3	Restriction	13	38.46	7.69	7.69	30.77	0.00	40.15	12.12
2	No changes	69	31.88	10.14	0.00	21.74	0.00	28.52	7.90
1	Liberalization	49	36.73	8.16	4.08	28.57	0.00	34.44	9.20
0	Ambiguous	12	50.00	16.67	0.00	33.33	0.00	41.67	22.22

Figure 7: Replication of Figure 2 excluding domestic migrants

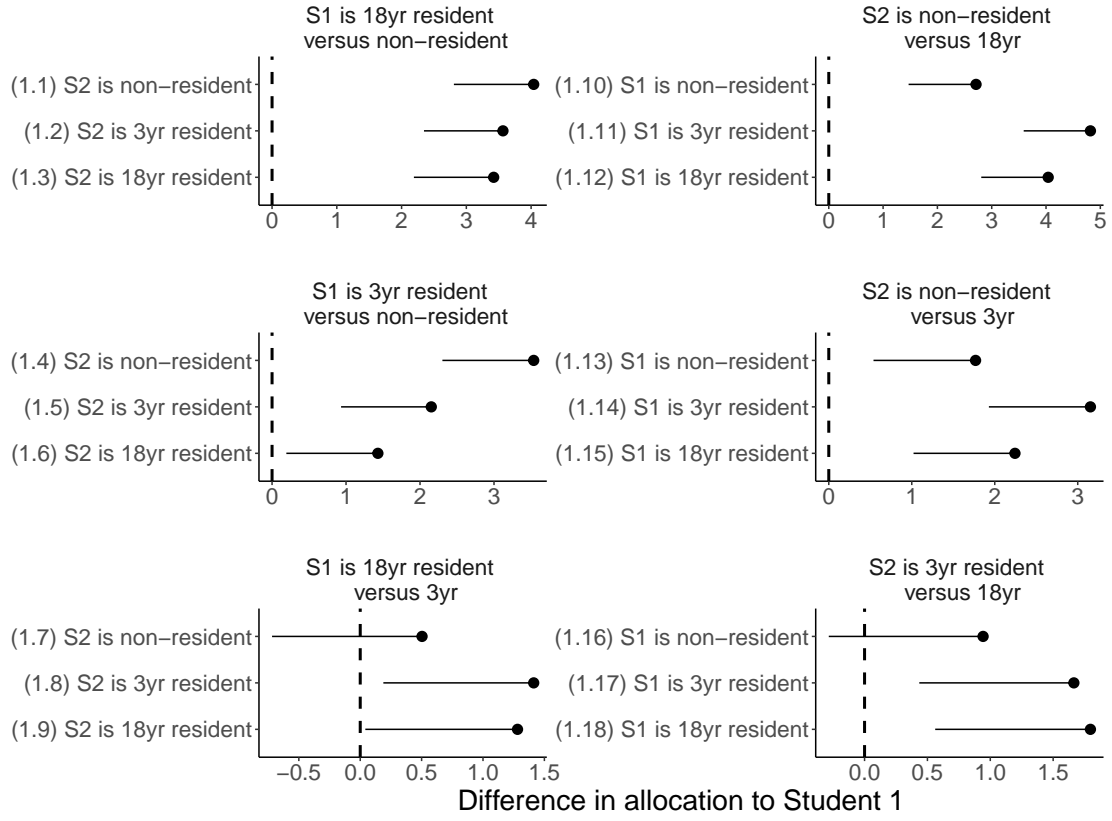


Table 3: Replication of Table 2 excluding domestic migrants

	Model 1
S1 is 18-year resident, S2 is 18-year resident (A)	0.71 (0.42)
S1 is 18-year resident, S2 is 18-year resident (B)	1.80* (0.42)
S1 is 18-year resident, S2 is non-resident (C)	4.04* (0.42)
S1 is 3-year resident, S2 is 18-year resident (D)	-1.28* (0.43)
S1 is 3-year resident, S2 is 3-year resident (E)	0.38 (0.42)
S1 is 3-year resident, S2 is non-resident (F)	3.54* (0.42)
S1 is non-resident, S2 is 18-year resident (G)	-2.71* (0.43)
S1 is non-resident, S2 is 3-year resident (H)	-1.77* (0.42)
Both students coethnic (a)	0.74* (0.28)
Only S1 coethnic (b)	1.05* (0.28)
Only S2 coethnic (c)	-0.08 (0.28)
Intercept	50.02* (0.35)
Num. obs.	17348

\* $p < 0.05$

Figure 8: Pro-local discrimination, partisanship and ideology

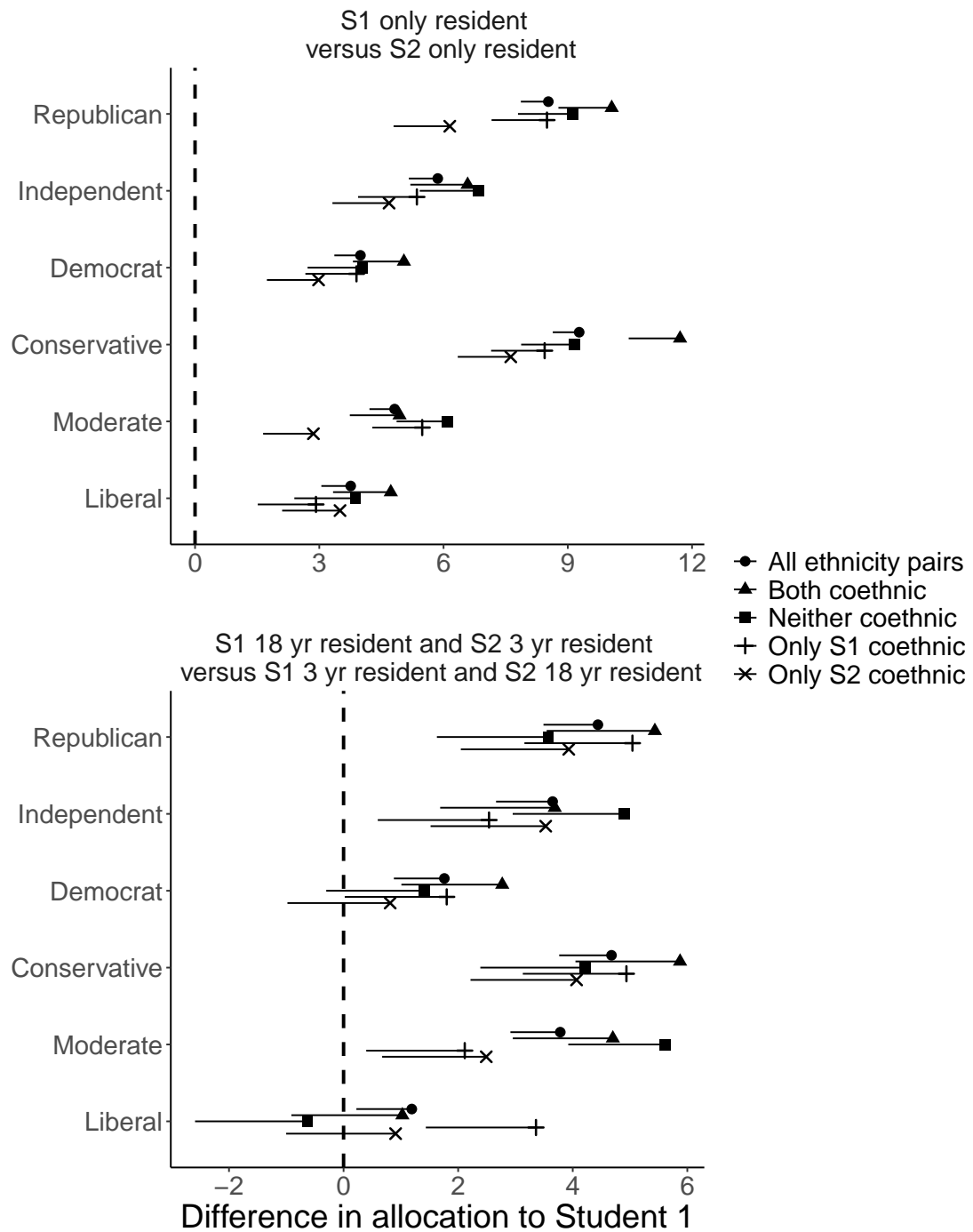


Figure 9: Average marginal component effects of information on residence and coethnicity

	Model 1	Model 2
3-year resident	−1.32* (0.13)	−1.34* (0.53)
Non-resident	−3.68* (0.13)	−3.61* (0.53)
Coethnic	0.55* (0.11)	1.88* (0.43)
Black respondent		−0.72 (0.50)
Latinx respondent		0.05 (0.53)
White respondent		1.21* (0.46)
Black respondent*3-year resident		0.34 (0.61)
Latinx respondent*3-year resident		0.20 (0.65)
White respondent*3-year resident		−0.10 (0.55)
Black respondent*Non-resident		1.30* (0.62)
Latinx respondent*Non-resident		1.06 (0.65)
White respondent*Non-resident		−0.69 (0.56)
Black respondent*Coethnic		0.28 (0.50)
Latinx respondent*Coethnic		−1.05* (0.53)
White respondent*Coethnic		−1.98* (0.45)
Intercept	51.39* (0.11)	50.75* (0.44)
Num. obs.	57786	57786

\* $p < 0.05$

## State scholarship programs

A subset of survey respondents responded to this prompt: “Now we would like you to consider general guidelines for scholarships. [PROGRAM NAME] gives financial aid to students planning to attend colleges and universities in that state. If you were advising this award program, what requirements would you recommend?”

The program name was selected to correspond to an actual public scholarship program for high-school age students in the respondent’s state. Some states have multiple programs of this type; in that case, I selected the program with the least descriptive name to avoid prompting the respondents in favor of some criteria over others. Many programs include the name of the state in the program title. For those that did not, I specified the state along with the program name. The included programs were:

- Alabama’s CollegeCounts
- Arkansas’s Academic Challenge Scholarship
- Arizona Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP)
- California’s Cal Grant
- Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative
- Connecticut Capitol Scholarship
- Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program
- Georgia’s HOPE Scholarship
- Illinois Monetary Award Program (MAP)
- Indiana’s 21st Century Scholars
- Kansas Comprehensive Grant
- Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship
- Louisiana’s Taylor Opportunity Program for students
- Massachusetts’ MASSGrant
- Maryland’s Delegate and Senatorial Scholarship
- Michigan Achievement Scholarships
- Minnesota’s North Star Promise Scholarship
- Missouri’s Bright Flight

- Mississippi Tuition Assistance Grant
- North Carolina's Next NC Scholarship
- Nebraska's Davis-Chambers Scholarship
- New Jersey student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship
- Nevada's Silver State Opportunity Grant
- New York State Scholarships for Academic Excellence
- Ohio College Opportunity Grant
- Oklahoma's Promise
- Oregon Opportunity Grant
- Pennsylvania's PA State Grant
- South Carolina's Legislative Incentive for Future Excellence (LIFE) Scholarship
- Tennessee HOPE Scholarship
- Texas Educational Opportunity Grant
- Utah Promise Grant
- Virginia Commonwealth Award
- Washington College Grant
- Wisconsin's Talent Incentive Program Grants