Descriptive or Partisan Representation? Examining Trade-Offs for Asian Americans*

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Abstract

Do voters want representatives who share their race, ethnicity, or partisanship? We examine this question with a focus on Asian Americans who face trade-offs between descriptive (i.e., Asian American or "pan-ethnic") and partisan representation, as well as trade-offs involving "co-ethnic" (e.g., Korean for Korean) and "cross-ethnic" (e.g., Indian for Korean) descriptive representation. Across two experiments, we find that when Asian Americans are asked about collective representation in Congress, they prioritize increased co-ethnic and pan-ethnic legislators over co-partisan legislators. However, in a competitive electoral setting, they often trade off race/ethnicity for partisanship. Asian Americans are only willing to cross party lines to vote for a co-ethnic candidate, but never for a cross- or pan-ethnic candidate. These findings shed light on the importance of considering heterogeneous preferences along ethnicities within the same racial "in-group," such as Asian Americans, a heavily understudied and heterogeneous group in American politics.

Keywords: descriptive representation; partisanship; Asian Americans; conjoint analysis; survey experiment

Word Count: 9,817

1 Introduction

The question of how racial and ethnic minorities vote is central to the study of representative democracy. Given the long history of excluding minority voices from the political process (Griffin and Flavin 2011; Kroeber 2018; Young 2002), improving descriptive representation—which occurs when representatives share demographic characteristics with their constituents—has substantial benefits for minority voters individually and for the health of democracy collectively. Existing studies suggest that descriptive representation increases policy responsiveness (Yeung 2023), contact with representatives (Gay 2002), voter turnout (Barreto 2007; Barreto, Segura and Woods 2004; Griffin and Keane 2006), political activism (Bobo and Gilliam 1990), group consciousness (Junn and Masuoka 2008), the sense of political efficacy (Merolla, Sellers and Fowler 2013; Pantoja and Segura 2003), and political knowledge (Tate 2004).

However, as the social and psychological division between different partisan groups—a phenomenon known as affective polarization—has become more profound in American politics, partisanship may overpower the relevance of shared racial/ethnic identity (Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2016, 2018). In this context, even when racial/ethnic minority voters are conscious of and struggle with underrepresentation in the policy-making process, they may trade off descriptive representation for partisan representation. For example, Hispanic voters may prefer non-Hispanic Democratic candidates over Hispanic Republican candidates.

Furthermore, group-based identities are more complex than classic social identity theories suggest—identities are constructed by dividing people into in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel and Turner 1979). The complication arises because the same individuals can have *multiple* group identities (e.g., based on not only race/ethnicity but also gender) that interact with each other (Roccas and Brewer 2002). We do not clearly understand which of these identities for voters become salient and relevant in political decision-making (Dovi 2002). In particular, it is unclear how they make choices when facing difficult trade-off situations where they must

choose among these identities in elections.

When such identities conflict, do voters want representatives who share their race, ethnicity, or partisanship? How do they vote when candidates share one of these identities but not others? To examine these questions about the trade-offs about representation, we focus on the case of Asian Americans. The phenomenon of constituents voting for co-racial (and co-partisan) representatives has long been studied in the context of African Americans and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Latinos (see, e.g. Barreto, Segura and Woods 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Judis and Teixeira 2004; Tate 2004). However, much less is understood about Asian Americans, although they are the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in the United States (Budiman and Ruiz 2021*a*).

The study of Asian Americans is crucial for addressing gaps in the literature because their experiences highlight the blurred lines between in- and out-group constructions, as well as the weak connections between race/ethnicity and political affiliations for this group (Leonhardt 2023; Pew Research Center 2018). This ambiguity arises because "Asian American" is a pan-ethnic identity—a racial category based on consolidating different ethnic groups from varying cultures and national origins (Okamoto 2014).[1] But because of their weak partisan ties, Asian Americans can face a unique trade-off between descriptive (i.e., Asian American) and partisan representation. At the same time, because of the strength of their ethnic identity, they may also face trade-offs involving "co-ethnic" (e.g., Korean for Korean) and "cross-ethnic" (e.g., Indian for Korean) descriptive representation.

To untangle such complicated preferences regarding descriptive and partisan representation among Asian Americans, we conduct two studies. First, we measure Asian American preferences for collective representation in Congress, which is the extent to which the legislative body represents its constituents (e.g., how many Asian Americans there should be in

[1]However, we recognize that the pan-ethnic label "Asian American" is both a state-ascribed *racial* classification and a redefined *ethnic* identity, which are formed in response to social and political forces (Espiritu 1992). Following the standard practice, we mainly refer to Asian American pan-ethnicity as a *racial* identity to indicate its role as a "superordinate identity" that overlies ethnic identities (Le et al. 2021). Similarly, we refer mainly to the national origin of particular groups when referring to *ethnic* identities, such as Korean American, Japanese American, etc.

Congress). Second, we investigate the preferences for dyadic representation in a competitive election setting using a conjoint experiment, in which survey respondents are asked to choose one of two hypothetical candidates.

We find that when Asian Americans are asked about who they want in the legislature, they favor descriptive over partisan representation. They report that they would prefer more Asian Americans overall in Congress rather than more representatives who share their partisan affiliation. However, when asked to choose between such trade-offs between partisan and descriptive representation for two candidates, Asian Americans generally prefer partisan representation over descriptive representation. However, further analysis shows that descriptive representation is only prioritized when a Black or Hispanic candidate is on the ballot. For example, Korean American *Democratic* respondents prefer a Korean *Republican* candidate over a Black *Democratic* candidate. Therefore, Asian Americans are willing to cross party lines to vote for a co-ethnic candidate. However, this phenomenon never occurs for a cross- or pan-ethnic candidate (e.g., a Japanese Republican candidate or an Asian American Republican candidate for Korean American Democratic supporters, in the same example).

These findings contribute to the broader literature on the political preferences and voting behavior of racial/ethnic minorities. Specifically, we shed light on the importance of considering heterogeneity within "in-groups" to improve our general understanding of descriptive representation. Like other group identities, Asian Americans are not monolithic, and they feel competition not only against non-Asian Americans ("out-groups") but also among Asian Americans ("in-group"), especially when partisanship is also considered.

2 Preferences for Representation

Representation can take many forms. Substantive representation, the extent to which elites advocate on behalf of constituents (see, e.g. Sabl 2015), is often discussed in the context of party politics. Both demographic characteristics (e.g., race) and partisanship can bring

substantive benefits to constituents (Mansbridge 1999). We focus on *descriptive* and *partisan* representation, as well as how constituents may have preferences for each in a *collective* or *dyadic* setting.

2.1 Descriptive Representation

Descriptive representation occurs when there are shared characteristics between legislators and constituents (Pitkin 1972). Although many characteristics may qualify as a "shared identity" between legislators and constituents, the most relevant forms of descriptive representation revolve around salient identities, such as gender, class, and race/ethnicity. Descriptive representation enables lawmakers to cultivate a sense of empathy and trust among voters who share similar identities (Fenno 1977), yielding symbolic benefits for constituents. It can also result in substantive benefits for constituents through better communication and greater insights into the interests of marginalized groups (Mansbridge 1999; Pitkin 1972). This way, descriptive representatives may more readily advocate for the interests of their constituents in all parts of the policy-making processes (Lowande, Ritchie and Lauterbach 2019).

However, there is considerably less research on what factors drive voters' *demand* for descriptive representation. Some scholars find that the desire for descriptive representation is influenced by constituents' feelings of linked fate or perceptions of discrimination (Manzano and Sanchez 2010; Schildkraut 2013; Wallace 2014). The desire for descriptive representation may therefore be a strong consideration, particularly for minority voters, including Asian Americans.[2] As a group severely underrepresented in government and historically marginalized, Asian Americans may, *ceteris paribus*, vote for candidates who share their co-ethnic (Sadhwani 2022*b*) or pan-ethnic identity (Lublin and Wright 2023). This effect of race/ethnicity on Asian Americans' vote choice is mediated by the *strength* of their

[2]Although most studies are designed specifically to examine descriptive representation for minority voters, the desire for such representation has also extended to white voters (English, Pearson and Strolovitch 2019; Schildkraut 2017) as white racial identities have become more cohesive in recent years (Jardina 2019).

racial/ethnic identity (Schildkraut 2013).

2.2 Partisan Representation

Partisan representation can refer to several aspects of the connection between elected officials and voters, including collective party presence and overall party control (Hurley 1989), or concerns about policy responsiveness of the parties (Kastellec et al. 2015). Voters typically want their party to control the government to push forward its platform, which reflects their preferences. As a result, partisan representation is often framed around policy competition. However, as partisanship becomes both expressive and instrumental (Huddy, Mason and Aarøe 2015; Maxwell, Pérez and Zonszein 2023), a candidate's party affiliation can independently influence voters' "valence" preferences beyond the candidate's policy positions (e.g., Stokes 1963).

Regarding voters' *demand* for partisan representation, a growing literature on affective polarization is instructive (see, e.g., Iyengar et al. 2019, for a review of earlier studies). Existing studies show that voters exhibit affective partisanship, or emotional attachment toward one's in-party and against one's out-party, which fuels motivations for partisan representation (Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012). Partisanship has become an ever-increasingly important part of American voters' social identities, rising in prominence compared to, and intertwining with, other social identities (Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason and Wronski 2018). Therefore, regardless of whether people desire substantive benefits or a more symbolic feeling of being represented (Ruckelshaus 2022), voters may strongly prefer partisan representation, just as they do for descriptive representation.

2.3 Trade-offs between Descriptive and Partisan Representation

The reality is often more complex, as the same individuals may possess multiple group identities that interact with one another, as mentioned earlier. While existing research investigates how descriptive or partisan representation often operates *independently*, we shed

light on how they work *interdependently*. Specifically, we examine voters' preferences when facing a trade-off between their preference for partisan and descriptive representation.

There are two situations in which such trade-off situations would not exist. First, voters' multiple group identities do not introduce conflicts when partisan and descriptive characteristics align. For example, it is natural for an Asian American Democrat (Republican) to vote for an Asian American Democratic (Republican) candidate as opposed to a white Republican (Democrat). Second, and more importantly, even when candidates present cross-cutting identities along the lines of race/ethnicity and partisanship, if voters choose *solely* based on candidates' partisanship or their descriptive attributes, they should not consider their choices as difficult-to-make trade-off choices. However, prior research suggests that voters often must make complex decisions between multiple social identities (Miller, Brewer and Arbuckle 2009; Roccas and Brewer 2002). Furthermore, trade-offs involving such political decision-making are not uncommon in the real world (see, e.g., Hayes and Hibbing 2017; White, Laird and Allen 2014).

Nevertheless, little empirical research specifically examines trade-offs between descriptive and partisan representation. Some studies show that Black and Latino voters generally prioritize representatives' party identification or ideology over race/ethnicity (Ansolabehere and Fraga 2016; Casellas and Wallace 2015; Velez 2023). Based on a factorial survey experiment, Cuevas-Molina and Nteta (2023) investigate Latino voting behavior for a hypothetical representative who is aligned on ethnic and/or partisan characteristics, finding that Latino voters are willing to vote for co-ethnic candidates even when they are of the opposite party. Regarding trade-off situations for Asian Americans, the existing literature is more limited and focuses on specific elections in California (see, e.g., Leung 2022; Sadhwani 2022*b*).

2.4 Collective and Dyadic Representation

In addition to the different types of representation based on group identities, the existing literature discusses another dimension—collective and dyadic representation (Weissberg

1978). Collective representation refers to the extent to which a legislative body represents its constituents (e.g., the number of Asian Americans in Congress, given the proportion of Asian Americans among all constituents). Dyadic representation refers to the one-to-one relationship between a representative and an *individual* constituent (e.g., whether an Asian American voter has an Asian American member of Congress).

Casellas and Wallace (2015) examine Latinos' views of descriptive representation at both the collective and dyadic level. They find that descriptive representation at both levels is less critical for Latino Republican respondents than Latino Democratic respondents. Given that racial minorities are typically perceived to be Democrats, Casellas and Wallace's (2015) finding may suggest that those who have cross-cutting identities (i.e., Latino Republicans) are hesitant to trade off partisan representation for descriptive representation. However, because Asian Americans are stereotyped differently than Latino and Black Americans (i.e., as both the "model minority" and "forever foreigner," see Visalvanich 2017), it is unclear whether Asian Americans might infer partisanship from race/ethnicity in the same way. It is also unclear whether the preference for partisanship over race/ethnicity is observed at the collective or dyadic level.

3 The Case of Asian Americans

Amid the "blue wave" in 2018, Gil Cisneros, a Latino Democratic candidate, narrowly defeated Young Kim, a Korean American Republican candidate, in the CA-39 district. Kim won the rematch against the incumbent Cisneros two years later by just over 4,000 votes. Despite the difficulty of challenging an incumbent in a district that ended up going for Biden by 10.2 points, Kim could swing the district in her favor (Godwin 2022). This victory was made possible by many Korean Americans splitting their ticket in voting for Kim, a Republican, while voting for Democrats in other seats (Leung 2022; Staggs, Wheeler and Robinson 2020).

The election between Kim and Cisneros is an illustrative example of situations where Asian American voters are cross-pressured. Like in this case, their vote decisions are expected to become more salient in American politics as the nation becomes more racially diverse. Although Asian Americans are currently the most politically underrepresented group in the U.S.,[3] they now make up a substantial minority in this country. They are also the fastest-growing racial group, projected to surpass 46 million by 2060 (Budiman and Ruiz 2021*a*). Because around 60% are foreign-born immigrants, a significant portion of the Asian American population is still ineligible to vote (Budiman and Ruiz 2021*a*). Over time, however, more and more Asian Americans have naturalized and begun voting, a trend expected to accelerate. Furthermore, their votes may play a pivotal role in electoral politics. Indeed, Asian American voters now make up significant minorities in certain swing states such as Georgia, Nevada, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Texas (Sadhwani 2022*a*).

Beyond their underrepresentation in politics, there are several reasons why examining Asian American voting behavior is essential for the study of partisan and descriptive trade-offs. First, for Asian Americans, partisanship is not as crystallized as for other racial/ethnic groups. Because most Asian American voters are recent immigrants to the United States, their partisan identities do not necessarily develop in their homes through parental socialization over many generations (see, e.g., Kuo, Malhotra and Mo 2017; Raychaudhuri 2018). Historically, Asian Americans tend to vote for Democrats (Hopkins, Kaiser and Perez 2023; Masuoka et al. 2018), but their partisan preferences are not necessarily robust. As Raychaudhuri (2018) points out, some demographic characteristics of Asian Americans, such as their high socio-economic status and a strong sense of religiosity, align more closely with the Republican Party. Overall, Asian Americans have weaker attachments to political parties than other minority groups (Hajnal and Lee 2011; Wong et al. 2011).[4] This unique situation

[3] As of 2021, Asian Americans make up 6.1% of the U.S. population, but only 0.9% of elected officials in the country (Reflective Democracy Campaign 2021).

[4] Other racial/ethnic minorities' partisan preferences are also shifting. While the growth of non-white voters in the U.S. allegedly explains the growth of Democratic supporters from the 1970s to the 1990s (Judis and Teixeira 2004), the presence of non-white voters may not be a solid foundation for the Democratic Party in more recent elections (Scott 2022).

offers opportunities for other social identities to be considered alongside partisanship. Recent work also suggests that among Democrats, descriptive representation plays an increasingly important role, as identity congruence appears to grant greater leeway for representatives to diverge ideologically (Weissman 2024). This dynamic could similarly shape the trade-off decisions Asian Americans make between partisan and descriptive representation.

Second, studying desires for descriptive representation among minorities who have varied national origin groups, such as Asian Americans, also sheds light on how voters consider trade-offs more generally (see, e.g. Clayton, Crabtree and Horiuchi 2023; Junn and Masuoka 2008; Wu 2022). Unlike a co-ethnic representative, a cross-ethnic representative (e.g., Indian for Korean) may have no shared background, culture, language, or phenotypical features, which may make them less likely to be perceived as a descriptive representative (Cuevas-Molina and Nteta 2023; Lu 2020). Some scholars show that Asian Americans are more likely to associate with their co-ethnic rather than their pan-ethnic identities (Lien, Conway and Wong 2003; Wong et al. 2011). Asian American pan-ethnic identity may have developed as a strategic consideration, as aggregating individual ethnic identity claims would allow Asian Americans to demand more state resources as a larger racial group (Espiritu 1992).

A vital pattern emerging in these existing studies about Asian American political preferences and behavior is the *context-specific* relevance of identities for Asian Americans. Recent qualitative research has highlighted the complexities of Asian American identity, particularly regarding ethnic origin and pan-ethnic representation. Using semi-structured interviews, Yeung (2024) finds that while many Asian Americans accept the umbrella term "Asian American," many resist pan-ethnic identification, viewing it as inadequate to represent their diverse cultural experiences. Asian Americans also adapt their ethnic identities depending on context, sometimes prioritizing pan-ethnicity during collective experiences (Yeung 2024).[5]

These complexities underscore the varying and context-dependent preferences Asian Americans hold. Their preferences for Asian American representatives in Congress could be

[5]Other work shows the definition and stereotype of "Asian Americans" varies based on the background of who is being asked (Goh and McCue 2021; Lee and Ramakrishnan 2019).

more substantial as the pan-ethnic identity is more relevant in collective environments. However, their preferences for descriptive representation regarding co-ethnic versus pan-ethnic candidates could differ in electoral contexts. They may also differentiate between co-ethnic candidates (candidates from the same Asian-origin ethnic group), cross-ethnic candidates (candidates from a separate Asian-origin ethnic group), and pan-ethnic candidates (Asian American candidates generally).

Indeed, some scholars demonstrate that this nuanced racial/ethnic identity can extend to vote choice, with Asian Americans more likely to vote for co-ethnics who share their national origin (Sadhwani 2022*b*; Uhlaner and Le 2017). However, regarding trade-off situations for Asian Americans, the existing literature is limited and focuses on specific elections in California (see, e.g., Leung 2022; Sadhwani 2022*b*). In these elections involving trade-offs, Asian Americans are more likely to vote for co-ethnic candidates but not for pan-ethnic candidates. While these studies provide initial insights, whether these patterns generalize to other electoral contexts is unclear.

Therefore, drawing on these existing studies about Asian American voters, we present the following main hypothesis.

Hypothesis (Trade-Offs for Asian Americans): *The type of descriptive representation—whether a representative is co-ethnic or pan-ethnic—affects voters' preferences when they face a trade-off between descriptive and partisan representation.*

Specifically, Asian Americans are more likely to prioritize co-ethnicity, compared to pan-ethnicity, over co-partisanship. In other words, they are more willing to trade off partisan representation for co-ethnic candidates than pan-ethnic candidates.[6] This pattern is perhaps more relevant in dyadic representation. However, we do not have a strong expectation that it is exclusively relevant to dyadic settings instead of collective ones.

[6]This hypothesis is derived from our broader theory, which considers how co-ethnicity and pan-ethnicity affect trade-offs in political representation. Our pre-analysis plan also contains supplementary pre-registered hypotheses that are more specific for each test related to our survey design, the results of which are outlined in the paper and Appendix A.

4 Study Designs

To examine how Asian Americans evaluate descriptive and partisan representation, we conduct two separate pre-registered studies from an original survey fielded on Asian Americans.[7] The first study examines Asian Americans' preferences for shared representation in Congress and collective presence in the legislature. The second study examines preferences for dyadic representation in a competitive election setting.

We fielded our survey from February 26 to March 21, 2022, using Lucid Marketplace, which tracks well with other sampling platforms and national benchmarks (Coppock and McClellan 2019). The sample consists of respondents who identified as Asian or Asian American only. The total number of respondents is 2,362, excluding observations that Qualtrics flagged as potential bots. We collected our sample to reflect the nationwide distribution of ethnic groups with 23% Chinese American (excluding Taiwanese Americans), 20% Indian American, 19% Filipino American, 10% Vietnamese American, 8% Korean American, 7% Japanese American, and 13% all other Asian ethnic groups in the United States (Budiman and Ruiz 2021*b*). Our sample consists of 65% Democrats and 35% Republicans, including leaners. This partisan distribution is similar to recent estimates of Asian American partisan preferences, with 62% identifying as Democrats and 34% as Republicans, including leaners (Schaeffer 2023). We exclude true independents from our analysis since we are interested in trade-offs for partisans (Keith et al. 1986).

4.1 Study 1: Preferences for Shared Representation in Congress

For Study 1, we designed survey questions to measure how Asian Americans prefer partisan and/or descriptive representation when asked outright about the makeup of Congress. These questions are modeled after the 2016 National Asian American Survey, or NAAS (Ramakrishnan et al. 2018). Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with five different

[7]The pre-registration is available at the OSF (https://osf.io/k4sp5) and in the Appendix **??**. This project was approved by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at Dartmouth College (No. STUDY00032474).

Table 1: Study 1 Survey Design

Conditions	"We need more ... in Congress."
Co-Ethnic Design:	
Ethnicity shared (LI)	**[co-ethnics]**
Party shared (LI)	[co-partisans]
Ethnicity shared, Party shared (HI)	**[co-ethnic]** [co-partisans]
Ethnicity shared, Party not shared (HI)	**[co-ethnic]** [out-partisans]
Ethnicity not shared, Party shared (HI)	[co-partisans] who are not **[co-ethnics]**
Pan-Ethnic Design:	
Race shared (LI)	**Asian Americans**
Party shared (LI)	[co-partisans]
Race shared, Party shared (HI)	**Asian American** [co-partisans]
Race shared, Party not shared (HI)	**Asian American** [out-partisans]
Race not shared, Party shared (HI)	[co-partisans] who are not **Asian Americans**

Note: Respondents would fill in the information in the brackets that correspond to their own racial and ethnic identity. (LI) refers to low information, (HI) refers to high information. The key differences between the two designs are highlighted in bold. The "co-ethnics" include Chinese American, Indian American, Filipino American, Vietnamese American, Korean American, and Japanese American.

statements in the following format: "*We need more [type of representatives] in Congress*" (on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree"). We split questions into "low" and "high" information categories because the presence of ethnic and/or partisan information may change how voters weigh these factors (Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian and Trounstine 2020; Kirkland and Coppock 2018). Low-information questions independently ask respondents preferences for race/ethnicity and partisanship, while high-information questions give information about both race/ethnicity *and* party. While the NAAS survey only includes the low information items, we modify their questions to understand preferences for both descriptive *and* partisan representation when intertwined.

Respondents were randomly split across two research designs: Co-Ethnic Design and Pan-Ethnic Design (Table 1). In the Co-Ethnic Design, we asked questions about co-ethnicity

(such as, "We need more Japanese Americans in Congress" for Japanese respondents). In the Pan-Ethnic Design, we asked questions about pan-ethnicity (such as, "We need more Asian Americans in Congress"). In both designs, the partisan questions are the same (such as, "We need more Republicans in Congress"). The "high information" questions include statements about *both* race and partisanship (such as, "We need more Asian American Democrats in Congress"). Each respondent indicated agreement with five items about shared presence in Congress: (1) Race or ethnicity shared, (2) Party shared, (3) Race or ethnicity shared and Party shared, (4) Race or ethnicity shared and Party not shared, 5) Race or ethnicity not shared and Party shared. The questions are outlined in Table 1.

The last two rows of Table 1 in each design indicate trade-offs. Under the Co-Ethnic Design, they involve out-partisan but co-ethnic representatives (e.g., more Chinese Republicans in Congress for a Chinese American who is a Democrat) and co-partisan but not co-ethnic representatives (e.g., more Democrats who are not Chinese in Congress for a Chinese American who is a Democrat). Under the Pan-Ethnic Design, the questions are similar except with "Asian American" rather than "Chinese American," for example.

4.2 Study 2: Preferences for Shared Representation in Candidates

In Study 2, we study Asian Americans' choices in electoral settings, particularly when they face trade-off situations. While some scholars examine how voters react to cross-pressures in actual elections (Graves and Lee 2000; Michelson 2005), using actual election data is often insufficient to understand these relationships more broadly. The presence of Asian American Republican candidates, while increasing, is still a relatively new phenomenon (Lublin and Wright 2023). To gain a more coherent understanding of how Asian Americans make vote choices with cross-pressures, we use an experiment to randomly manipulate multiple characteristics of hypothetical candidates.

Conjoint analysis is a valid experimental method to understand such multidimensional preferences underlying these choices (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto 2014). In a

conjoint experiment, respondents rate or choose from a set of hypothetical profiles that vary on a set of attributes of interest selected by researchers. This approach is advantageous for us to study trade-off preferences between two different candidates while averaging over various combinations of other attributes.

Outcome Questions

After being shown two hypothetical candidates side-by-side, respondents were asked, "*Consider the following two hypothetical candidates for Congress. Which candidate are you most likely to vote for? Even if you are not entirely sure, please indicate which of the two you would be more likely to prefer.*"[8] This task was repeated ten more times for eleven total tasks, with the last task being the same as the first task. This repeated question is used to measure the intra-respondent reliability (IRR), which is helpful to accurately measure marginal means after correcting measurement-error-induced biases (Clayton et al. 2023).

Candidate Attributes

Each candidate has seven attributes. Each attribute has multiple levels, one of which is randomly assigned to each hypothetical candidate (see Table 2). Each level had an equal chance of appearing, except for the race/ethnicity (for over-sampling purposes) and education to maintain external validity (see de la Cuesta, Egami and Imai 2022).[9] The main attributes of our interest are *Race/Ethnicity* and *Party*. Other attributes include *Advances Favorable Legislation for District Constituents*, *Sex*, *Education*, *Votes with Party*, and *Was Born in the U.S.* We conducted a pre-test (n = 1,042) to validate attributes that are perceived to be associated with Asian American candidates and, thus, should be included in our

[8] Additionally, we asked respondents their *likelihood* to vote (i.e., a rating) for each candidate.

[9] For race/ethnicity, Asian Americans were weighted 50% (for the Co-Ethnic Design, each ethnicity was weighted around 8%), white was weighted at 30%, Black was weighted at 10%, and Hispanic was weighted at 10%. Education levels were distributed 68% to professional degrees and 32% to Bachelor's degrees, which correspond to the approximate distribution in Congress. Data about the educational makeup of Congress was taken from the Congressional Research Service's website (https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R45583.pdf, last accessed on November 10, 2024).

Table 2: Study 2 Survey Design

Attribute	Levels
	Co-Ethnic Design:
Race/Ethnicity	**Chinese American/Indian American/ Filipino American/Vietnamese American/ Korean American/Japanese American/** White/Black/Hispanic
Party	Democrat/Republican
Legislative Effectiveness	Sometimes/Often/Always
Sex	Male/Female
Education	Bachelor's degree/Professional degree
Votes with Party	Sometimes/Often
Was Born in the U.S.	Yes/No
	Pan-Ethnic Design:
Race/Ethnicity	**Asian American/** White/Black/Hispanic
Party	Democrat/Republican
Legislative Effectiveness	Sometimes/Often/Always
Sex	Male/Female
Education	Bachelor's degree/Professional degree
Votes with Party	Sometimes/Often
Was Born in the U.S.	Yes/No

Note: In the experiments, the exact label for *Legislative Effectiveness* is "Advances Favorable Legislation for District Constituents." We shorten it here for the presentation. The key differences between the two designs are highlighted in bold.

conjoint design (see Appendix B for details). The order of attributes was randomized across respondents but fixed within respondents.

Similar to Study 1, respondents were split into two design conditions: Co-Ethnic Design and Pan-Ethnic Design. In the Co-Ethnic Design, for *Race/Ethnicity*, in addition to "White," "Black," and "Hispanic," there were six other levels corresponding to Asian Americans' varying countries of origin: "Chinese American," "Indian American," "Filipino American," "Vietnamese American," "Korean American," and "Japanese American." These six ethnic groups compose around 87% of Asians in the United States. In the Pan-Ethnic Design, the

possible levels were "Asian American," "White," "Black," and "Hispanic."

A combination of these designs allows us to test how three different types of descriptive representation affect Asian Americans' vote choice: co-ethnic (from the same Asian country of origin), cross-ethnic (from a different Asian country of origin), and pan-ethnic (Asian American, no country of origin specified).

Statistical Methods

We report some deviations from our pre-registration. First, we exclude "ties" (both profiles having the same level (e.g., "Black") for the attribute of interest (e.g., *Race/Ethnicity*) in calculating marginal means. We pre-registered that we would measure a profile-level marginal mean (Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley 2020) for each attribute-level. This profile-level marginal mean measures the probability of choosing a profile that includes the level of interest (e.g., "Asian American") for the attribute of interest (e.g., *Race/Ethnicity*) averaged over (1) all the levels for this attribute (including the level of interest) in another profile, (2) all possible combinations of other attributes in both profiles and (3) all respondents. However, since pre-registration, some studies have shown that including profile pairs with these "ties" biases the marginal means by attenuating the estimates toward 0.5 for binary choices (Clayton et al. 2023; Ganter 2023).

Second, we measure marginal means corrected for possible measurement-error-induced bias (Clayton et al. 2023). Respondents' attention to every detail in a conjoint table may be limited. A new method proposed by Clayton et al. (2023) addresses this concern and improves the accuracy of estimates by using the IRR we measure in our survey.

Third, we calculate choice-level, rather than profile-level, marginal means (Clayton et al. 2023). We are specifically interested in how respondents make choices when they encounter trade-offs (for example, whether a Korean Democrat prefers a Korean Republican candidate or a Latino Democratic candidate, as in CA-39). For this purpose, it is more straightforward and informative to treat each (binary) *choice* as the unit of analysis. The standard method

of analyzing conjoint data (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto 2014; Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley 2020) treats each profile as an independent observation and, thus, ignores the comparison between the two profiles.

Measures of Social Identities

Respondents were also asked to answer questions about partisan and ethnic identities. First, we use Huddy, Mason and Aarøe's (2015) four-item measure of partisan identity for respondents who affiliate with or lean toward one of the two major parties. Second, we asked three sets of four-item questions measuring the strength of their co-ethnic, pan-ethnic, or partisan identity (see Figure A.3 for baseline results.) Specifically, following Mason (2016), we adapt Huddy, Mason and Aarøe's (2015) approach, originally designed to measure partisanship identity, to measure the strength of racial and ethnic identity. For example, for one of the partisan identity items, we asked respondents to answer: "*To what extent do you think of yourself as being a [Democrat/Republican]?*" on a 4-point scale. A corresponding question to measure co-ethnic identity is: "*To what extent do you think of yourself as being a [Chinese/Indian/Filipino/Vietnamese/Korean/Japanese] American?*" Similarly, a question to measure pan-ethnic identity is: "*To what extent do you think of yourself as being an Asian American?*"

5 Results

We first present the results of measuring Asian Americans' preferences for collective representation. We then present the results of our conjoint analysis, focusing on the study of trade-offs for dyadic representation.

5.1 Study 1: Preferences for Shared Representation in Congress

Figure 1 shows the results for examining our collective representation questions. Each point

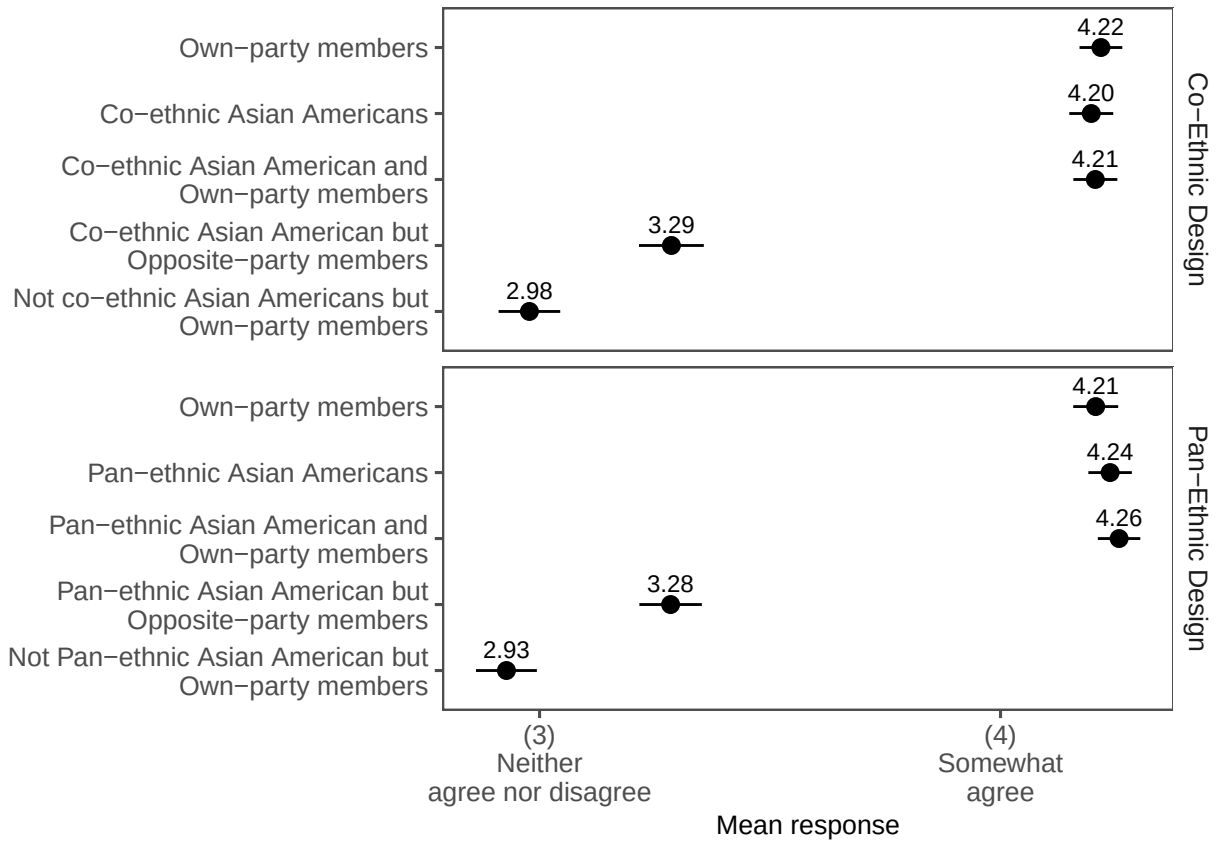

Figure 1: Mean response to more collective representation. *Note: We measure whether a respondent agrees or disagrees with the statement, "We need more... in Congress," ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The responses are treated as continuous. The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

corresponds to the mean agreement for each version of the question about respondents' preferences for collective representation. The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals. The results of subgroup comparisons are presented in Appendix A.1.[10]

Low-information Questions (Race/Ethnicity *or* Party)

The first two rows in each panel correspond to the average responses in low-information settings, where only one piece of information is given, either party ("Own-party members") or race/ethnicity ("Co-ethnic Asian Americans" or "Pan-ethnic Asian Americans"). There

[10]The results presented and discussed in this section do not differ by respondent ethnicity (Figure A.6). Results are also robust when we take into account only those who pass an attention check (Figure A.7) and speeders (Figure A.8).

are no clear differences between the desire for more descriptive or partisan representation. The average agreement for partisan representation is 4.22 or 4.21 in the Co-Ethnic Design and the Pan-Ethnic Design, respectively. The average agreement for descriptive representation is 4.20 or 4.24. There is also no meaningful difference between agreement about co-ethnic representation (4.20) and pan-ethnic representation (4.24).[11]

Overall, respondents have moderate to strong agreement that there should be more legislators in Congress who share their party or their race/ethnicity. One possible interpretation is that voters genuinely prefer to have more own-party and co-ethnic members of Congress without having stronger weights on one over another. However, because responses are clustered around this upper limit, another possibility is that this common way of measuring voters' preference for collective representation results in a ceiling effect, making it difficult to distinguish between genuine preferences between party and race/ethnicity.

High-information Questions (Race/Ethnicity *and* Party)

Additional information that implies a trade-off may change preferences for collective representation. We first look at the average agreement when respondents are given another piece of information that *aligns* with their partisan *and* ethnic/racial identity (third row): "Co-ethnic Asian American and Own-party members" or "Pan-ethnic Asian American and Own-Party members." To repeat, Asian Americans agreed with more co-ethnics (second row; without information about partisanship) on average at 4.20. This agreement for more co-ethnic Asian Americans *who share their partisan affiliation* does not increase substantially: it is almost the same (4.21). The pattern is the same when asking about pan-ethnics, namely, only a slight increase from 4.24 to 4.26.

There are, again, two possible interpretations of these results. The first is, once again, a potential ceiling effect. That said, the lack of further increase in agreement may suggest

[11]This is similar to the results in Lublin and Wright (2023), who find no difference between a preference for more co-ethnic or pan-ethnic collective representation in both the 2016 National Asian American Survey and their own survey fielded in 2021.

that respondents consider *both* ethnicity/race and party even when asked about only one or the other. Specifically, when respondents are asked about their preference regarding race/ethnicity (e.g., "more Asian Americans") in the hypothetical legislature, they may assume the party as well (e.g., "more Democrats" for Democratic supporters).[12] As minority candidates are typically perceived to be more liberal (McDermott 1998; Sigelman et al. 1995), Republican respondents may assume that these candidates are less likely to be their own party members.

Trade-offs and Strength of Identity

The last two high-information items in Figure 1 show how respondents feel about *trade-off* situations—the increased presence of legislators who share their race/ethnicity but not their party (fourth row in both panels) and the increased presence of legislators who share their party but not their race/ethnicity (last row in both panels). Respondents seem to view shared race/ethnicity as more important than shared partisanship when considering trade-offs for collective representation in Congress. For example, the agreement about the need for more legislators who are co-ethnics but of the opposite party drops to 3.29 points. When legislators are not co-ethnics but of the same party, agreement drops even further to 2.98 points. The pattern about pan-ethnic out-partisans (asking about needing more Asian Americans, but not a shared co-partisan, in Congress) and out-ethnic co-partisans (asking about needing more co-partisans, but not Asian Americans) is nearly identical.

Overall, respondents are least likely to trade descriptive representation for partisan representation; the lowest agreement was for supporting more co-partisans in Congress who are explicitly *not* of their shared race/ethnicity (trading off descriptive for partisan representation).[13]

[12] Peterson (2017) also finds that the effect of partisan cueing is highest in low-information environments, with race/ethnicity and party most closely linked together. Our subgroup analysis by respondents' partisanship (Figures A.1 and A.2 in the Appendix) also suggests cue-taking in the low-information version of the question, as Republicans tend to disfavor descriptive representation compared to Democrats (as in Casellas and Wallace 2015).

[13] Taking the difference in differences provide direct evidence that respondents prioritize descriptive rep-

One explanation for the preference for trading off partisan representation for descriptive representation is that respondents generally have stronger pan-ethnic and co-ethnic social identities than partisan social identities. To examine this potential mechanism, we measure the heterogeneity in the mean agreement by respondents' strength in racial, ethnic, and partisan identities. We identify a respondent with a "strong" social identity as one with a score in the top tercile, while "medium" and "weak" social identities correspond to the middle and bottom terciles.

Figure A.4 in the Appendix shows that those with a strong co-ethnic or pan-ethnic identity are more likely to agree that Congress needs more representatives who share their race/ethnicity than representatives who share their partisanship. Specifically, the difference between "Co-ethnic [or Pan-ethnic] Asian American but Opposite-party members" (fourth row) and "Not co-ethnic [or Pan-ethnic] Asian American but Own-party members" (fifth row) is the largest among respondents with a strong racial/ethnic identity (in blue), while it is the smallest among respondents with a weak racial/ethnic identity (in black).

We do not observe a similar pattern of heterogeneity in respondents' strength of partisan identity. Although we see differences by the strength of co-ethnic or pan-ethnic identity (Figure A.4), the differences are small and insignificant by the strength of *partisan* identity (Figure A.5). On the other hand, respondents with weak partisan identity are even more likely to trade off partisan representation for co-ethnic or pan-ethnic descriptive representation. These results highlight just how much Asian Americans are not willing to sacrifice shared racial/ethnic descriptive representation for the sake of partisan representation.

resentation over partisan representation. The difference between the third row (co-partisan and shared race/ethnicity) and the fifth row (co-partisan but not shared race/ethnicity) is $4.21 - 2.98 = 1.23$ (Co-Ethnic Design) or $4.26 - 2.93 = 1.33$ (Pan-Ethnic Design). The difference between the third row (co-partisan and shared race/ethnicity) and the fourth row (out-partisan but shared race/ethnicity) is $4.21 - 3.29 = 0.92$ (Co-Ethnic Design) or $4.26 - 3.28 = 0.98$ (Pan-Ethnic Design). This shows that these differences are more prominent when the shared race/ethnicity status changes than when the shared partisanship status changes.

5.2 Study 2: Preferences for Shared Representation in Candidates

Study 1 suggests respondents prefer descriptive representation along ethnic/racial lines over partisan representation when the questions are about *collective* representation. However, their preferences can differ when asked about *dyadic* representation for two reasons. First, in a competitive election, feelings of group threat are more likely to be activated (Huddy, Mason and Aarøe 2015). Second, the findings from Study 1 may be partly due to the direct questioning about partisanship and race/ethnicity. Respondents may feel that they are expected to report their preferences for more co-ethnic or pan-ethnic legislators because there are so few Asian Americans in Congress.

While directly asking about collective representation is a first step in understanding how Asian Americans weigh partisanship and race/ethnicity, we need to measure voters' honest preferences when they make more explicit trade-off decisions between two candidates with varying characteristics. The conjoint design of Study 2 is suitable for this purpose because we present difficult-to-choose trade-off options to respondents and ask them which one they would prefer. Conjoints are also known to mitigate social desirability bias (Horiuchi, Markovich and Yamamoto 2022), which is a possible concern in Study 1.

Marginal Means

First, we calculate the marginal mean of each attribute of interest—*Party* or *Race/Ethnicity*—before we examine specific trade-off behavior. As explained earlier, we measure *choice-level* marginal means (with bias-correction) proposed by Clayton et al. (2023). The unit of analysis is a profile pair. Therefore, the marginal mean of choosing an "Own-party candidate" is the same as the complement of the probability of choosing an "Out-party candidate" (i.e., excluding the cases where two profiles have the same levels). This quantity of interest averages over the combinations of all other attributes. What is an "own-party" is defined by each respondent's partisanship and the party of a hypothetical candidate presented in Table 2. For the *Race/Ethnicity* attribute, to measure the marginal means for the levels relevant

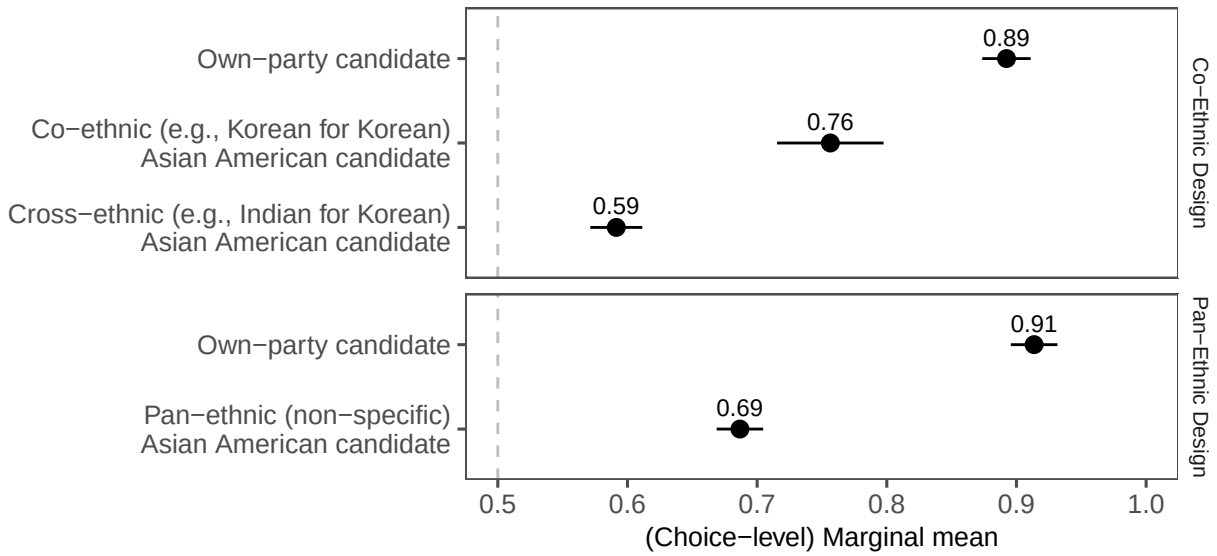

Figure 2: Marginal means on binary vote choice (main attributes). *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals. The comparison level is "Out-party candidate" for the marginal mean of choosing "Own-party candidate" and either "White," "Black" or "Hispanic" for the marginal mean of choosing a co-ethnic, cross-ethnic, or pan-ethnic Asian American candidate.*

to Asian Americans, we focus on profile pairs for which one profile contains the level of interest. They include (1) "Co-ethnic (e.g., Korean for Korean) Asian American candidate," (2) "Cross-ethnic (e.g., Indian for Korean) Asian American candidate" in the Co-Ethnic Design or (3) "Pan-ethnic (non-specific) Asian American candidate" in the Pan-Ethnic Design. In each pair, the other profile should contain either "White," "Black," or "Hispanic." This means that we intentionally exclude pairs with the same level, such as Black vs. Black or Asian American vs. Asian American (e.g., Korean American vs. Indian American) pairs.[14]

The estimated results are presented in Figure 2. We find some notable patterns. First, partisanship is the most critical factor in choosing candidates in a competitive electoral setting. The marginal mean of choosing "Own-party candidate" is 0.89 in the Co-Ethnic Design and 0.91 in the Pan-Ethnic Design. Therefore, if one of the two candidates in an

[14]For all of our analyses, we report the measurement-error corrected binary vote choice marginal means (Clayton et al. 2023) as our main findings, which is a deviation from our original pre-analysis plan. We also report the uncorrected vote choice and the rating marginal means for every main analysis. For example, alternative measurements for the marginal means of the main attributes in Figure 2 are presented in Figures A.9 and A.10. None of the various estimation strategies changes the interpretation of our results.

election shares the same party as a respondent, the respondent will vote for that candidate with approximately 90% probability.

Second, respondents do not favor shared partisanship and race/ethnicity equally. The marginal means for "Co-ethnic Asian American candidate," "Cross-ethnic Asian American candidate," and "Pan-ethnic Asian American candidate" are substantially smaller than the marginal mean for "Own-party candidate." This finding in Study 2 differs from the finding in Study 1, which suggests respondents do not distinguish between descriptive or partisan *collective* representation.

Third, Asian American respondents are the most likely to select candidates that share one's own origin or co-ethnics, with a 76% probability. When ethnicity is not specified, and candidates are just described as "Asian American" (pan-ethnic), the probability of selection drops to 69%. When the Asian American candidate is specified as having a different national origin as the respondent or cross-ethnics, the likelihood of voting for that candidate drops even further to 59%. However, all three marginal means of choosing Asian American candidates are greater than 0.5, implying that any Asian American candidate, regardless of their particular ethnicity, would be favored in an election compared to a white, Black, or Hispanic candidate for Asian American respondents.[15]

In sum, respondents are most likely to choose similar party candidates over candidates of similar race/ethnicity. Moreover, among similar race/ethnicity candidates, respondents are most likely to choose an Asian American candidate with their own ethnic origin (co-ethnics), followed by an Asian American candidate with no ethnicity specified (pan-ethnics), and finally, an Asian American candidate who does not share their ethnic origin (cross-ethnics). Even so, some form of racial cross-affinity exists for all three types of Asian American candidates: co-ethnic, pan-ethnic, and cross-ethnic. What is more important is that the Asian American (cross-ethnic) candidate is distinct from the co-ethnic and pan-ethnic candidates.

[15]We also examine whether these marginal means change based on the race of a candidate for comparison (i.e., a white, Black, or Hispanic candidate). The results are presented in Figures A.11 and A.12. We find no differences in whether the other candidate is white, Black, or Hispanic.

Asian Americans (cross-ethnic) are members of a respondent's *ethnic out-group* but *racial in-group*, meaning they occupy a space between in-group and out-group status that is still more preferable than the white, Black, or Hispanic candidates.[16] It appears that there are important nuances in how Asian American voters evaluate descriptive representatives regarding national origin and ethnicity.

We also examine whether the estimated marginal means are asymmetrical by respondents' partisan affiliation and the strength of their racial, ethnic, and partisan identities and find no major heterogeneity (see Figures A.13, A.15, and A.16 in the Appendix). A notable finding is that unlike Study 1, respondents with high co-ethnic and pan-ethnic identities still continue to prioritize candidates who share their party over their race/ethnicity.[17]

Trade-offs

Finally, we analyze respondents' decisions in trade-off pairs to examine whether Asian Americans are more likely to sacrifice descriptive representation for partisan representation. Figure 3 shows how often Asian Americans vote for candidates aligned with one characteristic but not aligned with another. That is, we choose profile pairs in which respondents compare an Asian American candidate (aligned with *Race/Ethnicity*) who is an opposite party member (not aligned with *Party*) and a white, Black, or Hispanic candidate (not aligned with *Race/Ethnicity*) who is an own party member (aligned with *Party*).

In these trade-off situations, Asian American respondents continue to prioritize shared partisanship, as they consistently choose an own-party candidate who is white, Black, or Hispanic more than 50% of the time over an Asian American candidate who is from the opposite party. This finding does not vary based on whether the Asian American opposite party candidate is a co-ethnic (e.g., a Korean American Republican candidate for Korean American

[16] Our finding differs from that of Cuevas-Molina and Nteta (2023) for Latino voters, implying that there are differences between Asian Americans and Latinos in their preference of cross-ethnic candidates to pan-ethnic ones.

[17] We also conduct robustness checks by analyzing separately those who passed the attention check (Figure A.17) and speeders (Figure A.18) and find that our results hold.

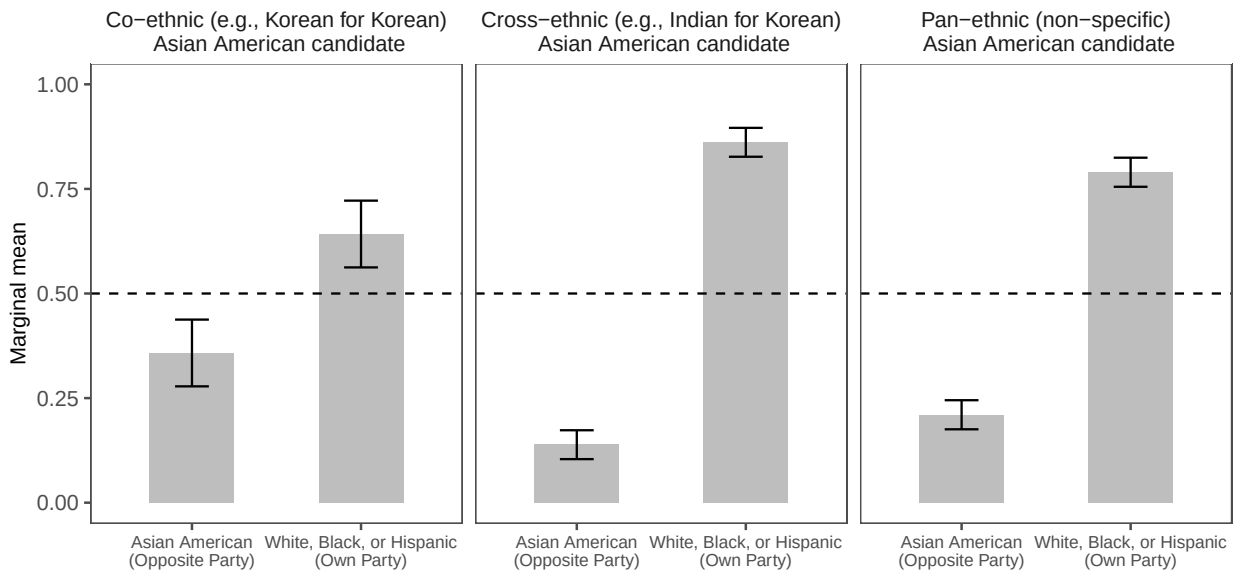

Figure 3: Marginal means on binary vote choice (trade-offs). *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

Democrats), cross-ethnic (e.g., an Indian American Republican candidate for Korean American Democrats), or a pan-ethnic (an unspecified Asian American Republican candidate). When facing trade-off decisions that involve shared partisanship or shared race/ethnicity, Asian American respondents are always more willing to vote for the candidate who shares their party.

While race/ethnicity may be less critical than partisanship in determining vote choice in trade-offs, there is notable variation *within descriptive representation itself* (i.e., across the left bars of the three panels in Figure 3). Asian American respondents are more likely to vote for co-ethnics of the opposite party (36%) than those described as pan-ethnics or cross-ethnics. When candidates are just described as "Asian American," the probability of vote choice drops to 21%. When the Asian American candidate is specified as not having the same national origin as the respondent, however, the probability of voting for that candidate drops even further to 13%.

One benefit of using *profile pairs* as the unit of analysis is that we can look at differences in trade-offs by the race/ethnicity of the other candidate for comparison. While keeping

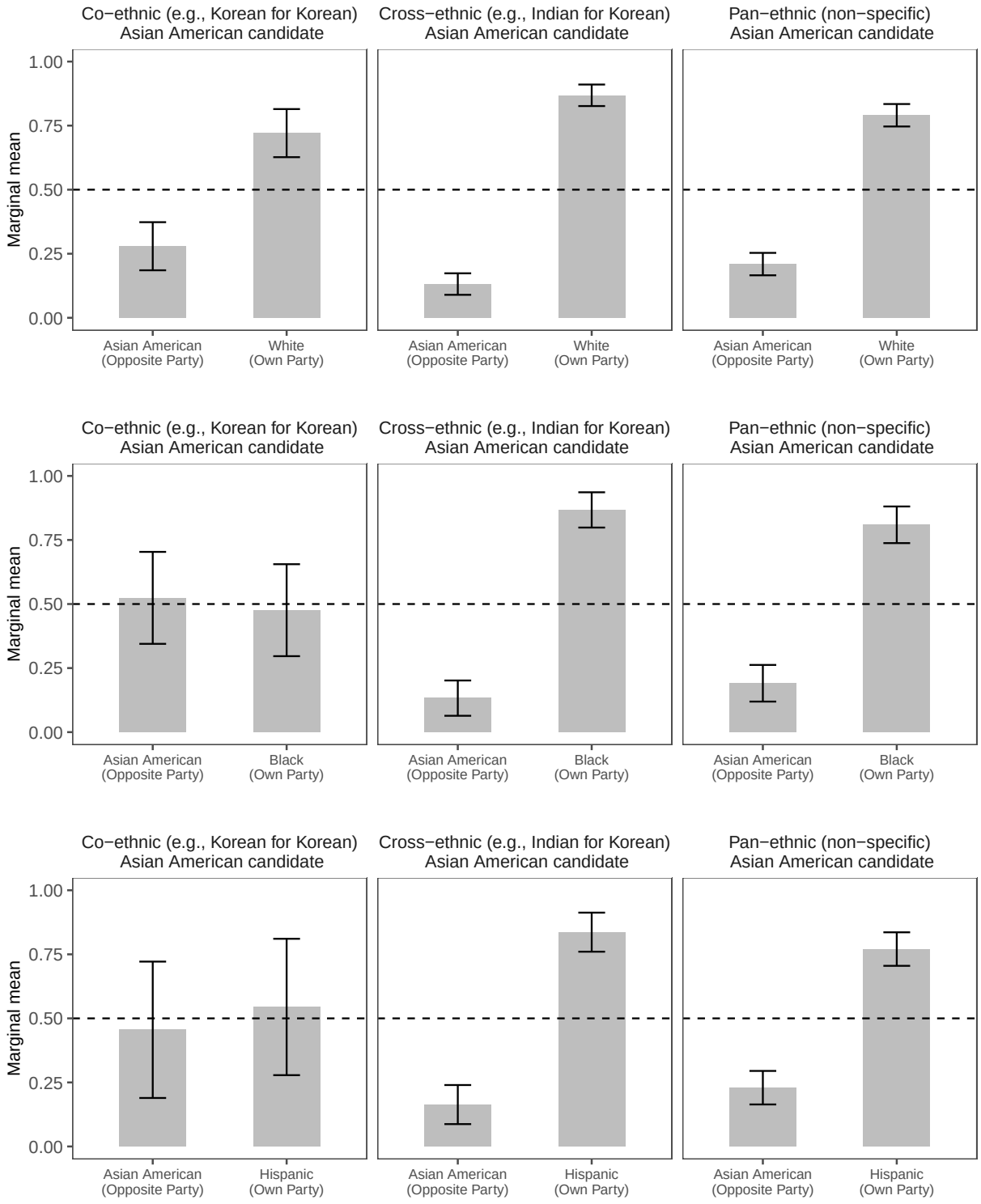

Figure 4: Marginal means on binary vote choice by race of other candidate (trade-offs). *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

the Asian American opposite-party candidate fixed, we examine whether respondents react differently when their party candidate is either white, Black, or Hispanic. The results are presented in Figure 4. While the pattern follows for white candidates (top row), there are substantial differences when Asian American respondents evaluate a Black or Hispanic own-party candidate versus a co-ethnic opposite-party candidate. We see that Asian American respondents are willing to cross party lines to vote for an opposite-party, co-ethnic member *only if* their own-party candidate is Black (first column, second row) or Hispanic (first column, third row).

Therefore, there seems to be a racial penalty extended to Black and Hispanic members that is not present for white own-party members. Unlike previous results, Asian Americans will vote for the opposite party candidate 52% of the time if the other candidate is Black and 46% of the time if the other candidate is Hispanic, neither of which are statistically significantly different than 50%. However, this behavior does not apply when the Asian American opposite-party candidate is either a cross-ethnic or pan-ethnic candidate (i.e., the second or third column, the second or third row). In these instances, respondents revert to the previous pattern: they will vote for their own party candidate regardless of whether or not they are white, Black, or Hispanic.

We examine the heterogeneity in trade-off choices among various subgroups of respondents, which are presented in the Appendix A.4. First, Democrats and Republicans follow much of the same patterns as the main results (see Figures A.21 and A.22). Second, Figure A.23 shows the results for first-generation immigrants, who tend to have a weaker partisan identity. We find that they have stronger preferences for a co-ethnic candidate of the opposite party compared to second and third-generation immigrants. The probability of voting for such a candidate is almost the same as the probability of voting for a white, Black, or Hispanic candidate of the respondents' party. However, these patterns are not seen for second and third-generation immigrants. Finally, we again look at the differences in marginal means by respondents' partisan, co-ethnic, and pan-ethnic social identities (see Figures A.24 and

A.25). Just as expected, we find that respondents with the highest partisan identities are more likely to penalize all Asian American opposite-party candidates, while those with the lowest partisan identities are equally likely to vote for co-ethnic opposite-party candidates and white, Black, or Hispanic own-party candidates. Regarding the heterogeneity by respondents' ethnic identity, we see a less clear pattern in Figure A.25. Those with the highest and lowest levels of co-ethnic identities are again equally likely to vote for either the co-ethnic opposite-party or the white, Black, or Hispanic own-party candidate.[18] However, those with a medium level of co-ethnic identity are significantly more likely to choose a white, Black, or Hispanic own-party candidate.

Overall, Asian Americans are almost always willing to trade off their descriptive representation for partisan representation in a competitive electoral setting. However, Asian Americans seem to be willing to trade off their partisan representation for descriptive representation in one circumstance only—when a co-ethnic Asian American opposite-party candidate competes against a Black or Hispanic own-party candidate. The descriptive representation must be on the terms of *co-ethnicity*.

6 Conclusion

Our contribution to the literature is threefold. First, we contribute to the broader literature on voters' preferences for descriptive and partisan representation. We find that the narrative that partisanship is predominant, as commonly discussed in American politics, is more complicated when considering a heterogeneous group like Asian American voters. When asked outright about preferences for collective representation, Asian Americans prioritize descriptive representation over partisan representation. However, when voting for a specific candidate, they are willing to trade off descriptive representation for partisan representation in almost all circumstances. Asian Americans also weigh different *forms* of descriptive

[18]This relationship does not extend to those with high pan-ethnic identities, as they only vote for an opposite-party Asian American candidate 24% of the time, even though it is still higher than those with low pan-ethnic identities.

representation, depending on how candidates are described and what level of information about ethnicity is given. Without considering trade-offs, they will still vote for any candidate described as Asian American (co-ethnic, cross-ethnic, and pan-ethnic) more often than the candidates who arex not Asian Americans (i.e., white, Black, and Hispanic). These results suggest a shared affinity for candidates who are Asian Americans compared to non-Asian American candidates, regardless of whether or not these candidates are of the same ethnicity as respondents. Notably for trade-off behavior, however, if Asian American respondents encounter a co-ethnic candidate of the opposite party, they are just as likely to vote *against* their own party if their only in-party alternative is a Black or Hispanic candidate.

These findings offer another contribution to the literature on the politics of race and ethnicity. Specifically, our findings provide crucial revelations about pan-ethnic groups in studying race/ethnicity and identities. Asian Americans are often grouped as a monolith even though they differ in ethnic, cultural, religious, and phenotypical backgrounds (Junn and Masuoka 2008; Sadhwani 2022*a*). We find that Asian American candidates who are explicitly *not* of the same origin as the survey respondents (i.e., cross-ethnic) are penalized compared to Asian American candidates described in pan-ethnic terms. For example, Chinese Americans are more likely to vote for a candidate described as an "Asian American" than a candidate described as a "Korean American," even considering other characteristics. This finding opens up avenues for further research on heterogeneity among different *ethnic* groups within the broader *racial* group, such as examining potential explanations regarding animosity, competition, or historical differences (Liu and Carrington 2021).

At the same time, our results raise concerns about the potential for building multiethnic and multiracial coalitions (see, e.g., Pérez et al. 2022; Pérez, Vicuña and Ramos 2023). Asian Americans may continue to face difficulties in organizing around shared descriptive interests. Continued immigration from Asian countries may reinforce existing ethnic boundaries among first-generation immigrants, making it harder to develop a unified political identity (Jiménez 2008). While Asian American *candidates* have succeeded in building multiracial coalitions

with solid support from Black and Hispanic voters (Lublin and Wright 2023), uniting Asian American *voters* across ethnic lines may remain challenging. The penalty applied to Black and Hispanic candidates, even when they are co-partisans, raises the possibility that racial animosity *between minority groups* might play a role. However, we cannot identify the mechanism because our survey did not include measures of racism or racial resentment. Future studies should include these measures to see if this penalty results from prejudice, perceptions of substantive representation, or something else.

We acknowledge several other limitations of our research and areas for future research. First, while examining shared pan-ethnicity reveals essential insights about the type of descriptive representation Asian Americans value, it is difficult to imagine a "pan-ethnic" but otherwise ethnically ambiguous candidate in the real world. One reason why we find the preference for pan-ethnic candidates over cross-ethnic candidates may be because respondents infer that Asian Americans (unspecified) are still co-ethnics. While candidates may campaign as "Asian Americans" without reference to a specific identity in the real world, the distinctiveness of a national origin surname, campaign advertisement, or some phenotypical features may give voters some clues to the ethnicity of that candidate.[19] At the same time, candidates may strategically appeal as an "Asian American" to increase their appeal to other Asian American constituents with whom they do not share a common ethnicity. Even though some informed Asian American voters can discern ethnicity, the effectiveness of this framing strategy on its own is worth considering (see, e.g., Boudreau, Elmendorf and MacKenzie 2019; Hurst 2023; Wu 2023). Further research is needed to determine the relative effects of these pan-ethnic Asian American and more specific ethnic American (e.g., Korean American) frames when combined with more information about the candidates, such as last names and phenotypes. The expectation that Asian Americans will treat all cross-ethnicities equally may overlook significant intra-group dynamics, as perceptions of "Asian American-

[19]This strategic ambiguity may be a much more viable strategy for Latino candidates, a fact that Cuevas-Molina and Nteta (2023) utilizes by just describing the name "Jose Martinez" without reference to a specific ethnicity for the pan-ethnic condition.

ness" may vary by respondent background (Goh and McCue 2021; Lee and Ramakrishnan 2019; Ocampo 2016; Yeung 2024).

Additional opportunities exist to extend our research about trade-offs to other minority groups or salient group identities such as gender or sexuality. Indeed, some scholars recognize the connection between Asian American and Latino experiences in the United States as composed mostly of immigrant populations (Cuevas-Molina and Nteta 2023; Schildkraut 2013). Other racial minority groups beyond Latinos also have some form of pan-ethnic identities, even if they are not typically perceived in this way, such as African Americans and African immigrants (Gooding 2021) or pan-Indianism for Native Americans (Herrick and Mendez 2019). As party lines continue to shift for ethnic/racial minorities, studying such trade-offs and interactions between descriptive and partisan representation of race, ethnicity, and party also continues to grow in importance for other groups.

Finally, while we only look at the case of Asian Americans in this paper, future research should examine Asian identities and representation in contexts beyond the United States. Major Western democracies, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, have substantial Asian diaspora populations who are beginning to influence political processes (see, e.g., Martin and Blinder 2021; Pietsch 2017). As the Asian diaspora is the largest non-white racial group in those countries, this group plays an increasingly critical role in the future of multicultural democracies, along with the potential backlash to this racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversification.

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Supplementary Materials

Descriptive or Partisan Representation? Examining Trade-Offs for Asian Americans

Table of Contents

A Additional Results

A.1 Study 1 (Subgroup Comparisons)

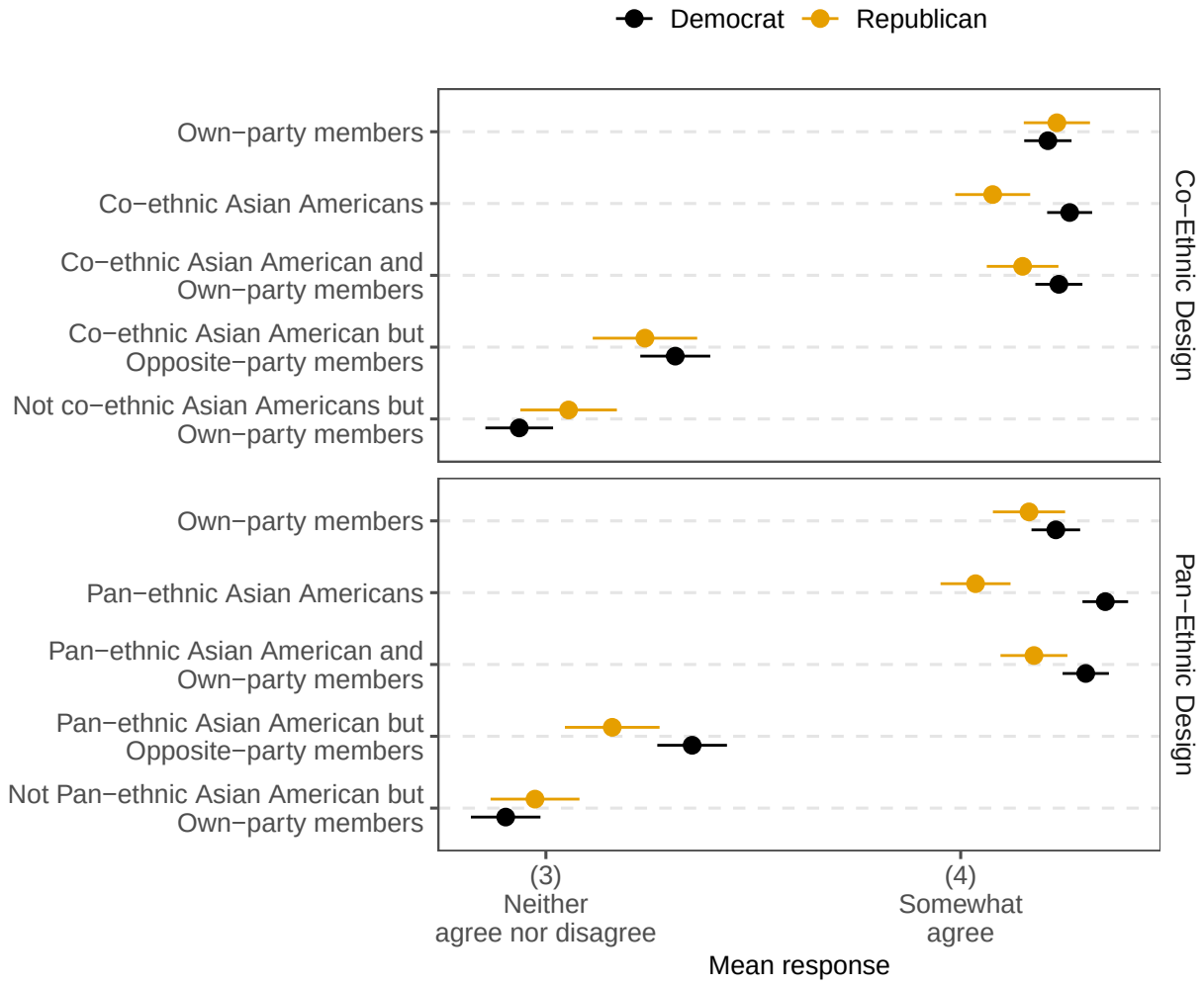

Figure A.1: Mean response to more collective representation by respondents' partisanship. *Note: We measure whether a respondent agrees or disagrees with the statement, "We need more... in Congress," ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The responses are treated as continuous. The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

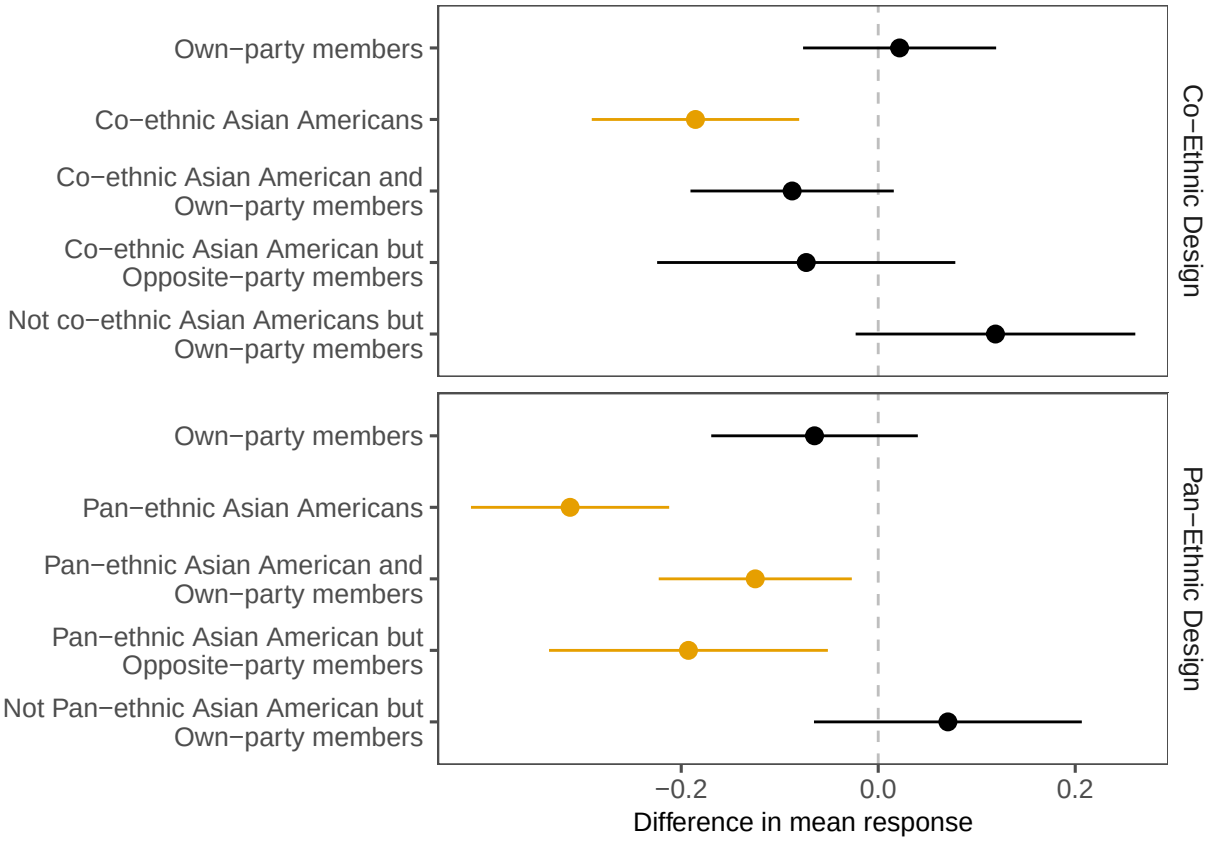

Figure A.2: Difference in mean response to more collective representation by respondents' partisanship. *Note: See Note in Figure A.1.*

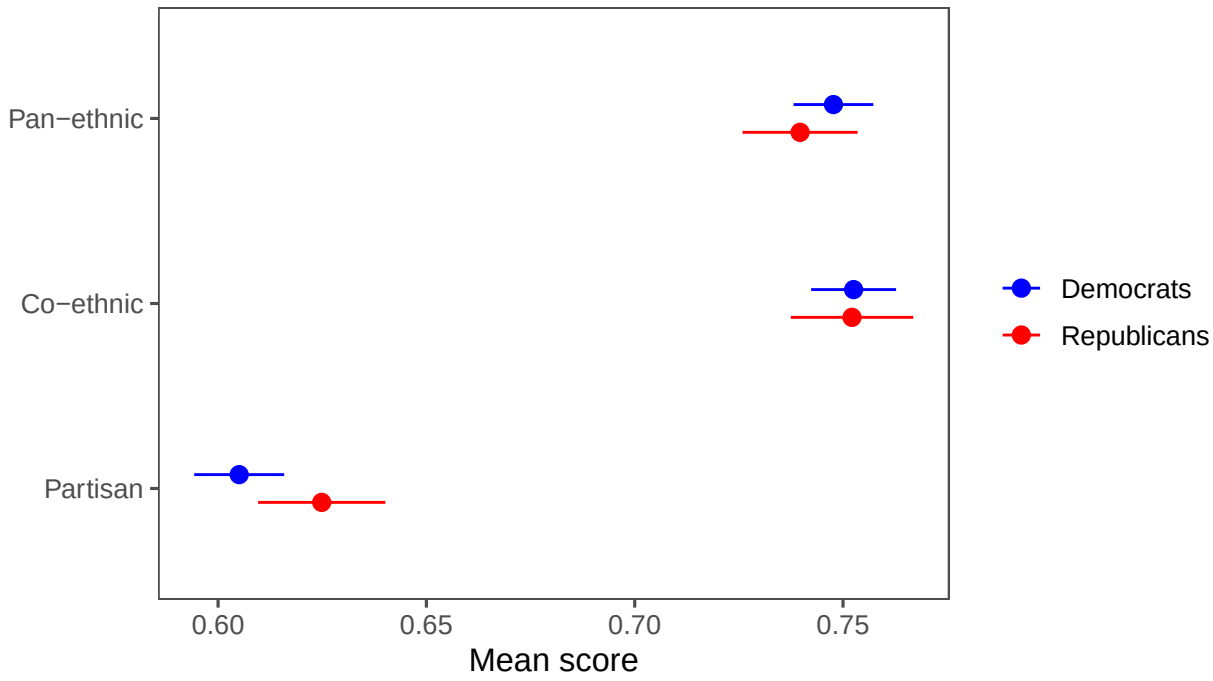

Figure A.3: Average score of social identity. *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

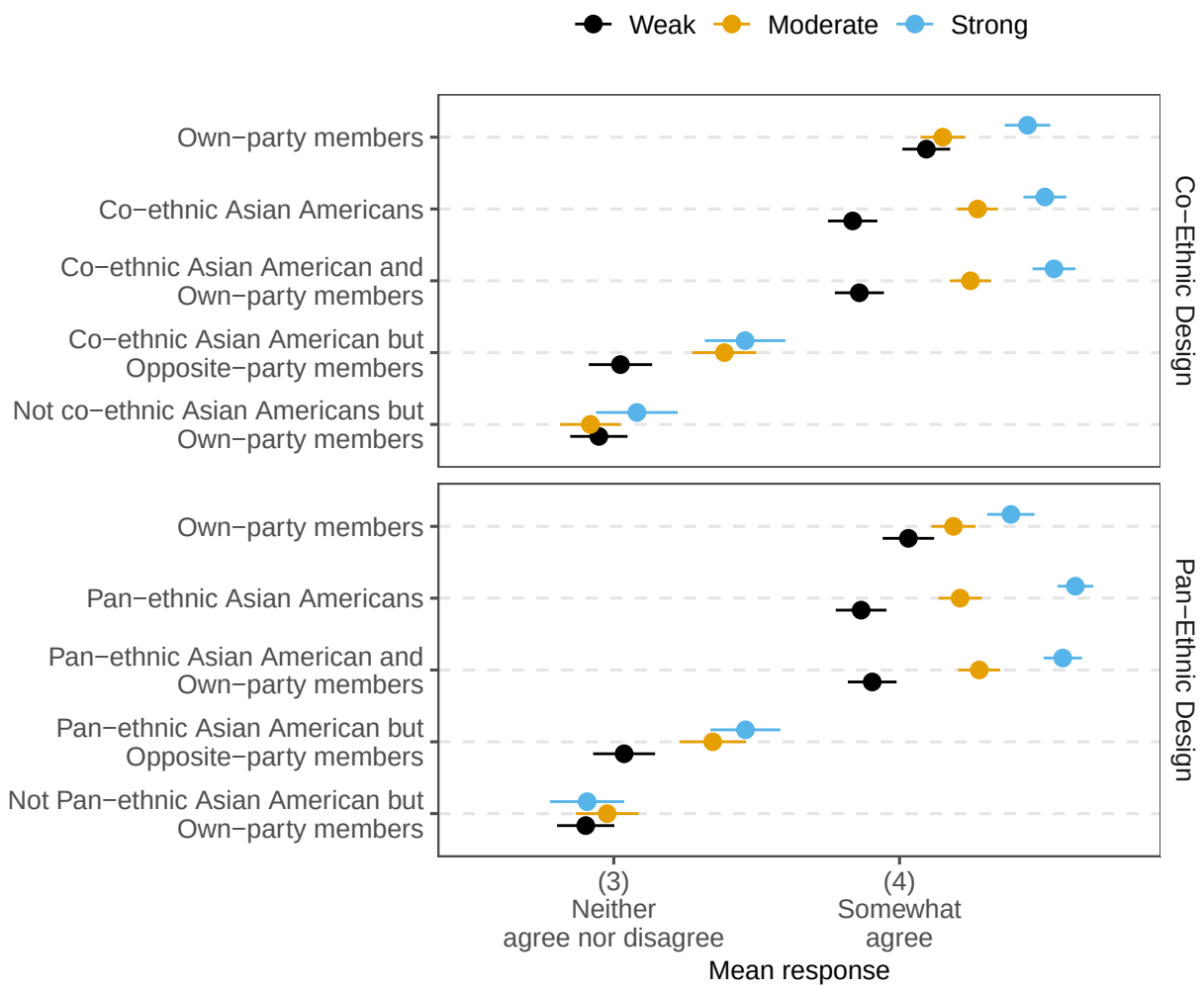

Figure A.4: Mean response to more collective representation by respondents' co-ethnic and pan-ethnic identities. *Note: See Note in Figure A.1.*

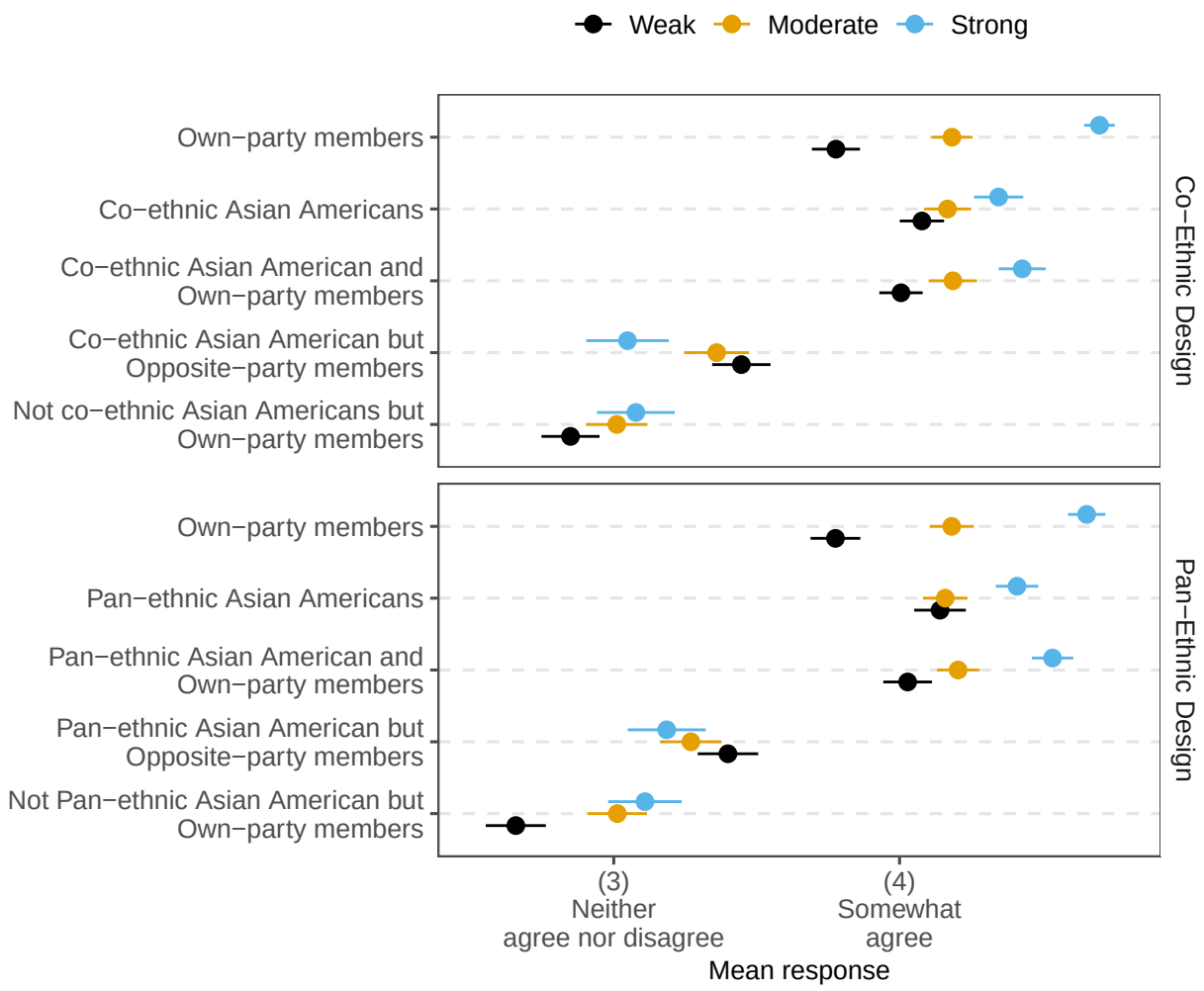

Figure A.5: Mean response to more collective representation by partisan identity. *Note: See Note in Figure A.1.*

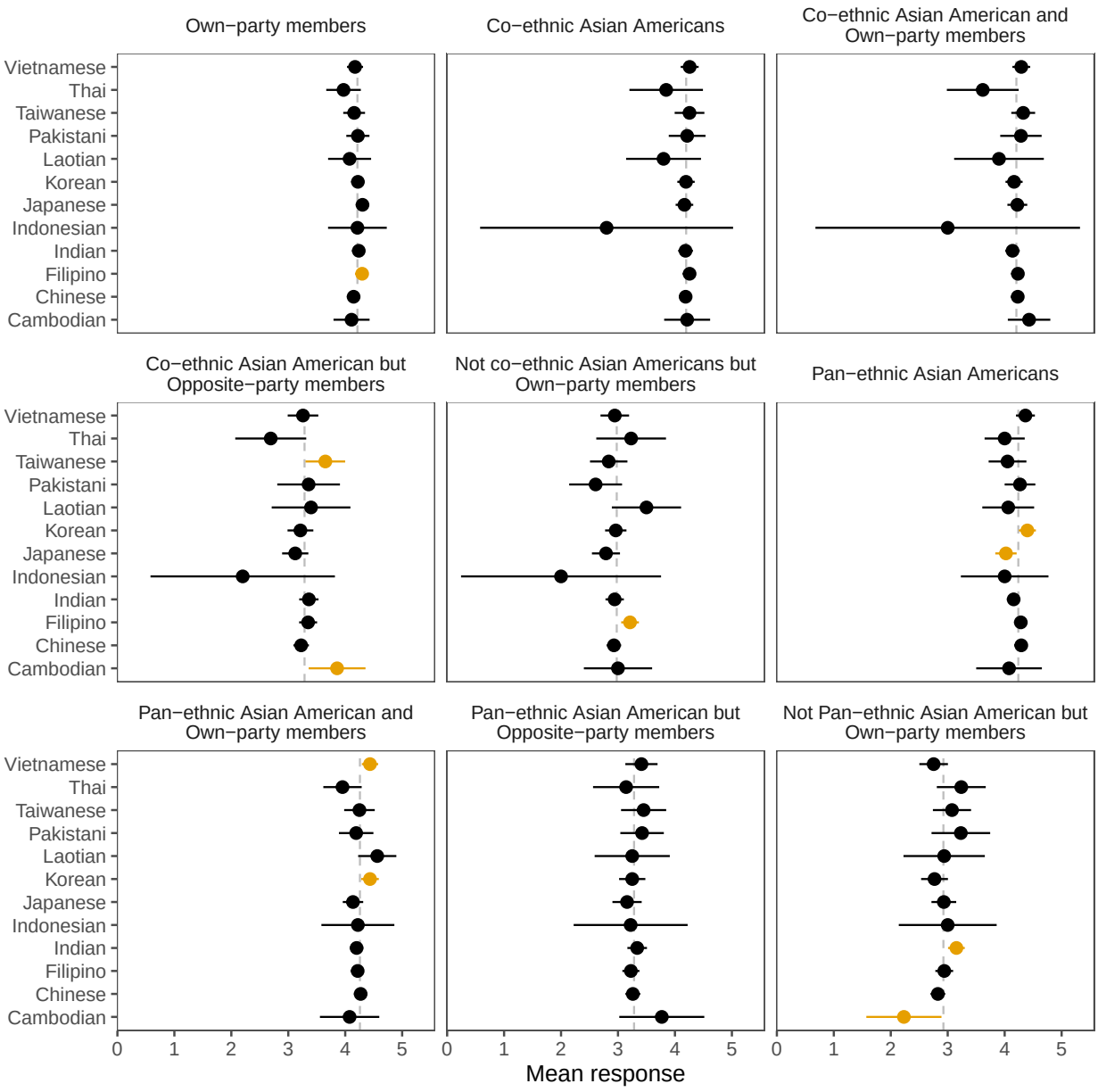

Figure A.6: Mean response to more collective representation by ethnicity. *Note: See Note in Figure A.1.*

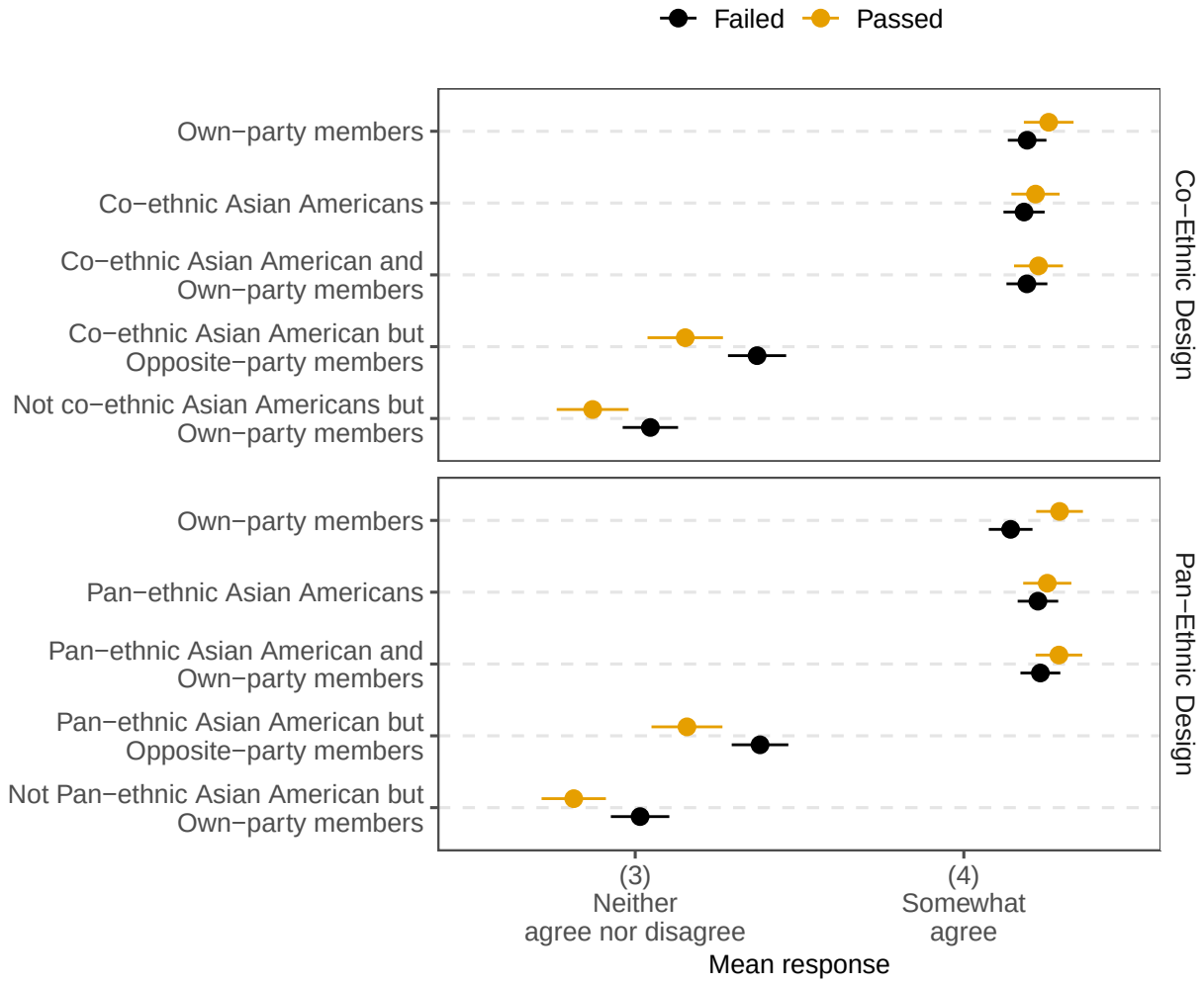

Figure A.7: Mean response to more collective representation by whether respondents passed an attention check. *Note: See Note in Figure A.1.*

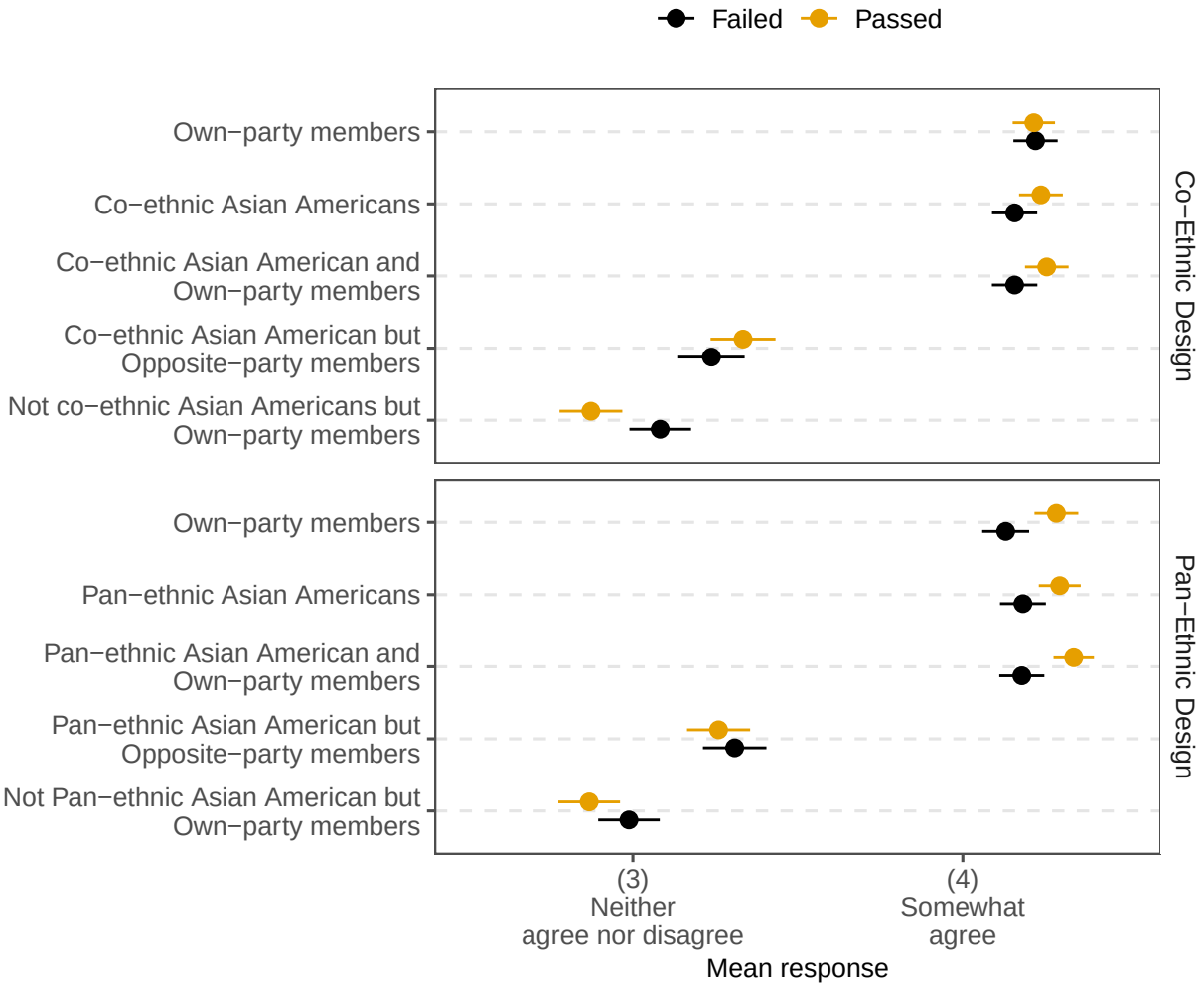

Figure A.8: Mean response to more collective representation by whether respondents passed a duration check. *Note: See Note in Figure A.1.*

A.2 Study 2 (All Respondents)

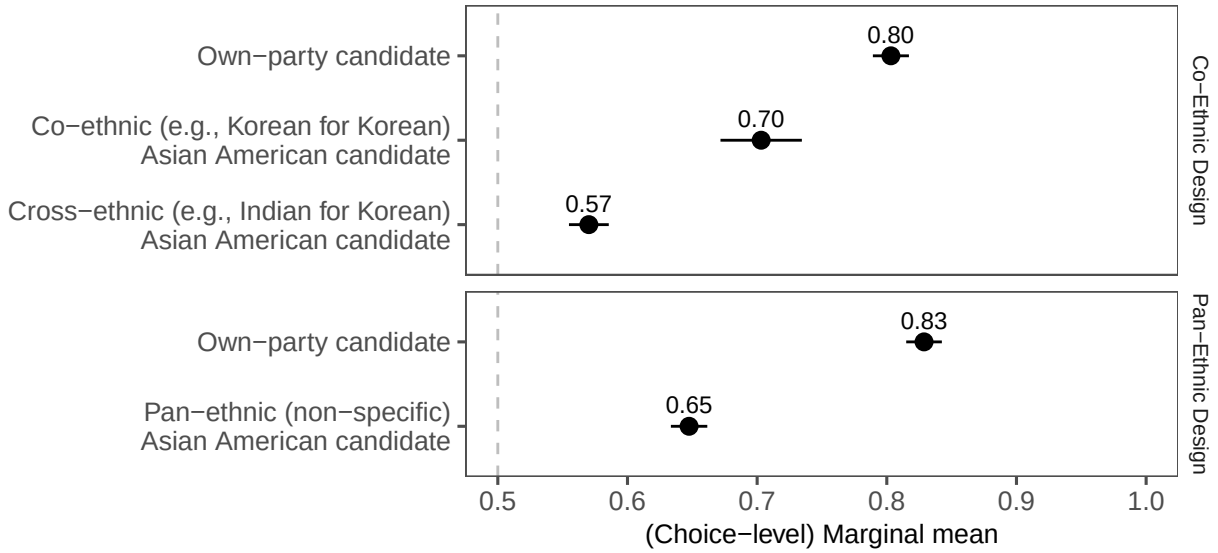

Figure A.9: Marginal means (uncorrected) on binary vote choice (main attributes). *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals. The comparison level is "Out-party candidate" for the marginal mean of choosing "Own-party candidate" and either "White," "Black" or "Hispanic" for the marginal mean of choosing a co-ethnic, cross-ethnic, or pan-ethnic Asian American candidate.*

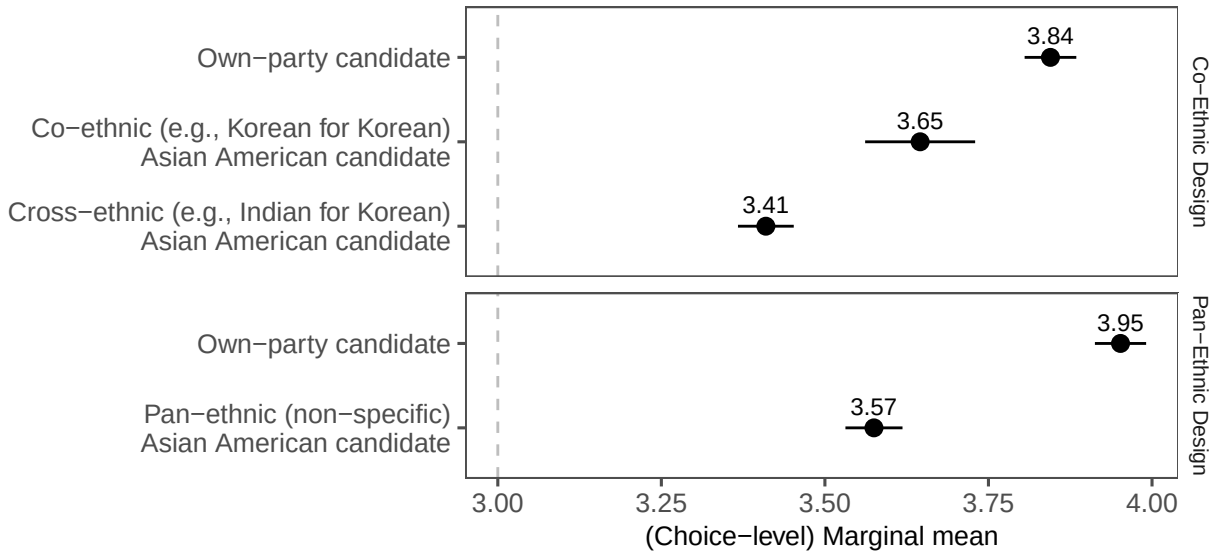

Figure A.10: Marginal means on ratings (main attributes). *Note: See Note in Figure A.9.*

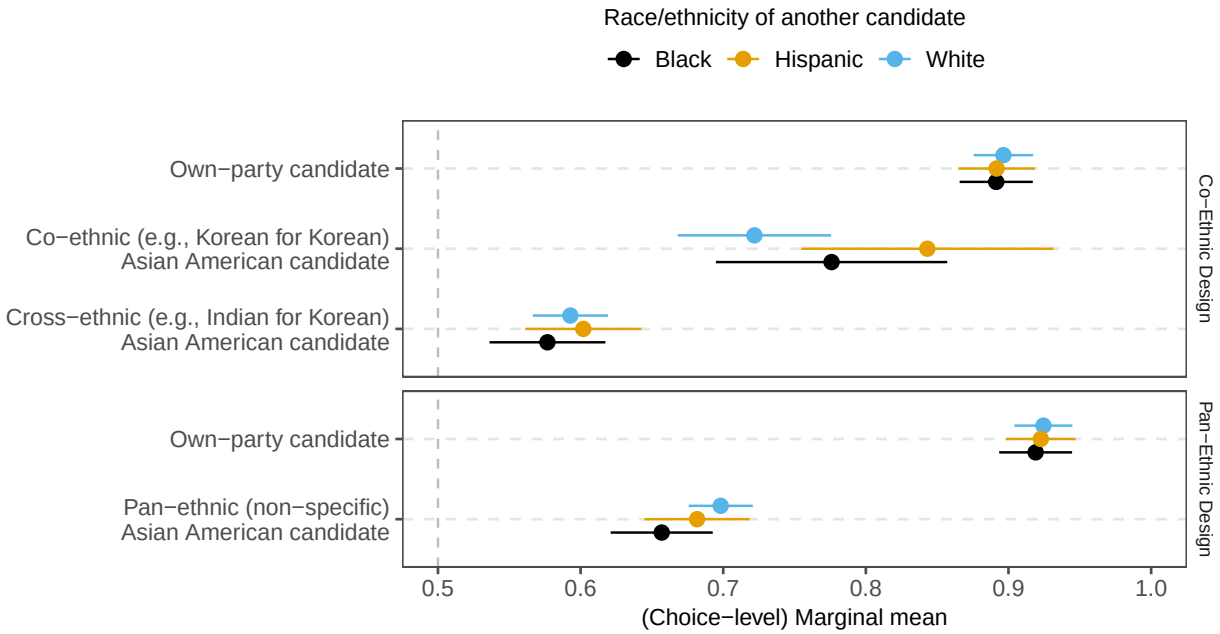

Figure A.11: Marginal means on binary vote choice by race of other candidate (main attributes). *Note: See Note in Figure A.9.*

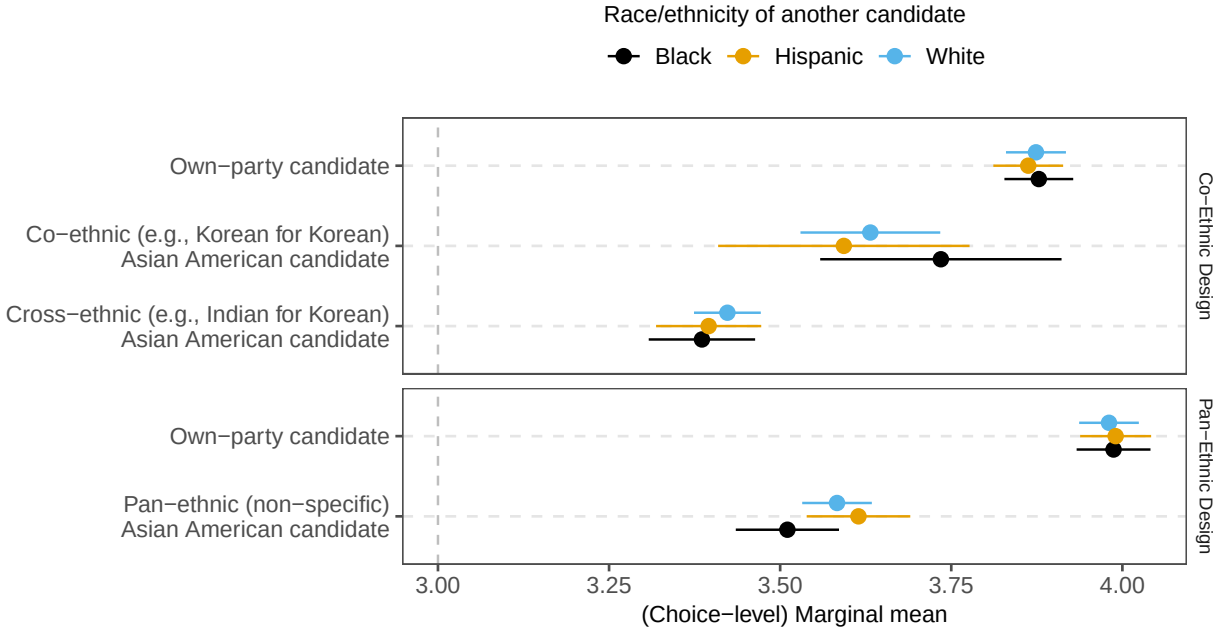

Figure A.12: Marginal means on rating by race of other candidate (main attributes). *Note: See Note in Figure A.9.*

A.3 Study 2 (Subgroup Comparisons)

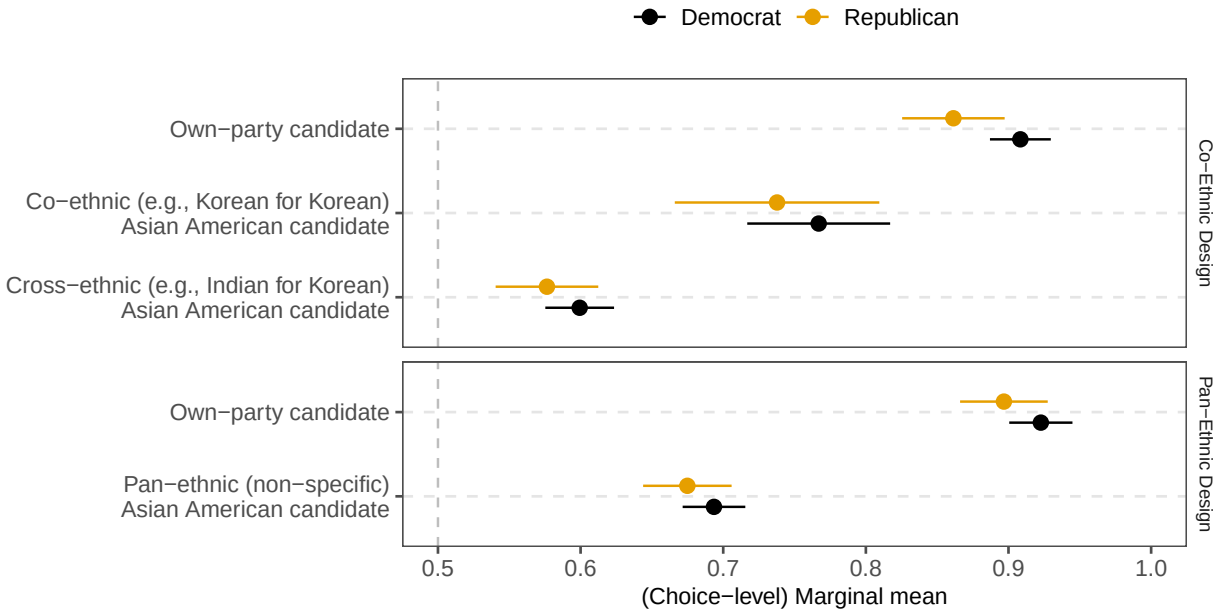

Figure A.13: Marginal means on binary vote choice by party (main attributes). *Note: See Note in Figure A.9.*

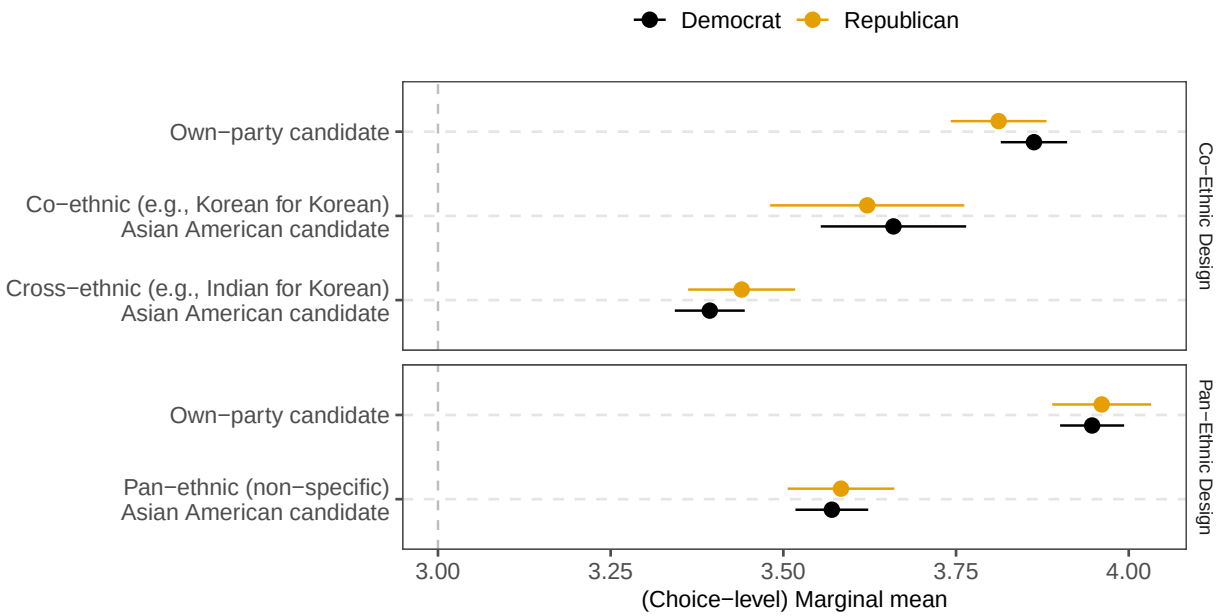

Figure A.14: Marginal means on rating by party (main attributes). *Note: See Note in Figure A.9.*

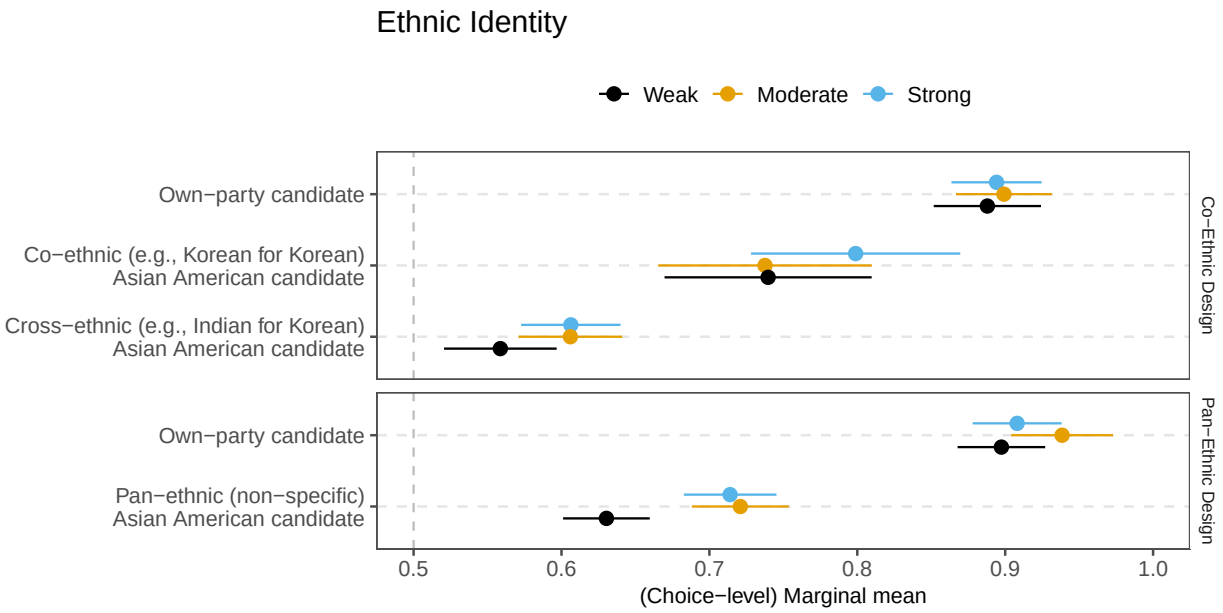

Figure A.15: Marginal means on binary vote choice by co-ethnic and pan-ethnic identity (main attributes). *Note: See Note in Figure A.9.*

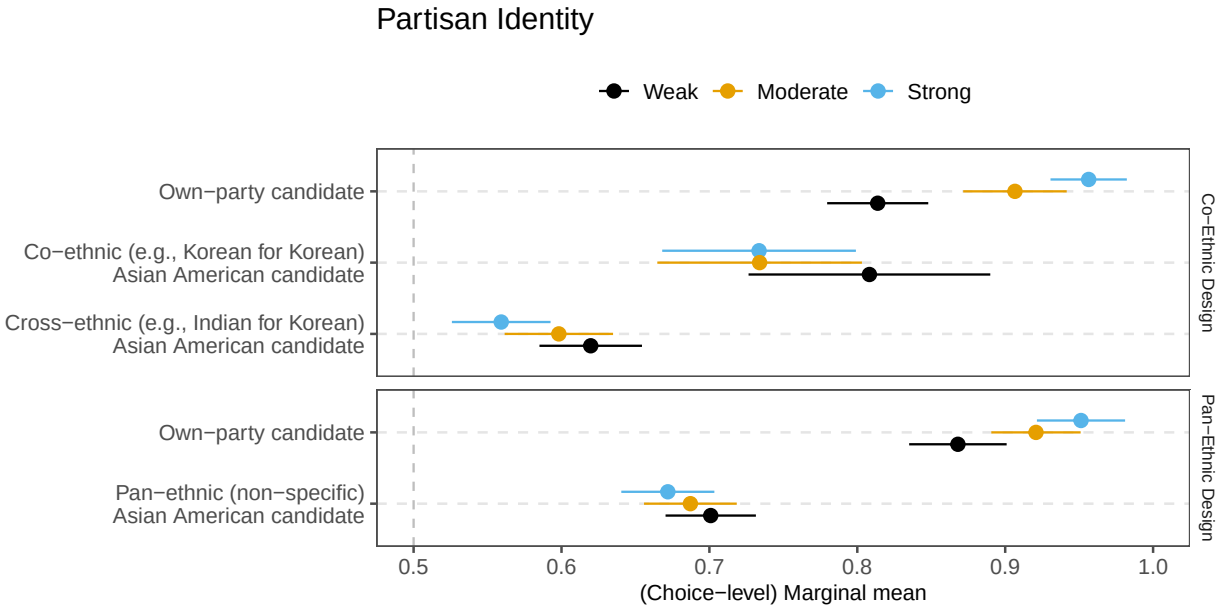

Figure A.16: Marginal means on binary vote choice by partisan identity (main attributes). *Note: See Note in Figure A.9.*

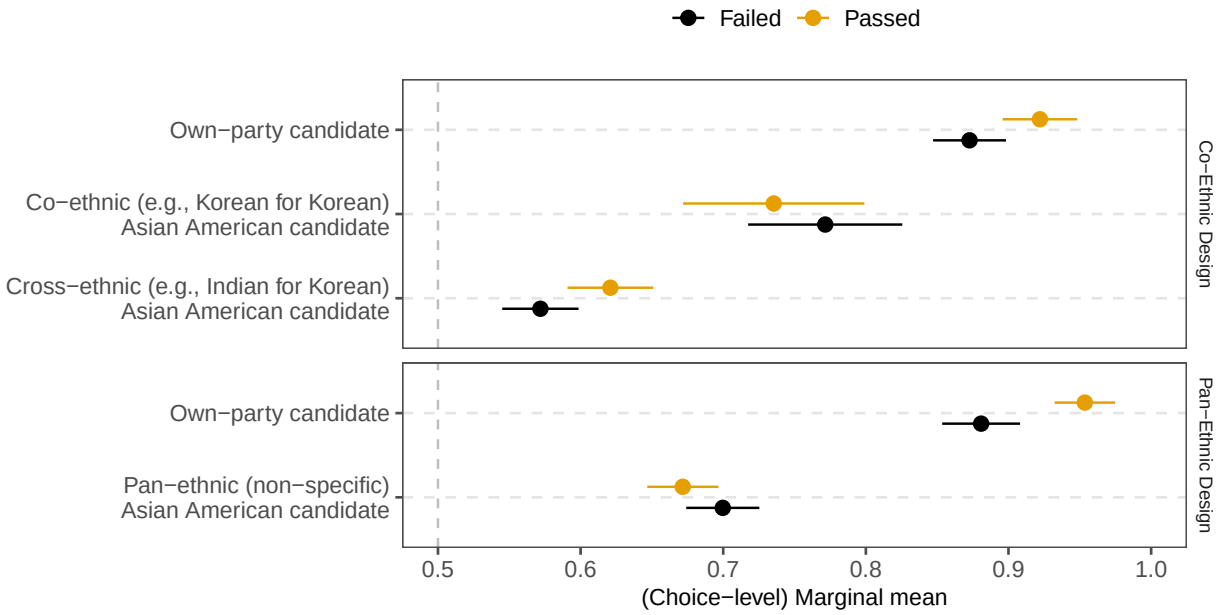

Figure A.17: Marginal means on binary vote choice by passed attention check (main attributes). *Note: See Note in Figure A.9.*

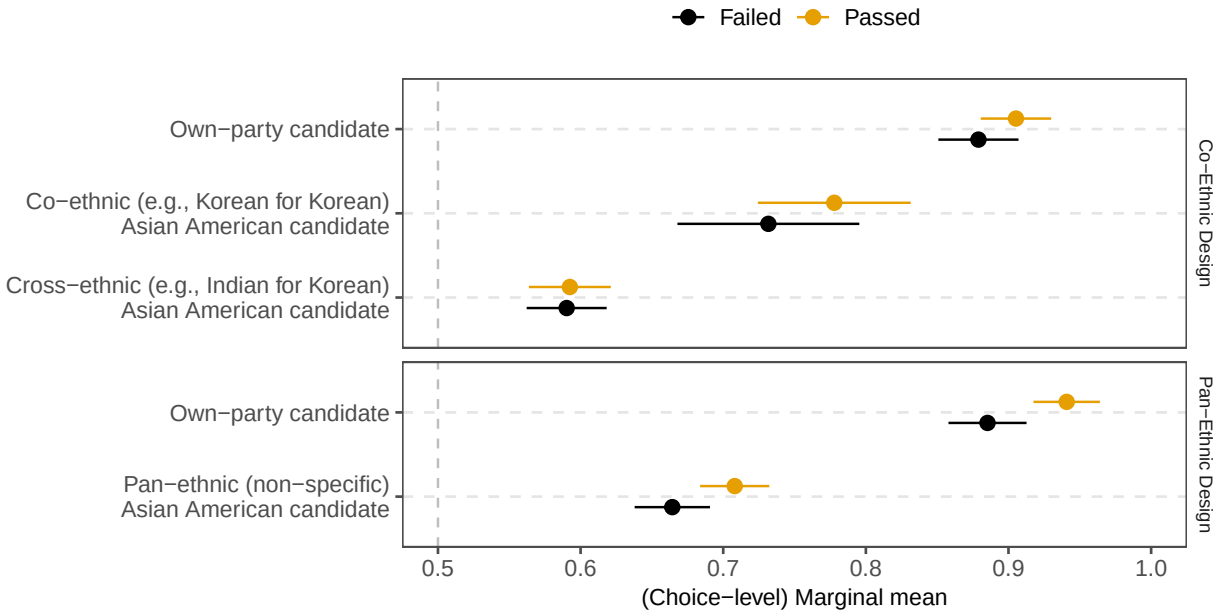

Figure A.18: Marginal means on binary vote choice by passed duration check (main attributes). *Note: See Note in Figure A.9.*

A.4 Study 2 (Trade-Offs)

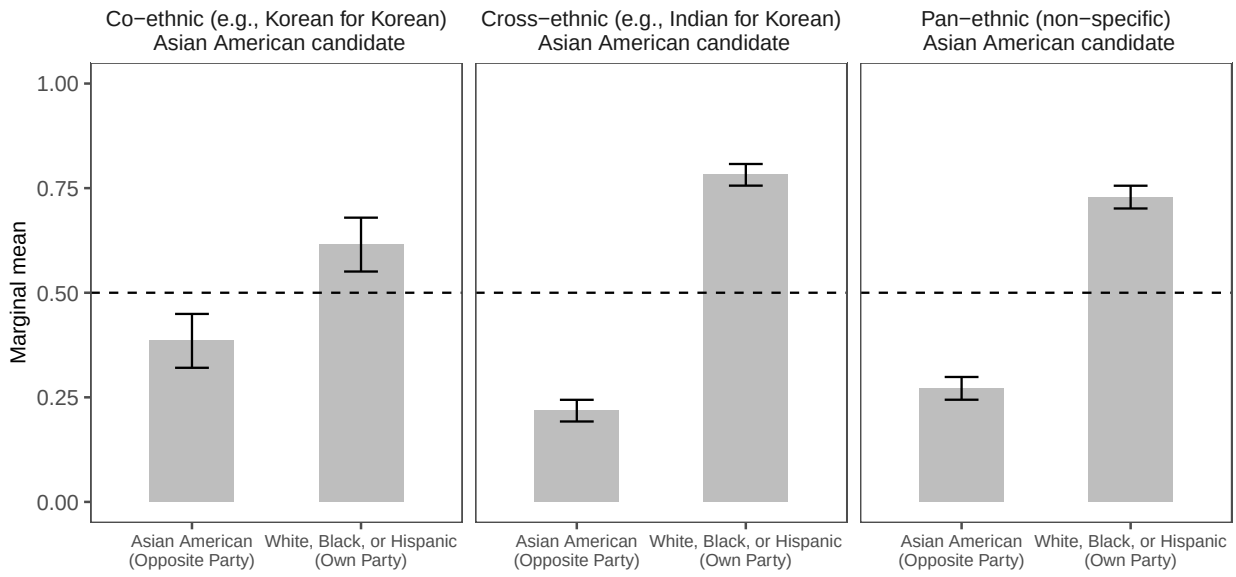

Figure A.19: Marginal means (uncorrected) on binary vote choice (trade-offs). *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

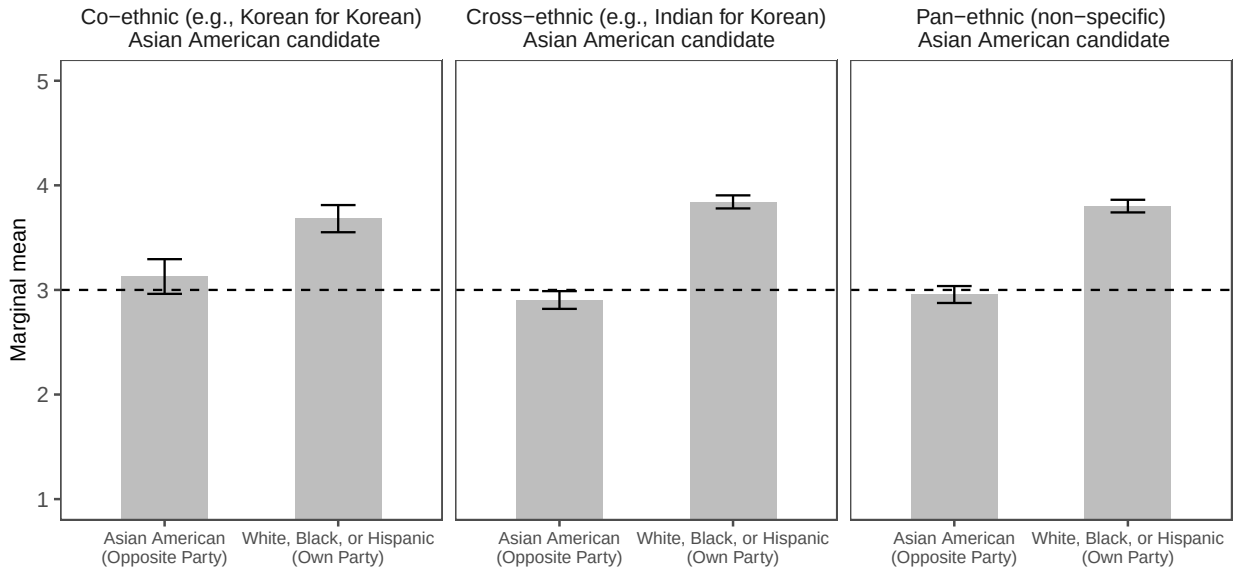

Figure A.20: Marginal means on ratings (trade-offs). *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

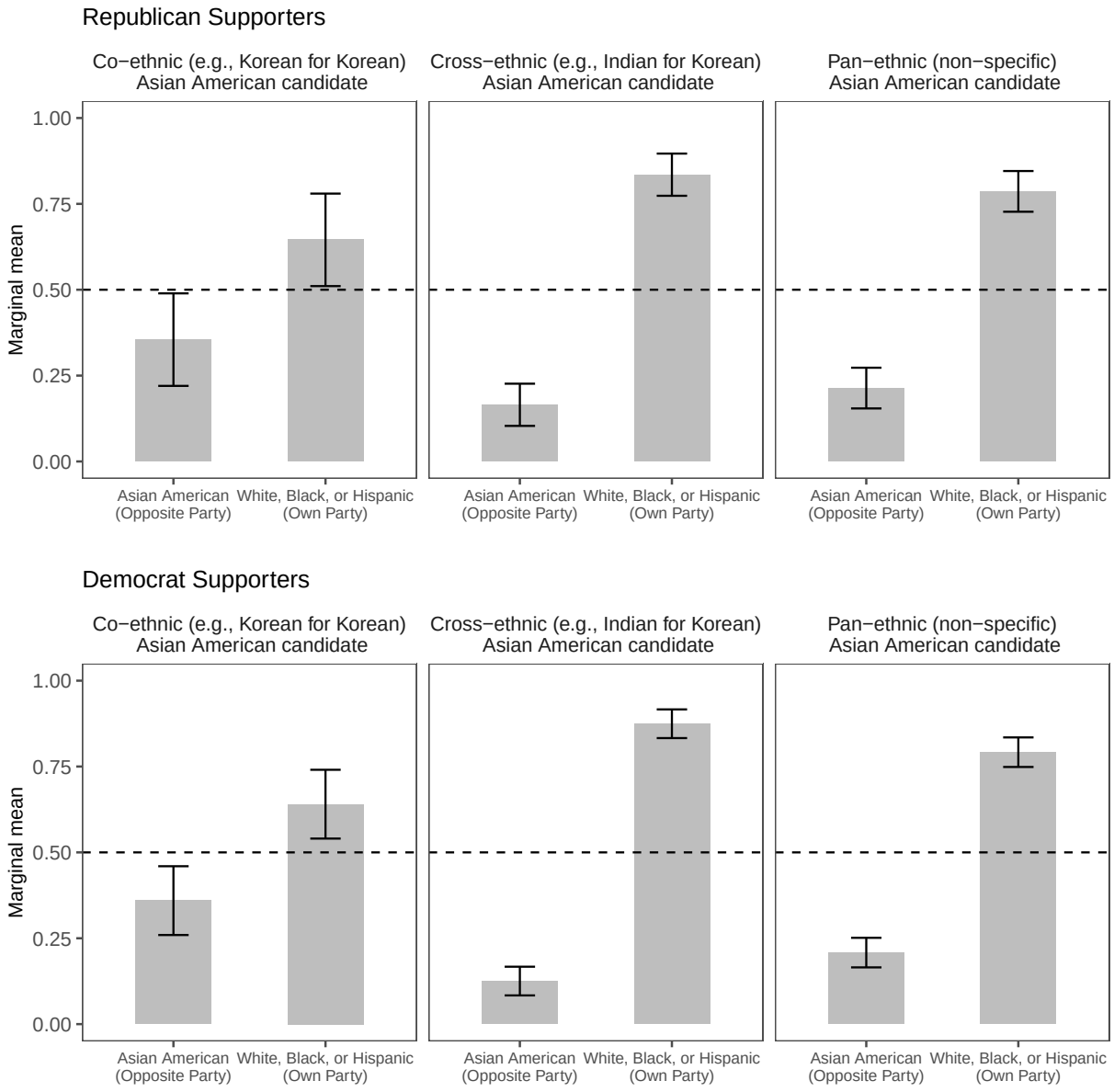

Figure A.21: Marginal means on binary vote choice by party (trade-offs). *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

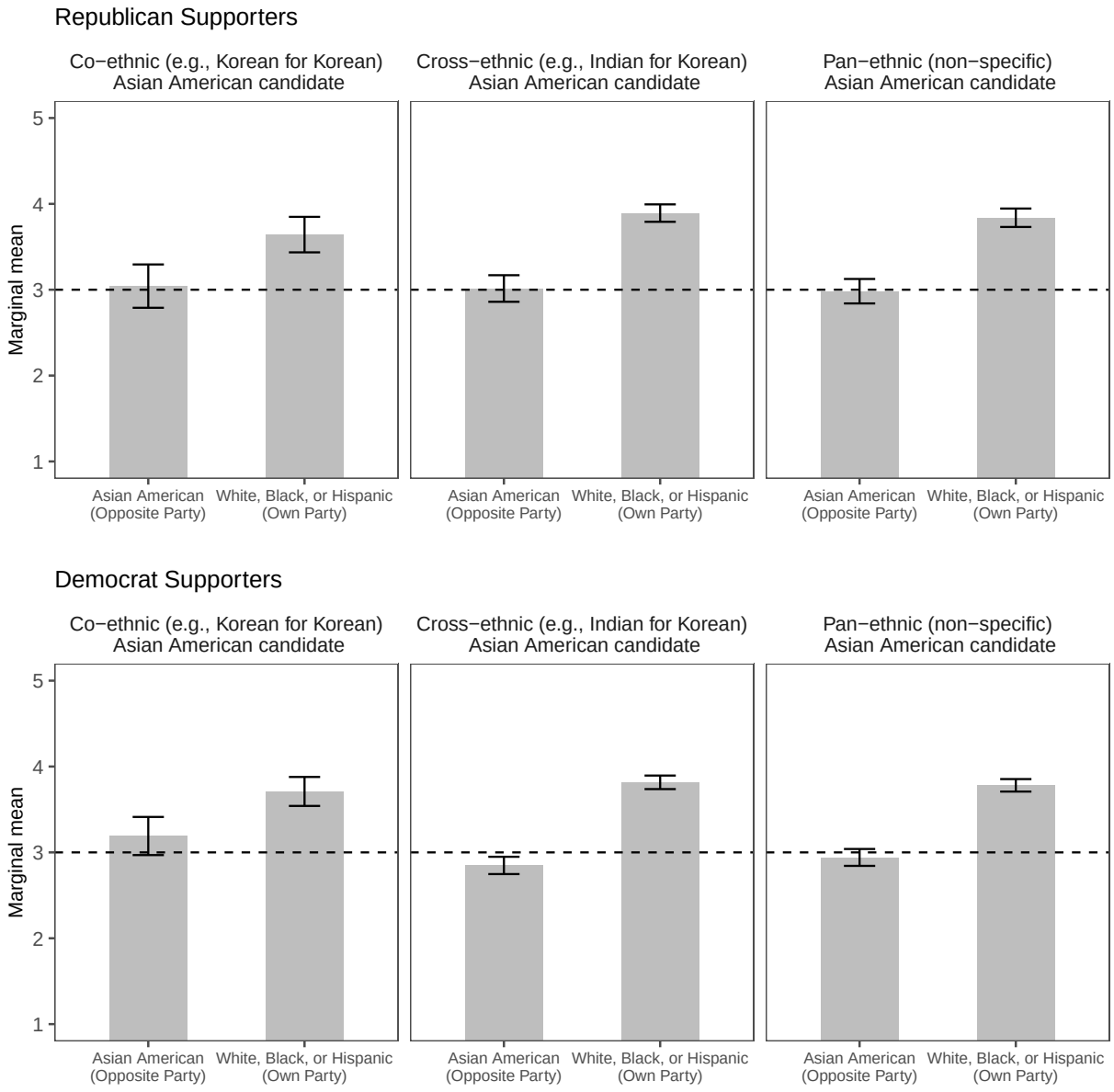

Figure A.22: Marginal means on ratings by party (trade-offs). *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

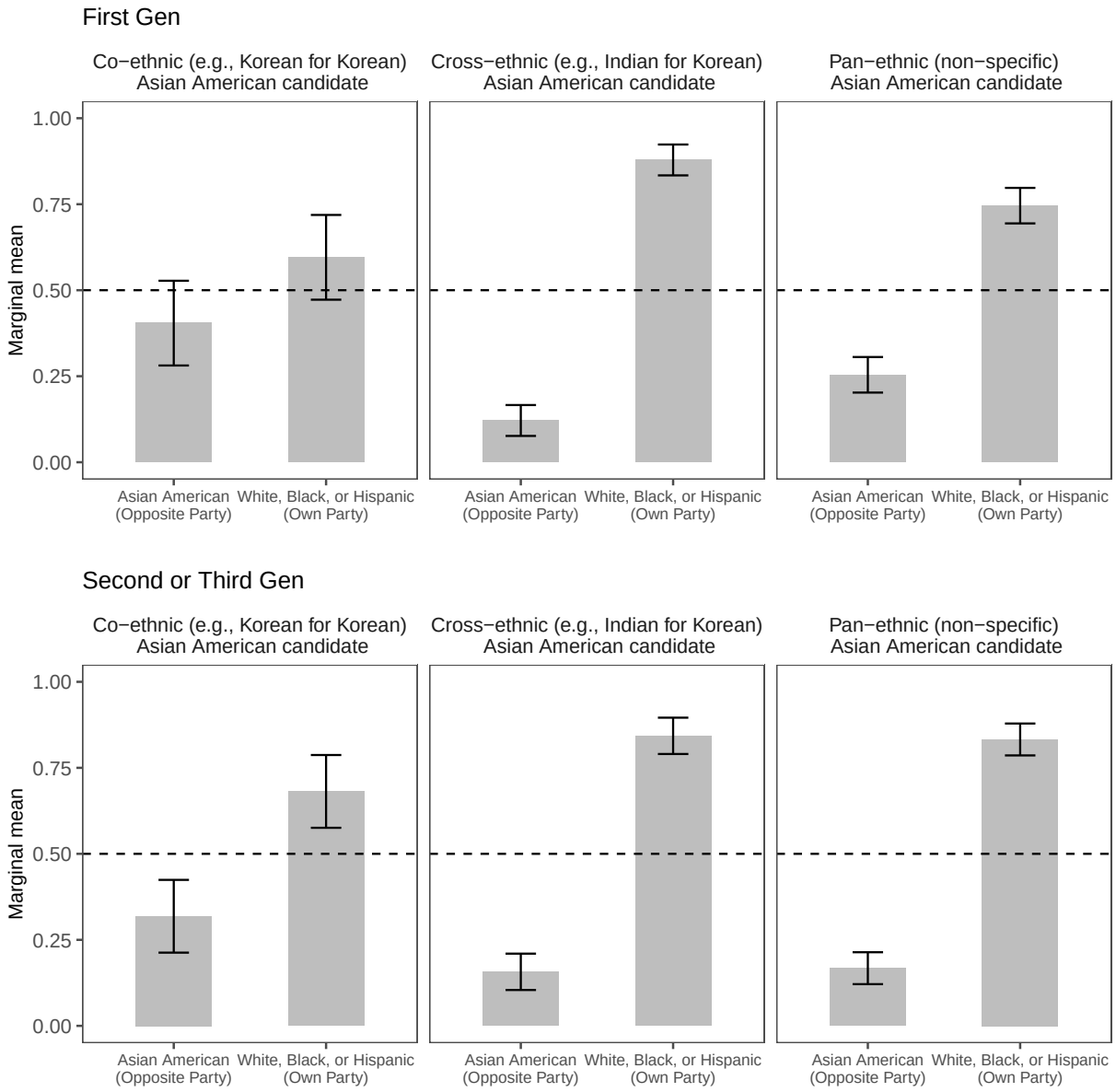

Figure A.23: Marginal means on binary vote choice by immigration generation (trade-offs). *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

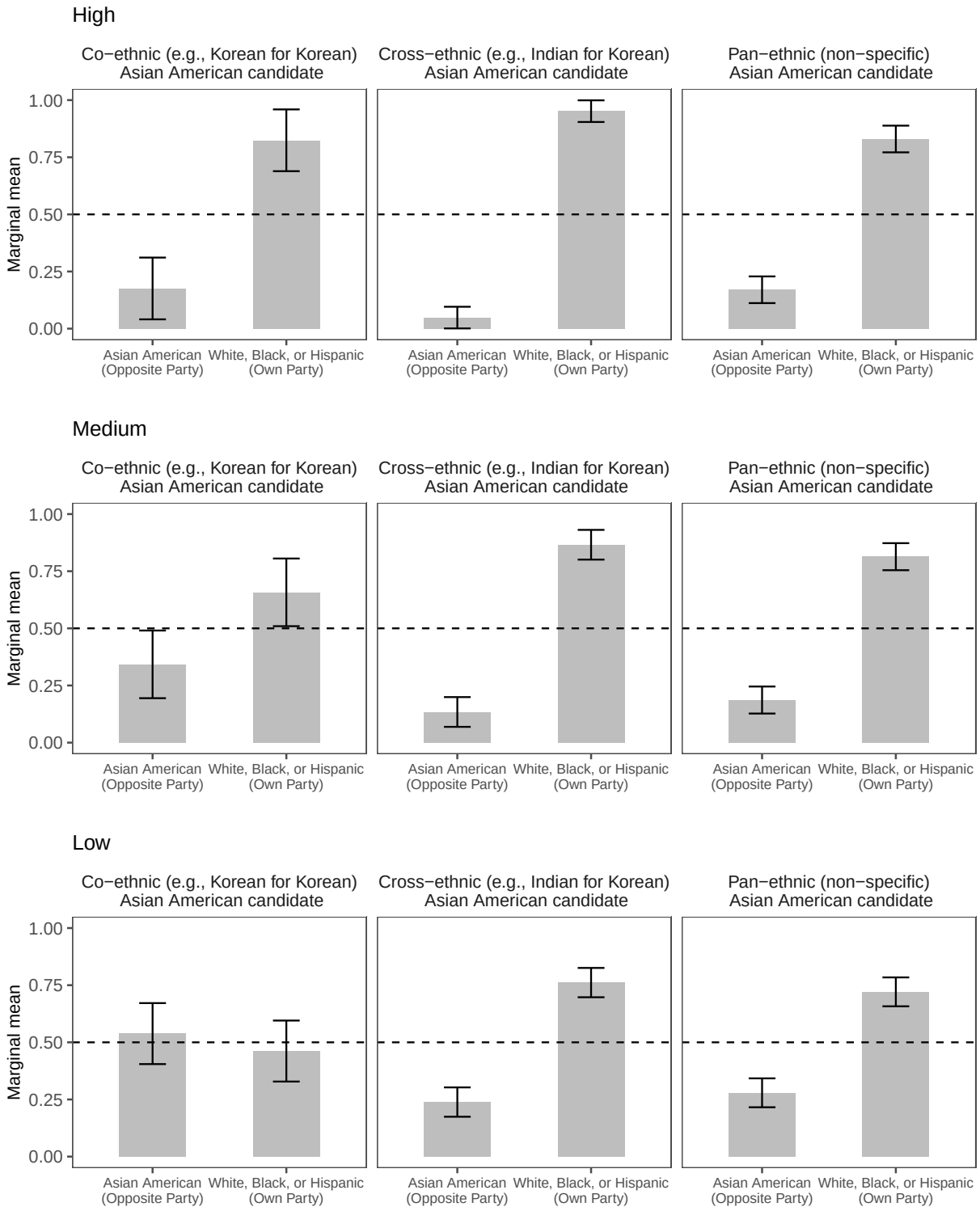

Figure A.24: Marginal means on binary vote choice by partisan identity (trade-offs). *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

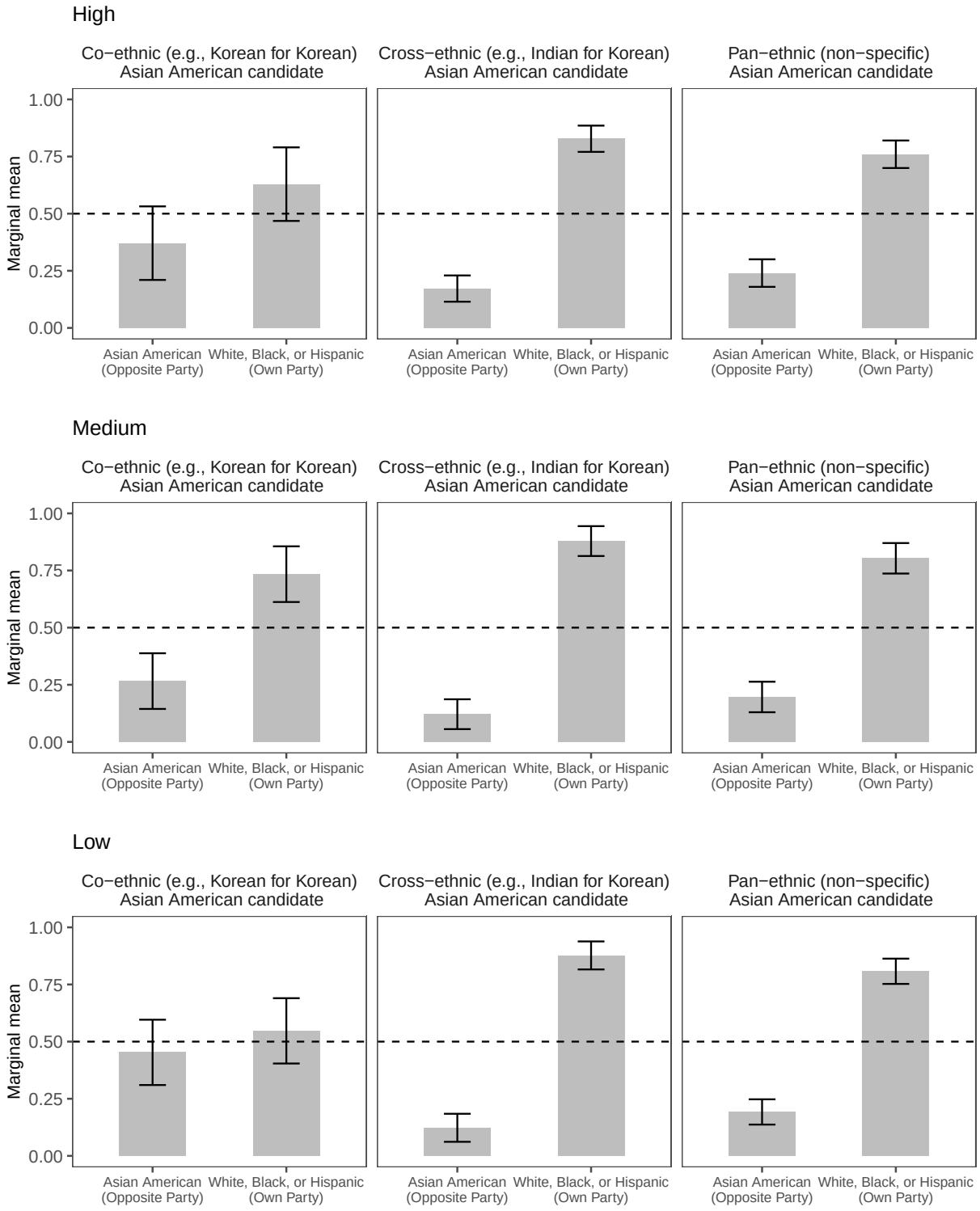

Figure A.25: Marginal means on binary vote choice by co-ethnic and pan-ethnic identity (trade-offs). *Note: The horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.*

B Pre-Test of Asian American Candidates

Since the estimates in the conjoint analysis are conditional on the conjoint design itself, it is important to include the attributes and levels that are "relevant" to the purpose of each study. For this reason (and as part of a broader separate study), we fielded a pre-test to measure the perceptions of Asian American candidates on Lucid Marketplace from August 3 to August 31, 2021. Our sample of 1,042 respondents includes 411 white and 631 Asian American respondents. For the purposes of this study, we only look at the Asian American respondents. Asian American respondents were over-sampled according to their national distribution in the United States. Specifically, in this study, 142 respondents are Chinese American, 112 are Indian American, 130 are Filipino American, 47 are Vietnamese American, 59 are Korean American, and 141 are other Asian.

Respondents were asked, "How likely is this [ASIAN-ETHNIC AMERICAN] candidate to be..." with a series of demographic and political characteristics. Each respondent was asked about various attributes of three candidates—two cross-ethnic candidates and one co-ethnic candidate. The demographic characteristics are gender (male/female), education (have/not have a college degree), nativity (native born/foreign-born), and income (bottom 10% of income in the US/top 10% of income in the US). The political characteristics are partisanship (Democrat/Republican), strength of partisanship (weak partisan/strong partisan), and ideology (conservative/liberal). Based on their responses and on our theoretical interests in race, ethnicity, and gender, we decided on our set of attributes for our conjoint analysis.