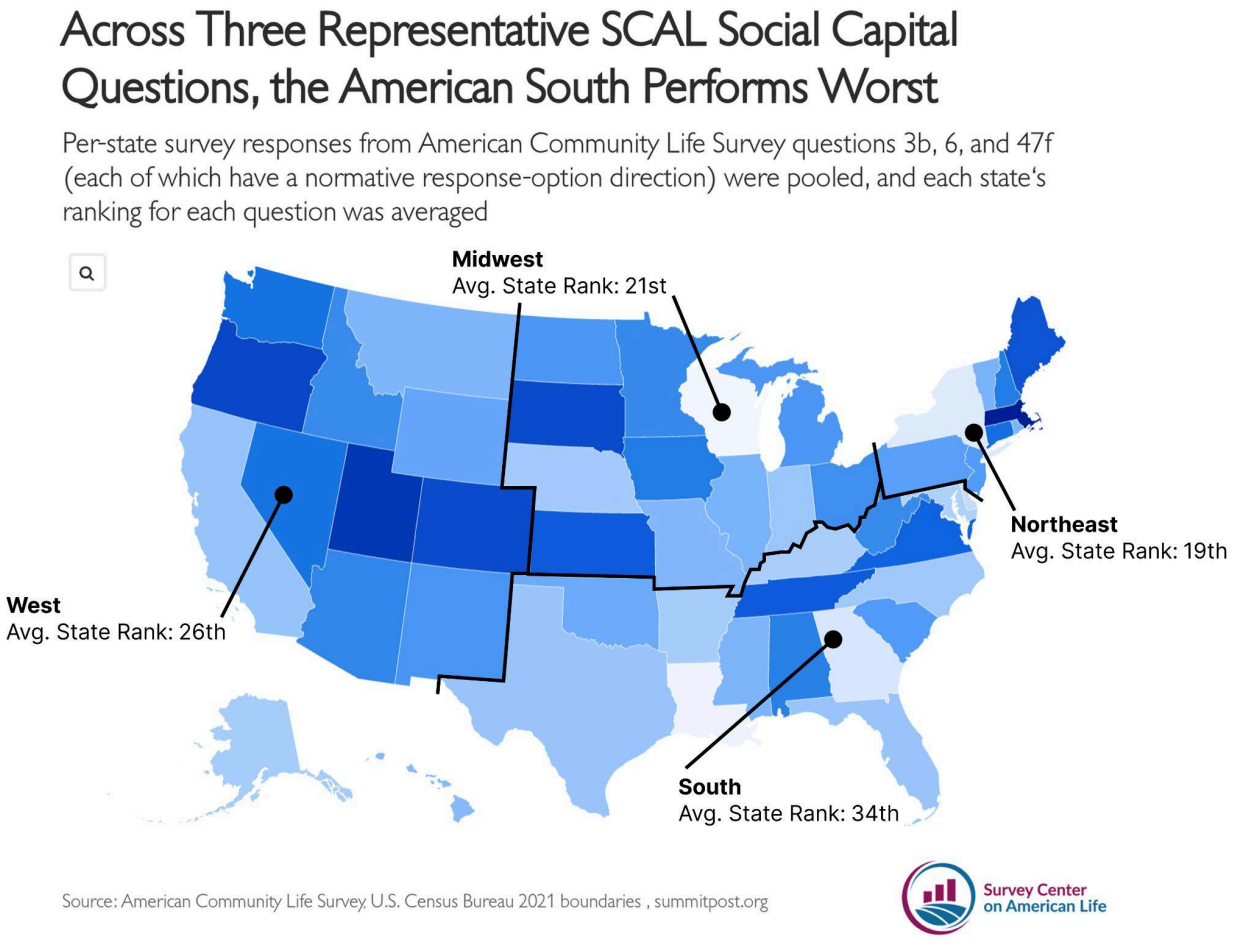


Figure 03

Error Introduced by Unexplained Racial Effects in SCAL Surveys

Gideon Putnam

08/28/2026

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Appendix A: Question Typology and Feature Descriptions

Online Appendix B: 107 Analyzed SCAL Questions

Executive Summary

- Of the 107 SCAL social capital items analyzed in this report, a large majority show statistically significant race-level variation after controlling for age, income, and education — the analytic vocabulary SCAL typically brings to race-level reporting.
- These gaps are large enough to matter for survey reporting. On a typical binary question, for example, these gaps translate to a roughly six-point difference in the reported breakdown that has no explanation in the covariates SCAL reports.
- Question design moves the gap more than any respondent characteristic does. Items asking about attitudes carry nearly double the unexplained gap of items asking about concrete behavior, and items framed around institutions carry more than triple the unexplained gap of items framed around local community. This suggests the effect is at least partly a property of SCAL's survey instruments, not underlying public opinion.

Introduction

Social science has a habit of measuring race and calling it geography. Race and ethnicity often predict social outcomes well past the point where income, education, and age can explain variance, and social scientists often lack the vocabulary to analyze that leftover signal — and so tend to report it as geography or not report it at all. Consider this the 'Southern Social Fallacy,' which has a few common features across fields:

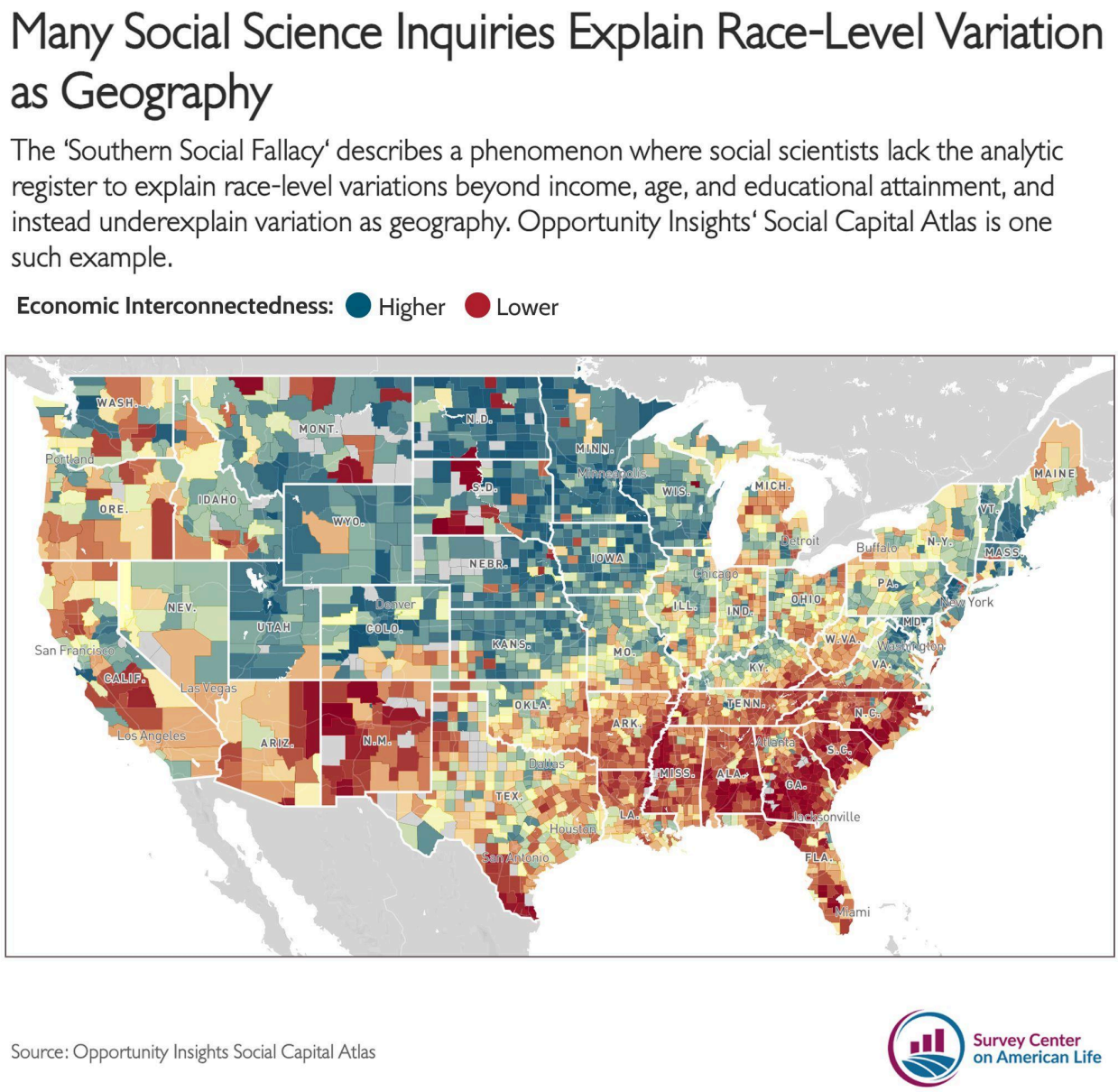


Fig 01: Opportunity Insights' Social Capital Atlas.

- Agnostic of an inquiry's subject matter, the American South performs worst. Wealthy and diverse California, New York, and Texas perform somewhere in the middle. The Midwest and New England perform the strongest.
- The inquiry does not name variation across race or ethnicity as a plausible interpretation of geographic variation.
- The inquiry defers geographic variation to differences in income and educational attainment, among other factors.

These findings often demonstrate a lack of comfort with naming race explicitly. For example, a 2018 report from the United States Congress Joint Economic Committee on the Geography of Social Capital in America, which runs 66 pages, references the word race only two times.

The Southern Social Fallacy pervades in part because it is motivated by good social science – race and ethnicity *should not* have explanatory power for geographic variation because there is no quality of racial experience *per se* that is agreed to constrain the development of, say, social capital. Any suggestion otherwise would be problematic. However, where race and/or ethnicity have statistical power across demographic groups (controlling for more plausible mechanisms like income, educational attainment, etc.) it is essential to name because it demonstrates the existence of an **unexplained racial effect** that should be contended with. In this report, unexplained racial effects are response gaps by race that controls for income, age, and educational attainment fail to account for. For the Survey Center on American Life's (SCAL) purposes, if we carry forward the premise that this unexplained effect cannot be accounted for by racial experience *per se*, we must pursue either that a) there is widespread and unsolvable measurement error across survey questions, b) there is widespread but *addressable* measurement error across survey questions, or c) SCAL is not (nor necessarily has to be) equipped to conduct a careful analysis of unexplained racial effects.

This fallacy is highly salient in several social science fields, many of which are among SCAL's research areas. Some examples include:

- Social Capital
- Social Mobility
- Life Satisfaction

While this fallacy is worth considering across SCAL's research portfolio, this report will only cover the research area of social capital. Social capital has many advantages for this

analysis: per figure 01, levels of social capital geographically track with levels of whiteness in the US, and indeed survey responses to social-capital-oriented questions in SCAL's portfolio indicate a large unexplained racial effect. Perhaps most importantly, drilled down to the survey-question level — for questions such as the number of close friends a respondent considers themself to have — there is simply no plausible explanation beyond controllable-for covariates like age, income, and educational attainment for race-level effects to consistently have statistical significance at the $p<0.001$ level, as they are observed to have. This tension — and the measurement error it suggests — motivates the analysis of this review.

This report has three main sections:

01 How Does SCAL Measure Social Capital?

This section considers the 107 survey questions that SCAL has asked since 2019 that are related to social capital. Questions are both analyzed by their content (agnostic of question framing) and by their framing (agnostic of content).

02 How Do These Measures Track By Race?

This section works through the contours of unexplained racial effects in SCAL's survey questions, following from the two analytic lenses established in section 01.

03 Conclusion: How Can SCAL Better Measure Social Capital?

This section considers how SCAL can minimize unexplained racial effects by different statistical interventions and/or question design; it also reflects on the extent to which change is strictly necessary.

01 How Does SCAL Measure Social Capital?

SCAL has asked 107 questions related to social capital since 2019.[1] Of these, a majority of questions have statistically significant variations across race. Even when controlling for mechanisms that could plausibly induce race-level variation — which for this report will be levels of income, age, and educational attainment[2] — 86 questions have statistically significant variations across race. Figure 02 shows two sample questions that demonstrate near-median levels of unexplained racial effect. For American Community Life Survey Q6, Black and Hispanic respondents are biased downward, leaving them more likely to report having fewer

[1] These questions are enumerated in Online Appendix B.

[2] A standard set of variables is located in each survey to ensure that these plausible mechanisms are being controlled for equivalently in each survey to head off the introduction of endogenous survey-level effects. The variables used in each survey to calculate age, income, and educational attainment are enumerated in Online Appendix B.

close friends than white respondents.[3] For American Social Capital Survey Q21b, Black and Hispanic respondents are biased upwards, indicating that they are more likely to report being a member of a hobby or activity group. The absolute effect percentile for both of these questions tells us that, independent of the direction of bias, these effects are clustered between the 40th and 61st percentiles of unexplained racial effects across the 107 analyzed SCAL questions. The effect is represented in coefficient over standard deviation units (β/SD), which normalizes effect strengths to question types with different numbers of response options and diffuse underlying response distributions — the analytic implications of which are explored in section 02.

Survey	*Question*	*Black Respondents*		*Hispanic Respondents*	
		Unexplained Racial Effect (β/SD)	*Absolute Effect Percentile*	*Unexplained Racial Effect (β/SD)*	*Absolute Effect Percentile*
Community Survey Q6	*"If you counted the number of people you consider to be your close friend and who, in turn, would also consider you to be their close friend, how many people would that be?"*	-0.193 SD	58th	−0.119 SD	56th
Social Capital Survey Q21b	*"Are you currently a member of any of the following groups or organizations, or not? [A hobby or activity group, like a book club, gardening club, or outdoors group]"*	+0.124 SD	40th	+0.134 SD	61st

Fig 02: sample SCAL social capital questions. Every effect in this table is statistically significant at the a=0.05 level.

There is not always a normative conclusion to the direction of an unexplained racial effect. Each question in the 107 question bank has an ordinal set of response options, so we can infer that respondents select one response option out of a continuous spectrum of potential opinions (i.e. selecting ‘very likely’ probably indicates a more strongly held opinion than

[3] This report will only analyze white, Black, and Hispanic respondents. While some SCAL surveys collect more detailed information about other races, like Asian people and Native American people, Black and Hispanic respondents have a large enough sample size to enable the analysis taken in this report, where other races often don’t.

'likely'). However, the direction of ordinal response options is inconsistent: for example, many SCAL questions have favorability-scale response options, from very unfavorable to very favorable, where a normative assessment of whether unexplained racial effects bias respondents 'upwards' or 'downwards' is predicated on the question or issue at hand — and thus cannot be made systematic. As a result, unexplained racial effects will generally be expressed in absolute terms in this report, indicating the extent to which survey responses vary by race after taking plausible mechanisms into account. For American Community Life Survey Q6, the interpretation of unexplained racial effects is that, controlling for age, income, and educational attainment, Black and Hispanic respondents report having 0.55 and 0.33 fewer close friends, respectively, than white respondents do.

When applied to American geography, the tangible effect of these unexplained racial effects is that for many of SCAL's questions, respondents who live in the American South are more likely to report normatively poor outcomes (i.e. lower levels of trust in neighbors to do the right thing) than respondents who live in any other region. Figure 03 shows the pooled responses from three randomly selected SCAL questions with significant race-level effects.

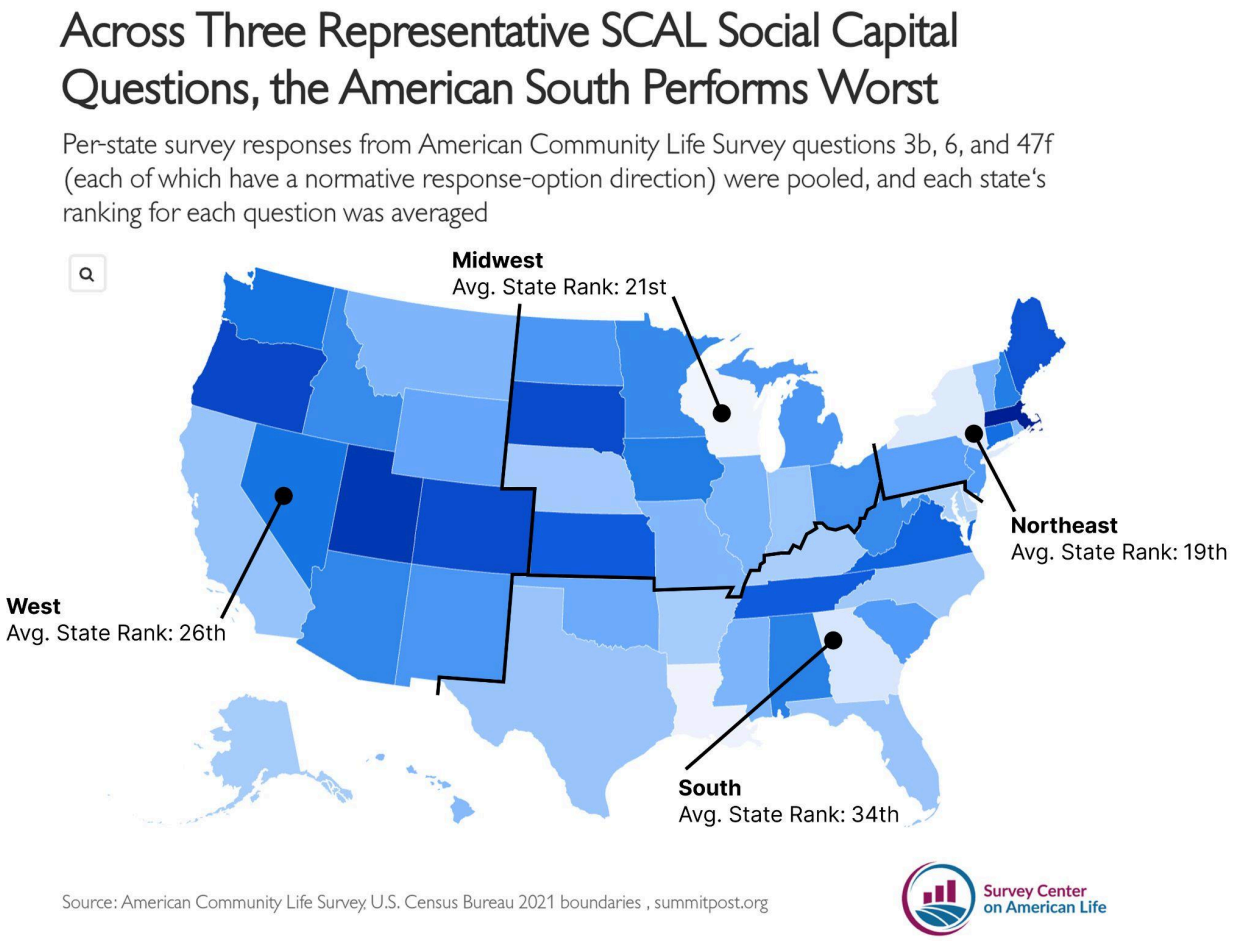


Fig 03: Geographic summary of three SCAL social capital questions. Note: the aggregated survey results depicted in this figure are not adjusted for income, age, or educational attainment. However, each of these questions has statistically significant unexplained racial effects.

While SCAL does not typically report survey results at the state level, this figure demonstrates that there is a meaningful relationship between a respondent's race and their survey responses — and one that pervades beyond SCAL's typical analytic vocabulary of age, income, and educational attainment.

The pool of 107 SCAL questions will be analyzed in this report on two axes: content and framing. There are many different content areas through which SCAL measures social capital, which we can break down into a question typology. The typology classifies each question by what it asks about — for example, a behaviour, an evaluation, a social tie, or a formal affiliation. This report evaluates four types of social capital questions — behavioural, attitudinal, personal network, and membership — and indexes (but analyzes separately) a further category, context,

that measures a respondent's surroundings rather than their personal opinions.[4] This report's second analytic lens considers SCAL questions by how they are framed. This report analyzes one question feature independently of a question's content: the subject of the question, which is broken down into five categories: self, family and friends, other people, community, and institutions. Full definitions and question examples for each question type and frame are provided in Appendix A.

02 How Do These Measures Track By Race?

Of the 107 questions SCAL asked about social capital between 2019 and 2026 — controlling for plausible mechanisms — 86 have statistically significant variations across race. For 74 questions, being Black significantly changes your response category compared to being white: 66 questions for Hispanic people. Figure 04 visualizes the response gap from unexplained racial effects, measured as standard deviations, between white respondents (who are represented along the x-axis), Black respondents, and Hispanic respondents.

[4] Unlike the four other types, Context items do not measure a respondent's social capital; they measure the opportunity structure around it. Because residential segregation supplies a well-documented substantive mechanism for race-level differences on Context items beyond age, income, and educational attainment, Context questions are described here but excluded from the unexplained-effects analysis in Section 02.

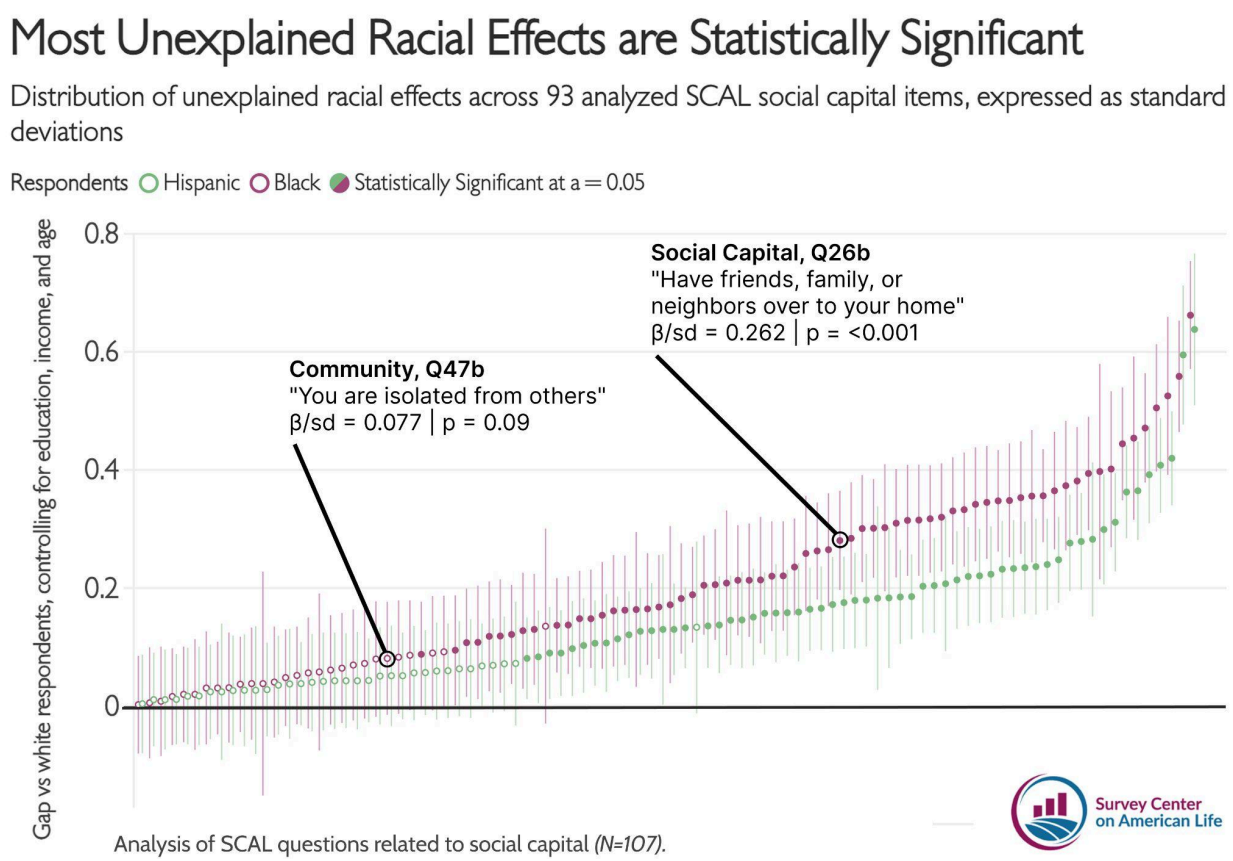


Fig 04: SCAL questions rank-ordered by unexplained racial effect size. Questions with the 'Context' type are excluded from this analysis. Note: both Black-white and Hispanic-white response gaps are rank-ordered independent of one another, so a vertical slice does not index the same question.

The two question examples that are highlighted in the figure — Q47b from the Community Survey and Q26b from the Social Capital Survey — demonstrate both the spectrum of unexplained racial effects in SCAL's question set and the way in which subtle changes in question design can lead to orders-of-magnitude shifts in unexplained racial effect. Asking if respondents consider themselves isolated from others — which has an attitudinal content type and an individual (self) framing, per the categories defined in section 01 — does not correspond to a significant unexplained racial effect. Contrarily, asking if respondents have recently had friends or family over to their home — which has a behavioural content type and a friends and family framing, per these same categories — is associated with a very strong unexplained racial effect.

Unexplained racial effects impact survey results in many ways. Per figure 05, the median effect size for Black respondents — controlling for plausible mechanisms — is 0.161 standard

deviations from the white respondent mean, and the median effect size for Hispanic respondents is 0.109 standard deviations.

Racial Identity	*Unexplained Racial Effect |β/SD|*		
	25th	*Median*	*75th*
Black respondents	0.075 SD	0.161 SD	0.290 SD
Hispanic respondents	0.045 SD	0.109 SD	0.172 SD

Fig 05: percentile effect strengths by racial identity. Questions with the 'Context' type are excluded from this analysis.

Expressing unexplained racial effects in terms of standard deviations allows for questions with different numbers of ordinal response options to be put onto a common scale and directly compared. It also normalizes each unexplained racial effect to a question's underlying race-level response distribution: a five-point effect on a question with tightly clustered responses represents a larger displacement of the distribution than the same five points on a question where responses are widely dispersed.

02a Question response-options and underlying response distributions

Unexplained racial effects have a substantive impact on survey crosstabs. Let's take the example of a two-response option question with a typical underlying response breakdown, depicted in figure 06. The median two-response-option SCAL question has an overall response breakdown of 76-24. Under the null hypothesis that there is no significant response variation across racial identities when income, age, and educational attainment are controlled for, both white and Black respondents would have similar adjusted response breakdowns (even if the non-adjusted response breakdowns showed some variation that could be attributed to, say, unequal levels of educational attainment). However, figure 06 demonstrates that the median unexplained impact of race for Black respondents — calculated from the median effect strength of 0.161 SD for Black respondents — is seven points for two-response-option question types. For Hispanic respondents, from the observed median effect strength of 0.109 SD, the average unexplained impact of race is five points for two-response-option question types.

In other words, on average, when SCAL analyzes response breakdowns by racial identity, seven points out of the total response-difference between white and Black respondents (and five points for white and Hispanic respondents) cannot be explained by SCAL's typical analytic vocabulary of age, income, and educational attainment. Instead, it must be explained by qualities

of racial experience *per se* that vary opinion — or perhaps some unidentified covariate. More likely than not, however, this unexplained racial effect simply goes unmentioned.

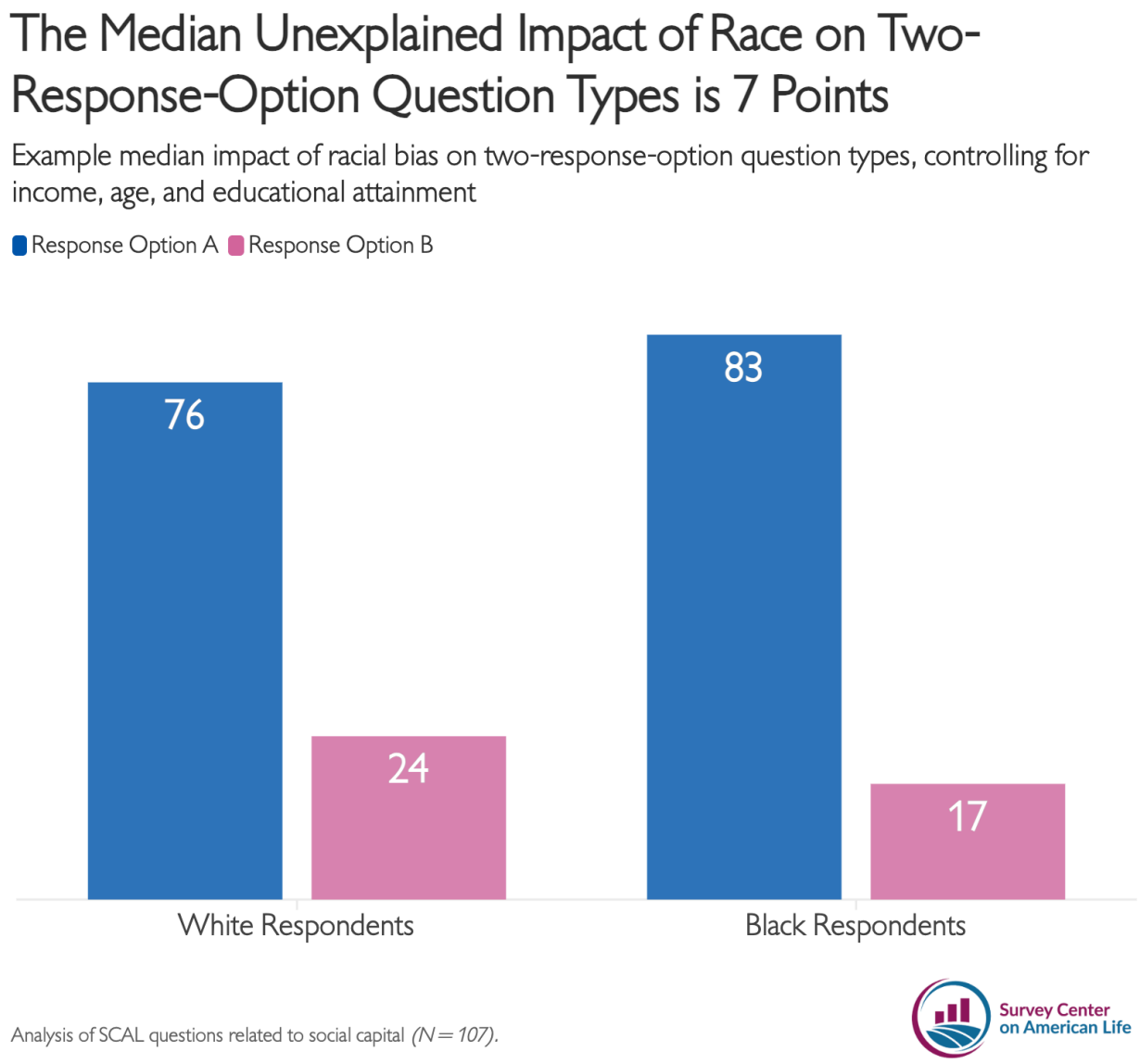


Fig 06: median impact of unexplained racial effects on binary survey crosstabs. Questions with the 'Context' type are excluded from this analysis.

As the number of response-options grows and the typical underlying response distribution changes, this effect is absorbed over more data points and thus becomes less salient. However, these gaps, while small, can often make up the majority of the strength of a finding that SCAL regularly reports on, insofar as race-level disparities are analyzed.

02b Question content types

Breaking down SCAL questions by their type and framing, as we delineated in section 01, helps to locate the survey questions that have the strongest unexplained racial effect. Figure 07 visualizes questions by type.

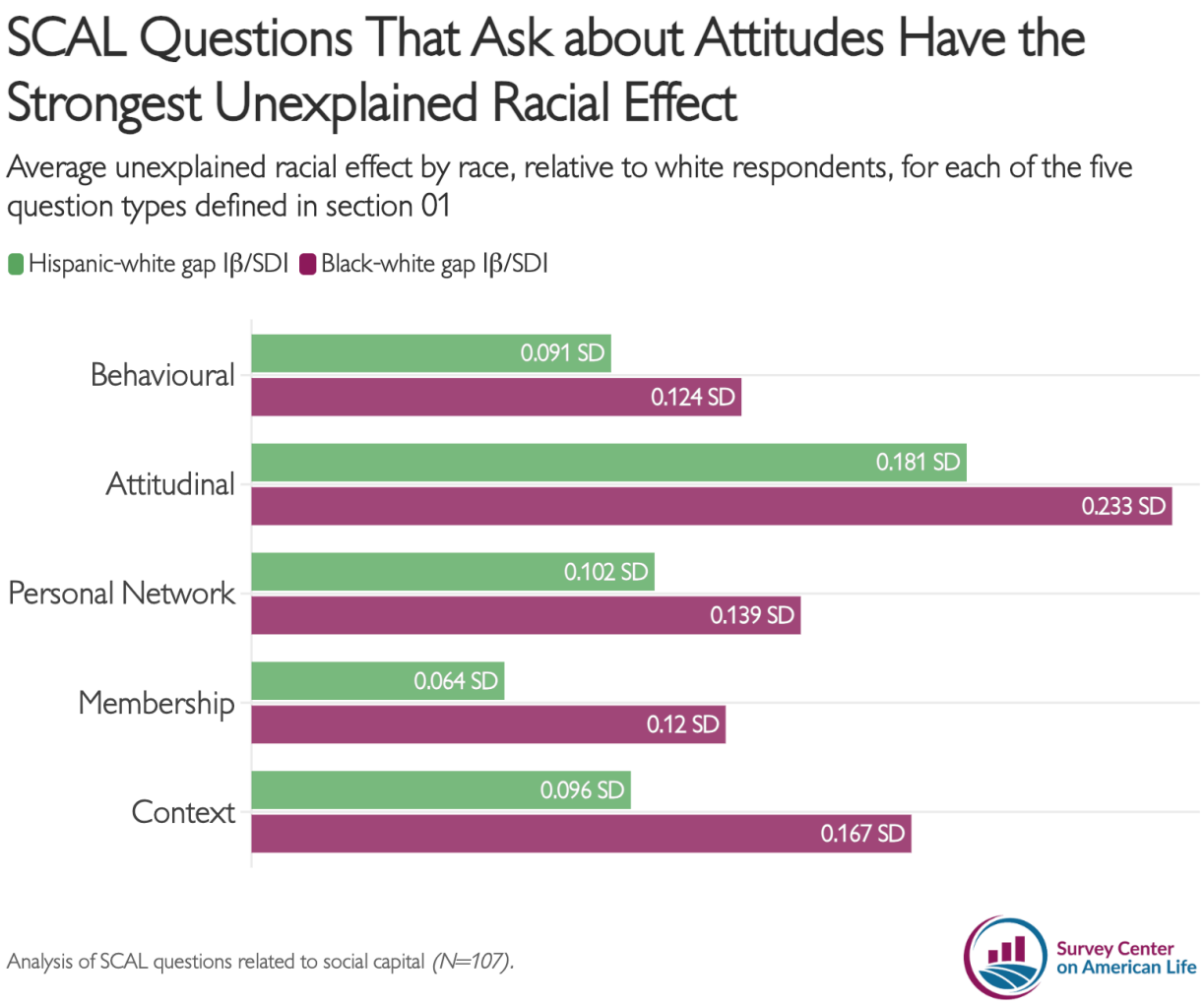


Fig 07: median unexplained racial effect for different question types.

We observe that, for both Hispanic and Black respondents, the median unexplained racial effect is similar across question types: behavioural, personal network, and membership questions all have effect strengths clustered around 0.090 SD and 0.130 SD for Hispanic and Black respondents, respectively. However, attitudinal questions have an unexplained racial effect that is nearly twice as large: 0.181 SD and 0.233 SD respectively for Hispanic and Black respondents.

Figure 08 breaks these averages down to the level of individual survey questions, and it demonstrates that questions with an attitudinal content type consistently result in statistically significant unexplained racial effects — whereas questions with a behavioural content type often do not. Both sets of questions attempt to gauge respondents' opinions about their communities, but questions that ask about concrete behaviours, not attitudes, present findings that are less biased by race. Conceptually, this race-level effect could plausibly signal measurement error. Consider Q13a and Q3; these items ask similar questions about how connected a respondent feels with their neighbours. Where Q13a (and Q11f) ask about a respondent's attitude in this regard, Q3 asks about a specific and objective behaviour — the frequency that someone speaks with their neighbors.

Item	*Hispanic-white gap |β/SD|*	*Black-white gap |β/SD|*
Overall Attitudinal Avg.	***0.181 SD***	***0.233 SD***
Q15a, comfort walking after dark in neighborhood	0.215 SD	0.293 SD
Q13a, trust people in your neighborhood	0.271 SD	0.236 SD
Q15c, comfort asking neighbor for help, personal problem	0.165 SD	0.189 SD
Q11f, importance of strong sense of community	0.061 SD*	0.173 SD
Q6b, comfort asking neighbor to help move furniture	0.140 SD	0.132 SD
Overall Behavioural Avg.	***0.091 SD***	***0.124 SD***
Q5a, worked with neighbors to fix a problem	0.044 SD*	0.218 SD
Q5d, took a walk around your neighborhood	0.046 SD*	0.201 SD
Q5c, exchanged emails/texts with neighbors	0.121 SD	0.172 SD
Q5b, social evening with someone in neighborhood	0.037 SD*	0.018 SD*
Q3, how often talked with your neighbors	0.080 SD*	0.003 SD*

*Fig 08: ten survey questions from the American Neighbor Survey. * indicates that an effect is NOT statistically significant at the a = 0.05 level. Questions with the 'Context' type are excluded from this analysis.*

One could base an argument for opinion about neighborly connection from either of these questions — but there is every reason to believe that trust has a murky definition for different people, one perhaps informed by different standards of trust being held towards neighbours in

different communities. Given one's ability to report on neighborly connection through either one of these questions, each question's extent of implausible race-level variation appears to be a reasonable factor to review before reporting results. While only about one in five SCAL social questions focus on attitudes (compared to the about one in three that focus on behavior) this analysis suggests that, for future surveys, it is worth considering if questions asking about respondents' attitudes could be reframed to instead ask about concrete behaviours.

02c Question subject frames

The framing of survey questions agnostic of content type suggests further ways to reduce measurement error in SCAL surveys — albeit one that is less clear than the outsized effect of attitudinal question types. Figure 09 shows the degree of unexplained racial effects by question framing across SCAL's 107 question set.

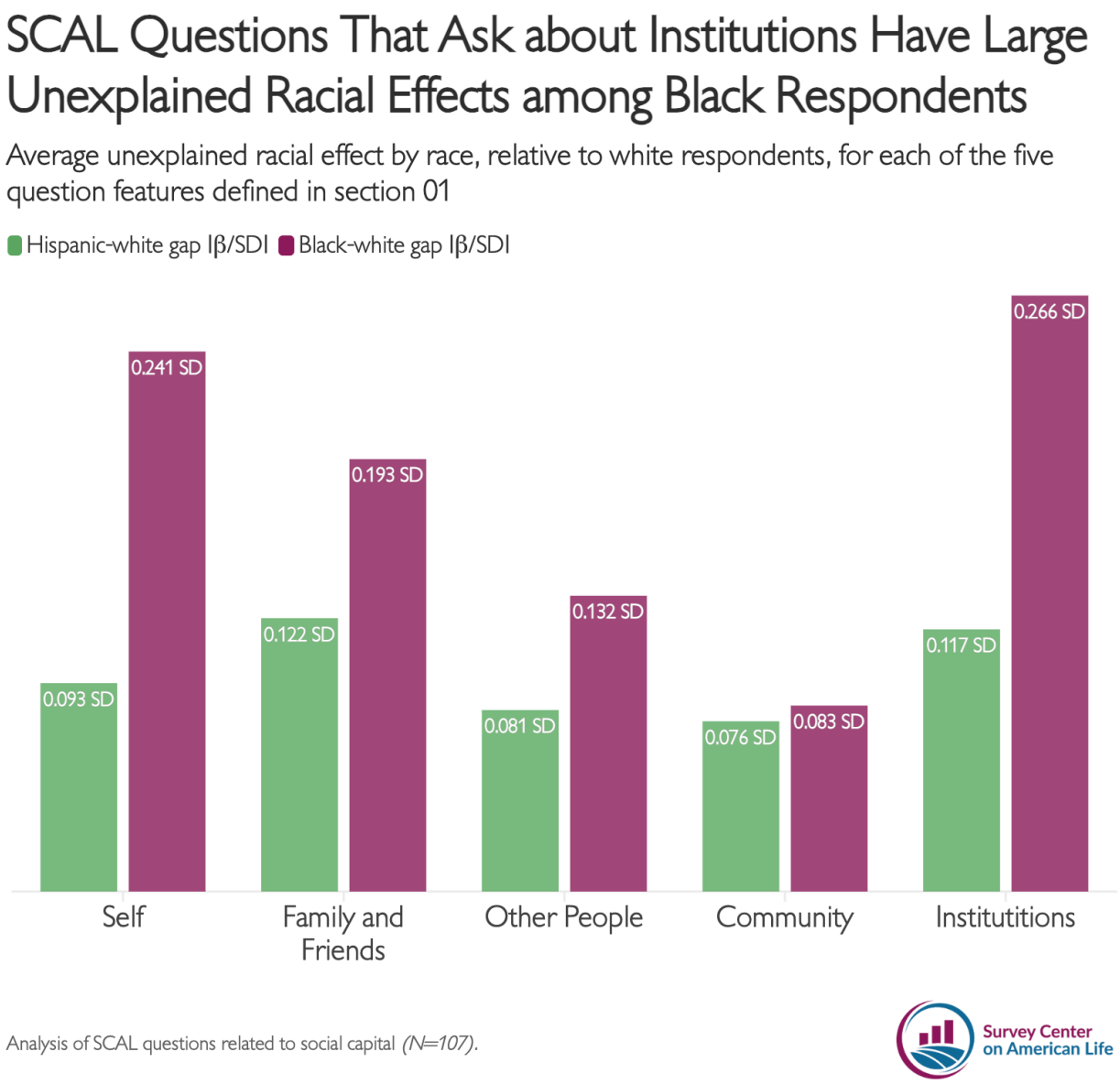


Fig 09: median unexplained racial effects by question feature. Questions with the 'Context' type are excluded from this analysis.

Unlike the strong pattern observed with the five question types, there is not a consistent pattern of unexplained racial effect strength by question framing — especially for Hispanic respondents. Among Black respondents (and to a lesser extent Hispanic respondents), we can observe that questions with a local-community framing — that do not ask about broader institutions nor specific family, friends, or community *members* like neighbors or congregants — have a particularly low unexplained racial effect. The starkest contrast among these five is between community and institutional frames for Black respondents — where broadening questions out to

focus on national issues more than triples the response gap among white and Black respondents. Figure 10 analyzes these patterns with greater detail with three examples each from institutional and community frames, and a single from questions framed around community members beyond friends and family ("other people").

Item	*Hispanic-white gap |β/SD|*	*Black-white gap |β/SD|*
Overall Institutional Avg.	***0.117 SD***	***0.266 SD***
Q21a, member of a church or religious organization	0.048 SD*	0.161 SD
Q21e, member of a labor union	0.116 SD	0.175 SD
Q26g, attended religious services in person	0.090 SD	0.217 SD
Overall Community Avg.	***0.076 SD***	***0.083 SD***
Q26i, attended a social event in the community	0.100 SD	0.059 SD*
Q21c, member of a sports league or workout group	0.046 SD*	0.018 SD*
Q26h, did volunteer work in the community	0.127 SD	0.022 SD*
Overall Other People Avg.	***0.081 SD***	***0.132 SD***
Q37, time with people at your place of worship outside of services	0.081 SD*	0.045 SD*

*Fig 10: seven survey questions from the Social Capital Survey. * indicates that an effect is NOT statistically significant at the a = 0.05 level. Questions with the 'Context' type are excluded from this analysis.*

A number of tentative conclusions can be drawn from this table — especially from patterns in the Black respondent to white respondent response gap. Whereas framing a question about social capital held through religious participation around strict church membership (Q21a) is associated with a meaningful unexplained racial effect, framing the same inquiry around interpersonal connection with churchgoers (Q37) does not produce the same significant effect. Similarly, for Black respondents, framing an inquiry about community socializing around attending religious services (Q26g) is associated with a fairly strong unexplained racial effect, whereas framing socializing instead around a more general, non-institutional "event in the community" (Q26i) results in a negligible unexplained racial effect among Black respondents (for Hispanic respondents, it should be noted, this trend does not hold). While figures 08 and 10 only show a

few selected examples, the reader is encouraged to reference Online Appendix B for further evidence that supports these observations.

This section finds that many of the 107 questions SCAL has asked about social capital since 2019 have unexplained racial effects that influence race-level response distributions. When analyzing patterns across question-response options and underlying response distributions, question content types, and subject framing, we observe that:

- The median response gap after controls for age, income, and education is 0.161 SD for Black respondents and 0.109 SD for Hispanic respondents, relative to white respondents. On an average binary item with a 76/24 split, this corresponds to roughly seven and five point differences, respectively, in response distribution. The same underlying gap appears smaller when reported as a shift in any single category of a longer scale — about five points in the top box of a five-point item — even though the overall unexplained response gap between racial identities is essentially unchanged. These unexplained effects have the potential to confound SCAL's reported survey statistics, which typically lack reference to race beyond age, income, and educational attainment.
- There is strong evidence that social capital questions that consider attitudes carry roughly double the unexplained racial effect of any other content type: 0.233 SD for Black respondents, against 0.124 SD for behavioural, 0.139 SD for personal network, and 0.120 SD for membership question types.
- There is some evidence that framing social capital questions around broader institutions, instead of smaller communities and individuals that make up these communities, is associated with greater unexplained racial effects. Institutional frames carry the largest gap for Black respondents (0.266 SD) and community frames the smallest (0.083 SD). However, more analysis must be conducted to reach greater confidence with this finding.

03 Conclusion: How Can SCAL Better Measure Social Capital?

It's fair to say that much of the analyses in section 01 and 02 are somewhat detached from the day-to-day affairs of SCAL. While no one finding in this report is a 'smoking gun,' nor does any given finding suggest an immediate course of action that SCAL should take, we can begin to consider some potential solutions to the questions posed by this review. In the

introduction, this author proposed three ways to think about unexplained racial effects. They represented either that:

- there is widespread and unsolvable measurement error across survey questions;
- there is widespread but *addressable* measurement error across survey questions;
- SCAL is not (nor necessarily has to be) equipped to conduct a careful analysis of unexplained racial effects.

We'll briefly consider each of these possibilities here.

03a There may be unsolvable measurement error

Any social scientist should hold *some* suspicion towards findings that are predicated on delicate statistical machinery, such as many of those presented in this review. Though each question is backed by thousands of survey responses, the number of questions analyzed, 107, is not incredibly large – especially when these 107 questions are split across five question types or framings. Even if the overall unexplained racial effect strengths are reliable across the full spectrum of 107 questions, coefficients for a given question type or framing may not be. Further, expressing coefficients as standard deviations, though necessary to report consistent effect strengths across SCAL questions, is admittedly abstract, and it may divert attention from simpler, more substantive findings (or non-findings) that a different approach could have made.

Given these qualifications, a reasonable reaction to these findings goes: indeed, these findings may indicate some unexplained race-level effect that is the product of measurement error, but the impacts are small enough, and the findings uncertain enough, that no action is warranted.

03b There is *addressable* measurement error

Qualifications aside, there is compelling evidence that unexplained racial effects are significant across a strong majority of SCAL questions related to social capital — and they go unexplained. When SCAL reports on a finding by racial identity, much of the reported differential cannot be understood through SCAL's traditional frames of analysis. Observed racial inequality in social outcomes is a pervasive feature of American social life and social science, and analyzing these inequalities — especially when controlling for income, educational attainment, and age — is an important step towards eradicating them.

Beyond unwieldy statistical interventions such as race fixed effects and per-survey covariates (i.e. also controlling for religious attendance to introduce an additional plausible mechanism for race-level response differences) that are excessive and/or not consistently replicable across surveys, research areas, and questions, asking questions in content-areas and with framing features that appear to be associated with less unexplained racial effect may be a way forward.

To this end, SCAL should de-prioritize asking questions about attitudes held about social-capital-adjacent topics, and instead should fill survey questionnaires with questions about concrete behaviors, memberships, and social network structures. SCAL should also consider undertaking more research about how question features, including many not included in this analysis such as recall period and response-option types, are associated with greater or lesser levels of unexplained racial effect. Provisionally, SCAL may consider de-emphasizing questions that ask about broader institutions, and instead focus more questions on local community life.

03c SCAL may not be equipped to conduct a careful analysis of unexplained racial effects

Even beyond these reflections on statistics, there is additional complexity to a central premise of this review: that race-level effects beyond income, age, and educational attainment are *unexplainable.* In the context of SCAL's analysis, this premise holds (SCAL rarely reports on race-level differences in survey responses, and when it does, these variations are not analyzed beyond reference to income, age, or educational attainment). However, even if they lack the analytic vocabulary to address these differences in the context of their own work, most social scientists would *agree* that some qualities of racial experience *per se* impact the development of opinion.

Indeed, unexplained racial effects may not imply measurement error at all and instead indicate the existence of a completely distinct epistemic question of how racial experience *per se* impacts opinion. Some social scientists may then just defer that work to other researchers with a more sociological toolbelt. The challenge of this perspective, this author believes, is that if taken too far, the unexplained effect risks being smoothed over; this is the approach taken by the 2018 report from the United States Congress Joint Economic Committee on the Geography of Social Capital in America, that was mentioned in this report's introduction, which while running 66 pages, mentions the word race only twice.

While this author's sympathies lie somewhere between conclusion 03b and 03c, a more neutral solution speaks to any of the three conclusions: SCAL could report the median unexplained racial effect of each survey. Figure 11 shows the median unexplained racial effect

Item	*For Social Capital Related Questions*	
	Hispanic-white gap |β/SD|	*Black-white gap |β/SD|*
American National Social Network Survey*	0.048 SD	0.308 SD
American Community Life Survey	0.117 SD	0.231 SD
Civility & Morality Survey*	0.193 SD	0.217 SD
American Neighbor Survey	0.140 SD	0.174 SD
American Social Capital Survey	0.093 SD	0.159 SD
American Gender & Society Survey*	0.116 SD	0.133 SD
American Family Life Survey	0.063 SD	0.083 SD

*Fig 11: seven SCAL surveys used in this report. * indicates that a survey has an N fewer than 10 questions in this report.*

for questions related to social capital in each of the seven SCAL surveys considered in this report — we can observe that surveys have varying levels of unexplained racial effect.

Agnostic of whether one believes that unexplained racial effect demonstrates measurement error or the need for an entirely different social scientific analysis, reporting on each survey's unexplained racial effect would qualify survey reporting against implausible race-level variation. There is some precedent for this among survey organizations. The best example is given by Pew, which reports race-specific margins of error for many of their survey instruments. While reporting unexplained racial effects would certainly require more explanation than race-specific margins of error (which too could be a good compromise solution), they also are a more precise measure of unexplained survey effects, and they could help work towards demystifying race-level variation in social scientific phenomena that SCAL researches.

Appendix A: Question Typology and Feature Descriptions

Question Typology	SCAL Items
Behavioral Behavioral questions ask what a respondent did and how often. *Community, Q.3b — "In a normal year, that is not including the past 12 months, how often do you do the following? [Have friends, family, or neighbors over to your home]"*	*36 SCAL questions*
Attitudinal Attitudinal items ask for an evaluation or a report of trust. *Community, Q.40f — "In general, how much do you trust the following groups to do the right thing? [The police in your local community]"*	*22 SCAL questions*
Personal Network Personal Network questions ask about a respondent's own ties. They come in two halves, reported together in the main text and disaggregated in the appendices. Network Structure questions ask about the structural half of the social-relations domain — how many ties, and to whom, a person has, independent of what those ties provide. *Community, Q.6 — "If you counted the number of people you consider to be your close friend and who, in turn, would also consider you to be their close friend, how many people would that be?"* Network Function questions ask about what ties provide and how their absence feels — the functional half of the social-relations domain. *Community, Q.47f — "How often in the past 4 weeks have you felt that … [There are people you can talk to]"*	*20 SCAL questions*

Membership Membership items ask whether the respondent formally belongs to a named organization type. *Community, Q.33 — "Even if you do not attend religious services regularly, are you personally a member of a local church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or other house of worship?"*	*15 SCAL questions*
Context Context questions ask about a respondent's local surroundings. *American Neighbor Survey, Q9a — "How many of the following places are within a 20-minute walk from where you live? [Coffee shop or café]"*	*14 SCAL questions*

Question Framing	**SCAL Items**
Self The referent is the respondent's own state or solitary activity. No second party in the item. *Community, Q.47b — "How often in the past 4 weeks have you felt that … [You are isolated from others]"*	*11 SCAL questions*
Family and Friends The referent is a named intimate tie: close friends, immediate family, household. *Community, Q.3b "In a normal year, that is not including the past 12 months, how often do you do the following? [Have friends, family, or neighbors over to your home]"*	*14 SCAL questions*

Other People The referent is a person or group outside the intimate circle but still individuated — neighbors, coworkers, congregants. *American Neighbor Survey, Q3 — "During a typical month in the past year, how often did you talk with any of your neighbors?*	*17 SCAL questions*
Community The referent is a respondent's community or its shared spaces, not any identifiable person. *Community, Q.3c — "In a normal year, that is not including the past 12 months, how often do you do the following? [Attend a local event or community meeting]"*	*29 SCAL questions*
Institutions The referent is a formal organization or authority: government, police, media, houses of worship. *Community, Q.3j — "In a normal year, that is not including the past 12 months, how often do you do the following? [Attend religious services]"*	*22 SCAL questions*

Online Appendix B: Full SCAL 107 Question Set

Acknowledgment of AI Use:
Claude was used to conduct some of the background research for this paper as well as some of the computation behind the statistical analyses. All writing was completed without the use of AI.