Partisans of Color: Asian American and Latino Party ID in an Era of Racialization and Polarization

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*W*hat influences partisan allegiance among Asian Americans and Latinos? These fast-growing demographics are heavily populated by immigrants who were raised outside the United States, which limits parental socialization as the primary mechanism behind their partisan identities. We argue that contemporary Asian and Latino partisanship is better understood in a context characterized by racialization and polarization. Asian and Latino adults regularly navigate the straits between their racial *and* American identities—two categories, sorted along partisan lines, that shape their sense of belonging in the US. We hypothesize that Asian and Latino adults generally prioritize their racial *or* national identity, which affects the intensity of their allegiance to Democrats or Republicans. Leveraging major Asian and Latino surveys since 2006 (N = 20,327), we uncover wide heterogeneity in identity prioritization, with 27% of Asian and Latino adults privileging their American identity over their racial one. Greater prioritization of one's racial (versus national) identity is significantly associated with Democratic (versus Republican) allegiance (meta-analyzed d ~ 0.30). These patterns also emerge at an automatic level via Implicit Association Tests (IATs). Across two experiments (N = 2,920) we then isolate one possible mechanism: Asian and Latino adults who feel their prioritized identity is overlooked signal their preferred attachment through their partisan allegiance.

What explains partisanship among Asian Americans and Latinos? It is now difficult for Democrats and Republicans to compete electorally without adding voters from these diverse groups to their electoral coalitions. Asian and Latino adults trend toward Democrats (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010; Wong et al. 2011), with roughly 66–75% of them backing Democratic candidates in recent national elections. Yet this figure masks enormous heterogeneity. About 25 to 30% of Asian and Latino adults regularly support Republican candidates (Fraga, Velez, and West 2024; Wong and Shah 2021), and about 40% identify as Independents (Doherty, Kiley and O'Hea 2018). We develop here a new theory on the origins of Asian and Latino partisanship against a backdrop of heightened polarization and racial diversity, revealing how both groups shape the vitality of partisan coalitions.

The conventional model of *parental socialization* holds that US-born parents transmit their partisanship to their children, which establishes life-long allegiance to Democrats or Republicans (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Niemi and Jennings 1991). However, many Asians and Latinos are immigrants (Carlos 2018; García 2012; Wong et al. 2011), which dilutes this theory's power. According to 2015–2018 American Community Survey data, about 28% of immigrants are from Asia, 25% are from Mexico, and 25% are from other Latin American countries. In 1960, only 4% of immigrants were Asian, 6% were Mexican, and 3% were from other Latin American nations. Immigrants also have cultural and historical experiences in their nations of origin that shape their partisanship via non-parental channels (Lien 2001; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; Ramakrishnan 2005; Schmidt et al. 2010).

Newer theories fill some gaps in the parental socialization framework, but with mixed results. Hajnal and Lee (2012) find that inconsistent and culturally insensitive outreach to Asian and Latino adults by both parties leads many of them to shun politics, leaving these populations with large shares of unaffiliated voters. This yields less crystallized partisanship in the aggregate (Dyck and Johnson 2022) and reinforces the political marginalization of many Asian and Latino voters (Ramírez 2015).

Other work suggests the high degree of partisan unaffiliation among Asians and Latinos is partly an artifact. Some of these analyses use survey items that take noncompliant answers at face value (e.g., not sure), which underestimates the share of firm partisans.

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Stable Asian and Latino partisanship emerges when conventional scales and scoring are used (Hopkins et al. 2020; see also Huddy, Mason, and Horwitz 2016). This work finds steadfast partisanship levels among Asians and Latinos, even during Donald Trump's nativist attacks on these groups (Hopkins, Kaiser, and Pérez 2022; McCann and Jones-Correa 2020).

We synthesize this work to solve existing theoretical impasses. One major hurdle is scholars' mixed attention to the psychology of partisan identification among people of color (PoC) (Pérez and Vicuña 2023). We clarify some of this psychology by focusing on the racialization of Asians and Latinos as *foreigners* and *outsiders* (Zou and Cheryan 2017). Prior research finds that Asian partisanship responds to whether their pan-ethnic group is perceived to be included (excluded) in Democratic (Republican) coalitions and discourse (Chan, Kim, and Leung 2022; Kuo, Malhotra, and Mo 2017). This aligns with partisanship as rooted in the mental associations people have between each party and the social categories they value (e.g., race) (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). While racial *exclusion* drives most Asians and Latinos toward *Democrats* (Saavedra Cisneros 2018), many identify as *Republicans* despite this party's anti-PoC hostility (Abrajano and Hajnal 2016). This suggests a need to explain how Asians' and Latinos' racialization drives their partisanship (Kim 2003).

Accumulating work indicates that parties are increasingly sorted in ideological terms, with Democrats becoming more homogenously liberal and Republicans becoming more homogenously conservative (Levendusky 2009; Mason 2018). This sorting has transformed the racial imagery, symbols, and groups that are mentally linked to each party. Democrats have become more strongly associated with PoC and racially progressive politics, while Republicans have become more strongly associated with whites and a preference for a racially conservative status quo (Westwood and Peterson 2020; Zhirkov and Valentino 2022).

These long-run trends have implications for Asian and Latino adults, who have varied priorities over their *racial* and *national* identities (Silber Mohamed 2017).[1] We treat identity as the degree to which a person views a category as central to who they are (Leach et al. 2008). For example, Latinos who prioritize their *American* (versus *racial*) identity are more supportive of racially conservative candidates (Hickel et al. 2020). Racially conservative Latinos also deny racism's prevalence in society (Alamillo 2019). These trends align with Republicans' hostility to racial diversity (Abrajano and Hajnal 2016). This implies that Asians and Latinos have digested some of the information

trickling from national polarization trends, but no available theory can explain it.

Our theory creates synergy between literatures on the racialization of Asians and Latinos and the heightened polarization of America's major parties. We claim that the convergence of these forces incentivizes Asian and Latino adults to identify as Democrats or Republicans more strongly. Prior work shows that Asians and Latinos are systemically racialized as *foreigners* and *outsiders* to US society (Kim 2003; Zou and Cheryan 2017), yielding wide heterogeneity in terms of how important their *racial* identity is compared to their *American* identity (Du Bois 1903; Hickel et al. 2020; Silber Mohamed 2017).[2] This prioritization of *racial* versus *national* identity is consequential in two ways.

The greater importance of *racial* (over *national*) identity indicates a distinct outlook about the role of race in one's life (Du Bois 1903; Hickel et al. 2020; Silber Mohamed 2017). Prioritizing one's *racial* identity implies recognition of one's subordinated status and the importance of improving one's lowlier position through available means, including politics (Tajfel 1981). In contrast, prioritizing one's *national* identity implies an outlook that minimizes the role of race in one's life and focuses attention on bolstering a racially conservative status quo for "real" *Americans* (Jost 2019; Sidanius and Pratto 2001). These categories (*race*, *nation*) are now more tightly associated in memory with the two major parties due to polarization. Democrats are construed as a diverse party that advocates for PoC, while Republicans are viewed as a more demographically homogenous coalition that champions racially conservative politics (Westwood and Peterson 2020; Zhirkov and Valentino 2022). This suggests that prioritization of one's *racial* or *national* identity might shape one's allegiance to *Democrats* or *Republicans*.

We test our claims across four studies. Study 1 draws on major surveys of Asian and Latino adults since 2006 (N = 20,327), using meta-analytic methods to show that prioritization of one's *racial* (*national*) identity is significantly correlated with *Democratic* (*Republican*) allegiance ($d \sim 0.30$). This suggests that *identity prioritization* is a real force among Asian and Latino adults. Study 2 uses two Implicit Association Tests (IATs) to show that Asians and Latinos automatically associate members of their *pan-ethnic* group (e.g., Mexicans, Chinese, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos) with *Democrats*—and *Americans* with *Republicans*. This implies that *identity prioritization* is deeply ingrained among Asians and Latinos and not driven by social desirability bias. Studies 3 and 4 probe one mechanism with two

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[1] Although it is plausible that polarization and racialization vary significantly across and within eras, we note that polarization has evolved incrementally across decades (Rosenfeld 2018), while racialization is the result of a lasting hierarchy with small and gradual perturbations over time (Zou and Cheryan 2017). Together, these descriptive facts provide two relatively stable forces as a backdrop to our theorizing.

[2] W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) coined the term *double consciousness*, which is the mental tug-of-war that Black people feel between their racial and American identities. This double consciousness is a useful lens to appreciate the duality that some Asians and Latinos sense. Indeed, our theory draws on this tradeoff between racial and American identities or *identity prioritization*—and not the solo influence of racial and American identities. For validation of this concept and measure, see Hickel et al. (2020) and Hickel, Oskooii, and Collingwood (2024).

experiments that manipulate public depictions of one's pan-ethnic group as mainly concerned about racial inequality versus national belonging. These treatments deny the importance that some Asians and Latinos place on their *racial* (or *national* identity). Asians and Latinos who prioritize their *racial* identity react to messages of racial inequality with greater Democratic allegiance. However, those who prioritize their *American* identity react to the same message with greater allegiance to Republicans. We conclude by discussing the implications of our results.
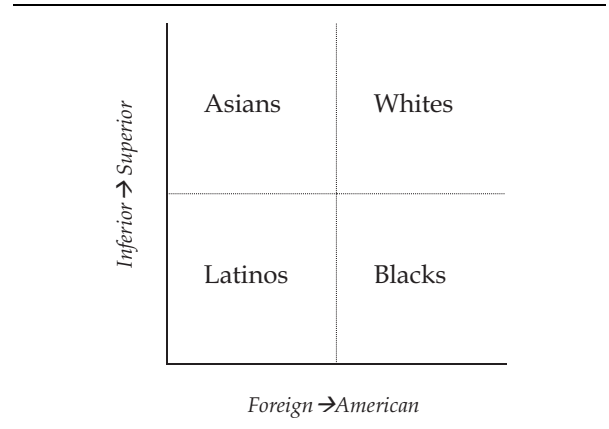
CONCEPTUALIZATION, THEORY, AND HYPOTHESES

Why do Asian and Latino adults prioritize their *racial* or *national* identity more? We first clarify key terms in our theory: *race*, *pan-ethnicity*, *national origin*, and *nationality*. We define *race* as the socially constructed designation of the US population based on perceived physical characteristics, ancestry, and/or language (APA Dictionary of Psychology 2024), which we operationalize via the US Census categories, *Asian American* and *Latino* (US Census Bureau 2022a).[3] The Census deems *Latino* an *ethnicity* (US Census Bureau 2022b), which entails membership in a cultural group (APA Dictionary of Psychology 2024). But social scientists often treat *Latino* as a *race*, a convention we follow here. This equivalence of *Asian Americans* and *Latinos* is facilitated by the fact that both are *pan-ethnic* categories that encapsulate varied *national origin* groups (e.g., *Asian Americans*: Chinese, Filipinos, Indians, etc.; *Latinos*: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, etc.) (Espiritu 1992; Mora 2014). In turn, *nationality* is an attachment to one's country of residence—here, the US.[4]

Our theory focuses on the racialization and stratification of Asian and Latino individuals. Racialization is a structural process that stigmatizes these groups and subordinates them to whites (Omi and Winant 1986). Stratification is the "sticky" social ordering of these racialized groups relative to whites (Kim 2003; Masuoka and Junn 2013). Although stratification produces stable social positions between whites and Asians and Latinos, racialization allows this field of relations to evolve—for example, when elites valorize Asians as "model minorities" relative to Black people (Kim 2003; 2023) or praise Latinos as "hardworking" in implied comparison to Black individuals (Fox 2004). These discursive moves reposition, even if temporarily, Asians and Latinos away from Black people and closer to whites, which bolsters white supremacy.

FIGURE 1. Two Axes of Subordination

Note: Adapted from Zou and Cheryan's (2017) Racial Position Model (RPM).

Kim (2003) observes that minoritized groups (i.e., Asians) are often triangulated between whites and other PoC, which produces structural advantages ("Asians as model minorities") and disadvantages ("Asians as perpetual foreigners"). Recent work innovates this view by illuminating richer variation in the social stations of minoritized groups (Chen and Hosam 2022; Kim 2023; Masuoka and Junn 2013). As Zou and Cheryan (2017) explain, PoC in the US are marginalized along two broad axes: how *inferior–superior* and how *foreign–American* are they considered?[5]

As Figure 1 shows, whites are the most *superior* and *American* group. In turn, PoC are divided by their varied stations in this order. While Black people are sometimes considered a more *American* minority than Latinos and Asians (Carter 2019), Black and Latino people are often stereotyped as *inferior* compared to Asians and whites. Further, although Asians are sometimes deemed *superior* to Blacks and Latinos, as indicated by the *model minority* myth (Kim 2003), Asians and Latinos are both stereotyped as *perpetual foreigners* (Lacayo 2017). This implies that Asians and Latinos are subordinated to Black people. However, this order also has an anti-Black pole on top of its pro-white pillar (Davies 2022; Kim 2023). Consequently, Asians and Latinos sometimes benefit from being *foreign*, but not Black (Chen and Hosam 2022; Kim 2023; Pérez, Robertson, and Vicuña 2023).

The marginalization of Asians and Latinos as *foreigners* makes their pan-ethnic identities highly accessible because it regularly drives their exclusion (Pérez and Vicuña 2023). Since the 1990s, this marginalization has occurred in tandem with systemic surges in nativism (Abrajano and Hajnal 2016), sexism (Frasure-Yokley 2018), homophobia/transphobia (Michelson and Harrison 2020), and Islamophobia (Lajevardi 2020). Against these trends, pan-ethnic identities provide Asians and Latinos with a sense of security and belong-

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[3] Per the US Census, individuals can report any race, but still report Latino ethnicity. In this paper, the category *Asian* is inclusive of Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders.

[4] This does not require one to be a (naturalized) citizen of the US. It only demands that an Asian or Latino person identify to some degree as *American*. Note that identity is distinct from categorization, which reflects classification into a group (Tajfel 1981).

[5] Kim (2003) names these axes as superiority/inferiority versus insider/foreigner.

ing as outsiders (Hogg, Hohman, and Rivera 2008), plus an outlook that enshrines the role of race and racism in their lives (Espiritu 1992; Mora 2014). For many Asians and Latinos, their pan-ethnic identity is a high priority because it is central to their lives (Ethier and Deaux 1994). Although many Asians and Latinos prefer to define themselves by *national origin* (e.g., Chinese, Mexican), rather than *pan-ethnicity* (i.e., Asian, Latino) (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010; Schmidt et al. 2010; Wong et al. 2011), we reason that in national politics, *Asian* and *Latino* are the relevant categories, with national origin groups cognitively subsumed under pan-ethnic categories (e.g., Asian = {Chinese, Indian…}; Latino = {Mexican, Cuban…}) (Pérez 2021). Since pan-ethnic and national origin identities are believed to converge and align with the Democratic party (Huddy, Mason, and Horwitz 2016), it is plausible that *identity prioritization* also extends to national origin attachment (relative to American identity), which we explore in Study 1.

Still, not all Asians and Latinos prioritize their pan-ethnic identities (Hickel et al. 2020). This can be partly explained by demographics within these groups, where rootedness in the US (e.g., nativity, immigrant generation, age) predisposes some individuals to value their American identity more (e.g., Abrajano and Alvarez 2010; Wong et al. 2011). But there are also major systemic forces that encourage some Asians and Latinos to prioritize their American identity. As Sidanius and Pratto (2001) observe, racial hierarchies are sustained by a consensus between the oppressors and some of the oppressed. This arises for two reasons. First, despite the benefits of identifying with a minoritized ingroup, it also poses risks, such as a chronic lack of social respect, which negatively affects some people's well-being (e.g., low self-esteem) (Huo and Binning 2008). Thus, some minoritized individuals look for paths out of this marginalization, such as identifying with a higher-status group like *Americans.*[6]

For instance, Pérez, Robertson, and Vicuña (2023) establish that some Latinos are motivated to prove their worth as new *Americans*, leading them to express racism toward Black people despite their shared station as *inferior* groups (Figure 1). Indeed, inclusion in a higher-status group (*American*), no matter how tenuous, often drives individuals to sharpen the boundaries between "us" and "them" (Pickett and Brewer 2005). This implies that some Asians and Latinos will prioritize their *American* identity to counter their racial subordination, but at the expense of bolstering the larger system of oppression against *non-Americans* (Jost 2019), which includes their pan-ethnic groups (Hickel et al. 2020). Although *American* identity provides these individuals with greater prestige and a sense of belonging, it also desensitizes them to the welfare of

non-Americans, including their own pan-ethnic groups (Dovidio, Gaertner, and Saguy 2015). We therefore hypothesize that the racial stratification of Asians and Latinos produces significant variation in their prioritization of their *racial* or *American* identity (H1). Given the heterogeneity between Asians and Latinos in terms of their arrival to the US, their geographic spread, cultural nuances (e.g., common Latino language; no common Asian language), and their distinct treatment by US institutions (Schmidt et al. 2010), we expect some variation in the size of this relationship.

But how does this identity preference relate to Asians' and Latinos' partisan allegiance? Democrats and Republicans have become more racially and ideologically homogenous than before (Levendusky 2009; Mason 2018). This process yields two implications we exploit. First, polarization has yielded clearer stereotypes about who comprises each party and what it stands for (Ahler and Sood 2018; Westwood and Peterson 2020). People have racialized images about Democrats and Republicans (Zhirkov and Valentino 2022), with the former perceived as intertwined with PoC and the latter with whites, the "real" *Americans* (Danbold and Huo 2015). Alas, both whites and PoC associate the category, *American*, with whites (Devos and Banaji 2005).

These mental schemas indicate clear mental links between parties and racial and national symbols. Democrats privilege the identities of racially minoritized supporters, while Republicans enshrine American identity among their rank and file. Each party also has different visions about race in US society. Democrats widely recognize the continued influence of prejudice in US politics and broadly advocate for a racially inclusive society, while Republicans downplay racism's prevalence and advocate for a polity that excludes sundry outgroups, including racial ones (Abrajano and Hajnal 2016). This suggests two party alternatives for Asians and Latinos: Democrats who privilege racial liberalism or Republicans who espouse racial conservativism. Thus, we predict that Asians' and Latinos' partisan allegiance is influenced by how much weight they place on their *racial* or *national* identity (H2). Asians and Latinos who privilege their *racial* (*national*) identity will report stronger allegiance to *Democrats* (*Republicans*).

Finally, we explain when *identity prioritization* is activated. Many Asians and Latinos trend toward Democrats because their racial identity is central to them (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010; Wong et al. 2011). Yet it is also true that many Asians and Latinos deem their *American* identity just as important, if not more (Silber Mohamed 2017). This means each party's image as the home of PoC (Democrats) or Americans (Republicans) risks being misaligned with Asians' and Latinos' own identity priorities. This misalignment is called *categorization threat* (Branscombe et al. 1999), and it reflects the cognitive discomfort one feels when classified into a group against one's preferences. For example, Latinos who prioritize their *American* identity will experience *categorization threat* if they feel

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[6] Many forms of national attachment exist, including *patriotism*, *nationalism*, and *nativism* (Carter and Pérez 2016; Huddy and Khatib 2007). We focus on *American* identity because it is the least ideologically and racially skewed form of national attachment, broadly endorsed by Democrats and Republicans, and by whites and PoC (Huddy and Khatib 2007).

TABLE 1. Hypotheses About Identity Prioritization and Asian and Latino Partisanship

(H1) Significant variation in Asian and Latino individuals' prioritization of their *racial* versus *American* identity.

(H2) Asian and Latino partisanship is significantly affected by the weight they assign their *racial* versus *national* identity.

(H3) *Categorization threat* activates identity preferences, leading Asian and Latino adults to express their partisanship in line with them.

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social pressure to align with Democrats, like most of their co-ethnics, prompting them to express Republican allegiance. Thus, *categorization threat* should activate one's prioritized identity (*racial, national*), leading Asian and Latino adults to adjust their partisanship in line with it (H3).

Table 1 displays our hypotheses. Study 1 evaluates (H1-H2) with analyses of surveys on Asian and Latino adults since 2006, including a meta-analysis. Study 2 uses a pair of IATs to further assess (H2) by revealing the automaticity of *identity prioritization*. Studies 3–4 use two experiments testing for *identity prioritization*'s moderating influence on Asian and Latino partisanship (H3).

Studies 1 and 2: Identity Prioritization and Its Association with Asian and Latino Partisan Allegiance

To test H1 and H2, Study 1 assembled major publicly available population surveys of Asian American and Latino politics since 2006. Our efforts yielded N = 20,237. The inclusion criteria for this analysis were two-fold. First, surveys had to include large numbers of Asian and Latino adults to analyze (N ≥ 500 per group). Second, surveys had to contain items to operationalize our main variables, *identity prioritization* and *partisan self-identification*. This yielded (1) the 2006 Latino National Survey (LNS) (N = 8,634); (2) the 2008 National Asian American Survey (NAAS) (N = 5,159); (3) the 2012 American National Election Study (ANES) (N = 1,005 Latinos); (4) the 2016 Collaborative Multi-Racial Post-Election Survey (CMPS) (N = 3,055 Asians and N = 3,002 Latinos); and (5) the 2020 Collaborative Multi-Racial Post-Election Survey (N = 3,956 Asians and N = 4,585 Latinos).

Our preregistered analyses of these surveys involved linearly predicting expressed allegiance to the *Democratic* (*Republican*) party based on one's *identity prioritization*, holding constant differences in perceived discrimination, ideology, church attendance, education, nativity, gender, and age (Supplementary SI.1). We also undertake a preregistered meta-analysis of these surveys to estimate a common trend among them (Supplementary SI.1). We measured partisanship with

a 7-point scale arranging individuals in terms of strength of identification as *Democrats* (*Republicans*), with those indicating "independence" arrayed as partisan leaners upon further prompting (Supplementary SI.2). Substantial shares of respondents indicated no partisan affiliation in the 2006 LNS. They are excluded from our analyses because their replies were not further probed for partisan leanings, leaving us with N = 5,802. Throughout, we rescale partisanship to a 0–1 range, where higher values indicate greater Democratic self-identification.

Our key predictor is *identity prioritization*. Except for the 2008 NAAS, we measured it by differencing pairs of pan-ethnic and American identity items (Supplementary SI.2).[7] For example, in the 2012 ANES, Latinos were asked, separately, "How important is being [an *American*/*Hispanic*] to you personally?", with replies arrayed from 1 (extremely important) to 5 (not at all important). We recoded each variable so that higher values indicate more importance. We then subtracted one's importance score for *American* identity from one's importance score for racial identity. Thus, *Identity prioritization = Racial identity – American identity*. Positive scores reflect prioritization of one's *racial* identity as Asian or Latino, while negative values indicate prioritization of one's *American* identity. We rescale this variable to a 0–1 range. (Supplementary SI.3) describes the coding of our covariates, also on a 0–1 range. Our coefficients reflect percentage-point shifts. In all our studies, the reported *p*-values are two-tailed. We advise readers to interpret these analyses as correlational and suggestive of our proposed mechanism, rather than causal and strictly unidirectional.

STUDY 1 RESULTS

Table 2 displays mean *identity prioritization* scores in each survey (in raw form), along with their standard deviations. Across all samples, reliable variation exists in the degree of *identity prioritization* among Asians and Latinos. Here, a value of zero indicates no prioritization of either pan-ethnic or national identity. We generally observe a modest preference for one identity over the other, with variation around each mean. Indeed, the average prioritization of pan-ethnic identity over American identity varies by year, survey, and sampled population. This aligns with the situational salience of identities (Turner et al. 1987), while highlighting possible historical, cultural, and demographic nuances between Asians and Latinos (Schmidt et al. 2010).

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[7] The 2008 NAAS does not contain identity importance items. Thus, we gauge *identity prioritization* with an item on Asian American linked fate (to gauge pan-ethnic ID) and perceived commonality with whites (i.e., to gauge American ID). The latter operationalization is justified based on Devos and Banaji (2005), who find that the category *American* is strongly associated in memory with the category *White*. We distinguish these items, similar to our measurement strategy described in the text.

TABLE 2. Significant Heterogeneity in Asian and Latino Identity Prioritization

Survey (Population)	Mean (Std. Dev.)	Range (raw)	One-sample t-test (*null: no ID prioritization*)
2008 NAAS (Asians)	−0.450 (1.469)	−3 to 3	$t_{3,972} = -19.321$, $p < 0.001$
2016 CMPS (Asians)	−0.170 (.772)	−3 to 3	$T_{3,024} = -12.126$, $p < 0.001$
2020 CMPS (Asians)	0.784 (1.536)	−4 to 4	$t_{3,659} = 30.868$, $p < 0.001$
2006 LNS (Latinos)	0.570 (1.275)	−3 to 3	$t_{8,188} = 40.493$, $p < 0.001$
2012 ANES (Latinos)	−0.438 (1.447)	−4 to 4	$t_{917} = -9.169$, $p < 0.001$
2016 CMPS (Latinos)	−0.151 (.906)	−3 to 3	$t_{3,002} = -9.123$, $p < 0.001$
2020 CMPS (Latinos)	0.888 (1.561)	−4 to 4	$t_{3,374} = 33.060$, $p < 0.001$

Note: Positive values in *identity prioritization* indicate greater weight on one's racial versus American identity. All significance tests are two-tailed.

These patterns align with prior analyses of *identity prioritization* among Latinos (Hickel et al. 2020), but here, we broaden this evidence to multiple survey samples, time periods, and populations (i.e., Asian Americans). The last column in Table 2 formally supports H1. The *t*-tests indicate we can confidently reject the null that no systematic differences in *identity prioritization* exist among Asian and Latino adults. Consistent with our theoretical discussion, older, US-born Asians and Latinos are less likely to prioritize their pan-ethnic identity over their American identity (see results in Supplementary SI.4).

Our next hypothesis (H2) is that these individual differences in *identity prioritization* are meaningfully associated with Asian and Latino adults' expressed allegiance to *Democrats* (*Republicans*). Table 3 supports this claim, with complete results in Supplementary SI.5. Across samples, we find a consistently positive, substantively meaningful, and generally reliable association between *identity prioritization* and *partisan allegiance* among Asian American and Latino adults. Supplementary SI.6 reports provisional results showing similar patterns when *identity prioritization* is measured with items on national origin identity (e.g., Mexican) rather than pan-ethnic identity (i.e., Latino).

Table 3 also reveals some hints that the associations between *identity prioritization* and *partisan allegiance* have increased over the period under analysis and that the observed associations are generally stronger for Latinos than Asian Americans. The latter might stem from population differences (e.g., more foreign-born Asian Americans than Latinos) and/or contextual variation (e.g., more consistent partisan outreach during recent presidential elections among Latinos, than Asians) (Schmidt et al. 2010).

Our analyses reveal associations ranging from a low of about 7 percentage points to a high of 25 percentage points. These patterns are independent of our covariates, which means that having knowledge of Asian and Latino adults' *identity prioritization* helps to reliably predict the strength of partisan allegiance among them.[8]

Table 3's last two rows report diagnostics from sensitivity analyses for observational analyses like these (Cinelli and Hazlett 2020). Each regression's robustness value (RV) indicates the percentage of residual variance of *identity prioritization* and *partisanship* that would bring our estimated effect to zero. In turn, the robustness value for the t-value of each point estimate ($RV_{\alpha = 0.05}$) indicates the minimum strength of association (in terms of partial R^2) that would bring our point estimates into a range where they are no longer statistically distinguishable from zero. Looking at the leftmost entry for Asians in Table 3 (row RV), we see that an unobserved confounder would need to explain at least 4.99% of the residual variance of our *identity prioritization* predictor and our partisanship outcome to reduce that estimated effect to zero. The entry below that (under $RV_{\alpha = 0.05}$) indicates that unobserved confounders would need to explain at least 1.77% of the residual variance in identity prioritization and partisanship for us to be unable to reject the null (at $p < 0.05$) that the effect of *identity prioritization* is equal to zero. These diagnostics suggest the estimated effects of *identity prioritization* are reasonably robust to confounding. Nevertheless, they do not provide evidence of a causal and/or a unidirectional relationship in these cross-sectional data.

Given the variability around *identity prioritization*'s effects, we undertake a preregistered meta-analysis, which estimates the average association, *net of* differences in survey samples under analysis (Goh, Hall, and Rosenthal 2016) (https://osf.io/6tfh5/; Supplementary SI.1). This approach utilizes a precision-weighted estimate of the association between *identity prioritization* and expressed *partisanship* across survey samples. Figure 2 displays these associations, with a meta-analyzed estimate of 0.149, SE =0.008, $p < 0.001$. We convert this into a *d*-value, which is in standard deviation units. Our meta-analyzed *d*-value of 0.29 suggests that a unit increase in the prioritization of one's *racial identity* (versus

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[8] Although *identity prioritization*, as a concept, requires that we difference our measures of Latino (Asian) and American identities to capture an individual's tradeoff between both categories,

Supplementary SI.5.1 shows that in our available datasets, these two identities are *differentially* associated with pro-Democratic partisanship, as one might expect. Besides more faithfully measuring *identity prioritization*, our measure of this concept has the added benefit of reducing random and systematic (i.e., method artifact) measurement error via the differencing procedure we use (Kinder and Kam 2009).

TABLE 3. Prioritization of Pan-Ethnic ID (over American ID) Predicts Democratic Partisanship Among Asians and Latinos

	Dependent Variable: Democratic Partisanship						
	2008 NAAS (Asians)	2016 CMPS (Asians)	2020 CMPS (Asians)	2006 LNS (Latinos)	2012 ANES (Latinos)	2016 CMPS (Latinos)	2020 CMPS (Latinos)
Pan-Ethnic ID (American ID)	0.059** (0.020)	0.075 (0.049)	0.121** (0.023)	0.145** (0.023)	0.251** (0.062)	0.214** (0.045)	0.191** (0.027)
Constant	0.409** (0.024)	0.195** (0.036)	0.119** (0.023)	0.446** (0.028)	0.102 (0.056)	0.107** (0.035)	0.139** (0.025)
Adj. R^2	0.090	0.319	0.386	0.058	0.236	0.260	0.284
F-statistic	24.67 (14, 3319)	96.13 (10, 2013)	259.48 (8, 3280)	30.26 (11, 5227)	23.71 (10, 725)	78.46 (10, 2190)	142.88 (8, 2856)
N	3,334	2,024	3,289	5,239	736	2,201	2,865
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RV	4.99%	3.47%	8.77%	8.35%	13.95%	9.66%	12.39%
$RV_{\alpha = 0.05}$	1.7%	0.0%	5.6%	5.8%	7.45%	5.79%	9.12%

Note: **$p < 0.010$ or better, two-tailed. All variables run along a 0–1 interval. Full results in Supplementary SI.5.

American identity) heightens one's expressed allegiance to the Democratic party by about one-third of a standard deviation, which we interpret as substantial, since partisan identities are characterized as being difficult (though not impossible) to shift, given their stability (Egan 2020; Hopkins et al. 2020). These layers of evidence support (H2): *identity prioritization* is meaningfully associated with Asian and Latino partisanship.

Still, our analyses here rest on self-reported data, which means the correspondence between *identity prioritization* and partisan allegiance might be affected by social desirability pressures to express one's allegiance with a certain party (e.g., "since most Latinos are Democrats, then I, as a Latino, should also say I'm a Democrat"). Study 2 throws light on this possibility by digging deeper into the automaticity of *identity prioritization* among Asians and Latinos.
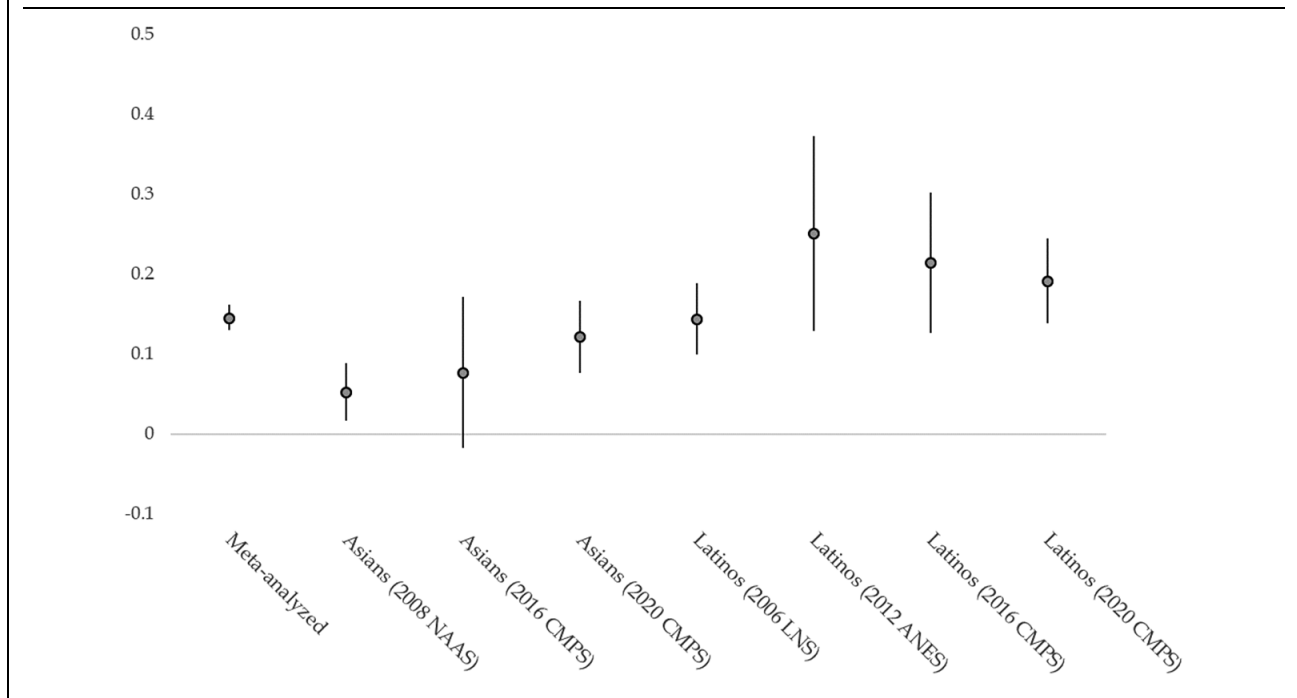
STUDY 2: IMPLICIT ASSOCIATION TESTS (IATs)—PAN-ETHNICS|DEMOCRATS VERSUS AMERICANS|REPUBLICANS

We further evaluate (H2) with a pair of IATs that use reaction times (in milliseconds) to gauge how automatically people associate pairs of categories in memory (Theodoridis 2017) (preregistration in Supplementary SI.7). A virtue of IATs is that they are less prone to social desirability bias than self-reports since one's ability to control responses is short-circuited through this rapid, timed sorting task (Pérez 2013).

We conducted our IATs among Asian and Latino undergraduates in a laboratory at a major public university on the West Coast during May 2023. Participants were recruited from political science classes and provided with two extra credit points in their course in exchange for their participation. After consenting to participate via an information sheet emailed to them, participants chose a convenient time to visit our lab to complete an IAT. These IATs estimate the degree to which Asians (N = 39) automatically associate (1) members of their *pan-ethnic* group (e.g., Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, etc.) with *Democrats* or *Republicans*; and (2) *Americans* with *Democrats* and *Republicans* (Supplementary SI.7 contains stimuli). The same logic was adapted to Latinos (N = 32) (e.g., Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, etc.). While sample sizes for these IATs are small, IAT effects are often large ($d > 0.80$), so they require fewer observations to detect (Pérez 2013). Even with our sample sizes, our power to detect a large and reliable effect ($d > 0.80$) is 0.83.[9]

Since the order of the IATs' classification pairs used by participants are randomly assigned, each IAT is a within-subjects experiment, with the estimated quantity being a D-value ranging from −2 to 2. Positive

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[9] Our preregistration anticipated collecting N = 50 participants from each group, but only 32 Latinos and 39 Asians voluntarily signed up and completed their IAT in our lab, for a total N = 71.

FIGURE 2. Percentage Point Increase in Democratic Allegiance by Greater Prioritization Racial ID Over American ID (95% Confidence Bands)

values indicate a stronger association between the hypothesized classification pair (i.e., *Latinos|Democrats* versus *Americans|Republicans*) in comparison to its opposite pair (i.e., *Americans|Democrats* versus *Latinos|Republicans*). In our IATs, participants sat behind laptop computers and sorted stimuli reflecting each category in these classification pairs (e.g., Mexican flag, Democrat logo, Republican logo, Chinese flag, American flag). Using one classification pair, each participant made 40 classifications of these stimuli. They repeated the same sorting exercise another 40 times with the opposite classification pair. For Asians, a positive D-value reflects the degree to which *Asians* and *Democrats*, and *Americans* and *Republicans*, are associated in their memory. For Latinos, a positive D-value indicates the extent to which *Latinos* and *Democrats*, and *Americans* and *Republicans*, are associated in their memory.
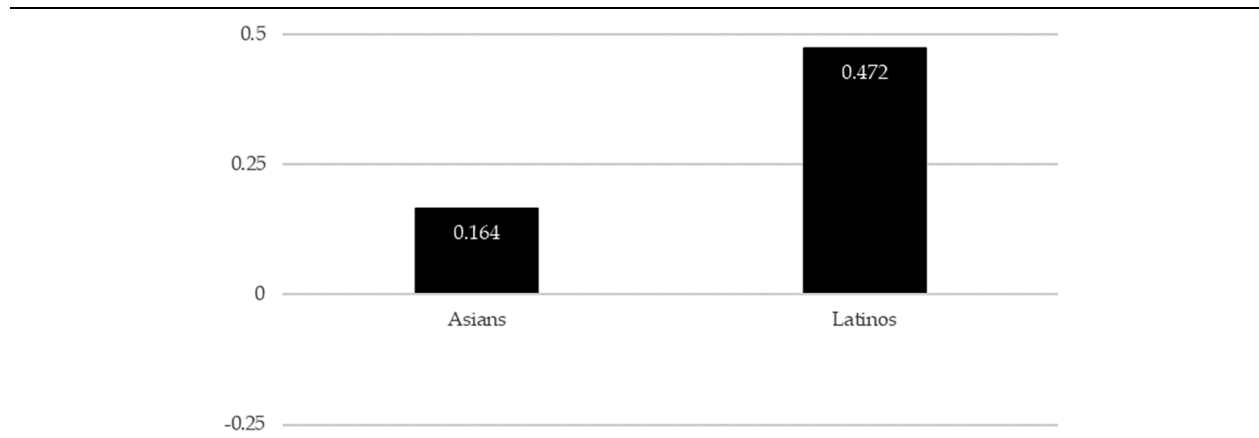
Figure 3 depicts our D-values, which are positive and range from moderately strong (Asians D: 0.164, SD = 0.459) to very strong (Latinos D: 0.472, SD = 0.317). If we divide each D-score by its standard deviation, we yield a Cohen's *d*, or standardized mean difference. Cohen's *d* values around 0.20, 0.50, or 0.80 or greater are considered small, medium, and large, respectively (Asian Americans *d* = 0.357; Latinos *d* = 1.489). The stronger IAT effect for Latinos is reliably different at the 1% level ($M_{Latinos}$ - M_{Asians} = −0.307, SE = 0.096; t = −3.210, df = 69, p < 0.002). These results suggest the associations between *Democrats* and *Asians* and *Latinos*—and between *Republicans* and *Americans*—are

automatic for these individuals, thus extending Study 1's observational analyses.

While the evidence across Studies 1–2 supports our first two hypotheses, what remains unclear are the mechanisms behind this pattern—that is, under what conditions does *identity prioritization* matter for Asian and Latino partisanship? Answering this question is partly complicated by some evidence suggesting that partisan identities can influence racial identities (Agadjanian and Lacy 2021; Hopkins, Kaiser, and Pérez 2022). Thus, to validate this aspect of our thinking, we undertook a pair of experiments, which allowed us to control the causal order between *identity prioritization*, partisan allegiance, and our proposed mechanism connecting both.

STUDY 3: CATEGORIZATION THREAT AND IDENTITY PRIORITIZATION AMONG LATINOS

Per our *categorization threat* hypothesis (H3), the internal diversity of Asian Americans and Latinos lends itself to depicting them as principally concerned about their status as *pan-ethnics* or as *Americans* (Branscombe et al. 1999). That is, members of these pan-ethnic groups possess, to varying degrees, attributes reflecting their nominal membership in two major categories with high partisan relevance: *Asian/Latino* and *American*. This implies that characterizations of each pan-ethnic population's central tendency and variance are somewhat malleable (Turner et al. 1987). Thus, Asians and Latinos should

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FIGURE 3. D-values from Implicit Association Tests with Asian and Latino Participants

Note: For Asians, a positive D-value reflects the degree to which *Asians* and *Democrats*, and *Americans* and *Republicans*, are associated in memory. For Latinos, a positive D-value indicates the extent to which *Latinos* and *Democrats*, and *Americans* and *Republicans*, are associated in memory.

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be sensitive to whether they are depicted as a primarily *pan-ethnic* or *American* group. This raises the possibility that their identity priorities will be misaligned with their ingroup's characterization. If this reasoning is valid, then depicting Asians and Latinos as generally *pan-ethnic* (*American*) communities should activate their *identity prioritization* (H3), with *identity prioritization* moderating the impact that being categorized as *Asian/Latino* or *American* has on partisanship.

Our initial test of (H3) uses a preregistered experiment with Latino adults (N = 1,572) (Supplementary SI.8). Study 3 occurred online on Dynata's survey platform, which compensates participants via an internal reward system akin to frequent flier miles. Latino adults from Dynata's respondent panel were invited via email to participate in our study. After providing informed consent, Study 3 collected demographic data and measured our moderator, *identity prioritization.* In the middle of this pretreatment module, participants completed *identity centrality* items gauging the importance of four identities for Latinos. In randomized order, these were one's identity as *American*, as *Latino*, as a *family member*, and as a *professional* (Leach et al. 2008). Here, *American* and *Latino* identities were gauged with two items each, answered on a 7-point scale, with a neutral option: (1) "Being [*American/Latino*] is personally important to me;" and (2) My [*American/Latino*] identity is central to who I am." We use these pairs of items to gauge each of these identities to increase our measure's reliability ($\alpha_{American}$ = 0.833, α_{Latino} = 0.840). We build our *identity prioritization* measure by taking participants' average *Latino* identity centrality and subtracting from it participants' average *American* identity centrality. This produces an *identity prioritization* measure ranging from +6 (prioritize *Latino* identity) to –6 (prioritize *American* identity),

where higher values indicate that Latinos prioritize their pan-ethnic identity more than their *American* identity. We leave this variable in its raw metric (M = 0.328, SD = 1.696).

Following an attention check, participants were randomly assigned to a control group or one of two treatments. All three conditions exposed participants to a mock news article from the *Associated Press*, which presented an alternative perspective to another point of view on a matter. In the control, participants read a news brief about how, *contra* the views of some people, the number of giant tortoises around the globe is declining. In turn, our *American categorization treatment* discussed how, despite being characterized as a largely pan-ethnic population, many Latinos place greater weight on their *American* identity. In contrast, our *Latino identity treatment* explained that, despite their similarity to Americans in terms of some traits (e.g., optimism, hardworking), many Latinos prioritize their *pan-ethnic* identity.[10]

Post-treatment, participants answered a conventional 7-point scale of partisan identification. This measure probes for partisan leaners, who are ultimately included along this spectrum; and it aligns with the same outcome analyzed in our observational analyses. We leave this partisanship measure, *Democratic allegiance*, in its raw metric and code it so that higher values indicate greater reported attachment to the Democratic party (i.e., 1 to 7 range). Below, we report fully interactive models where the impact of *identity prioritization* on *partisan allegiance* is moderated by

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[10] Each condition asked a factual manipulation check about its assigned article. About 10.4% of Latino participants responded incorrectly to this check, while about 8.6% of Asian participants did so in Study 4. We analyze all respondents to avoid post-treatment bias by dropping them (Montgomery, Nyhan, and Torres 2018).

TABLE 4. Categorization as *Latino* or *American* Activates Identity Prioritization Among Latinos

	Democratic allegiance (1–7)
Latino categorization	0.162
	(0.120)
American categorization	0.083
	(0.123)
Identity prioritization	0.302***
	(0.045)
Identity prioritization x Latino categorization	−0.250***
	(0.067)
Identity prioritization x American categorization	−0.320***
	(0.070)
Constant	4.412***
	(0.087)
N	1,572

Note: Entries are Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.050$.

exposure to our *Latino* and *American categorization* treatments.[11]

STUDY 3 RESULTS

The statistical key to (H3) is a set of reliable interactions indicating that the impact of *identity prioritization* on Latinos' *Democratic allegiance* is moderated by our *Latino categorization* and *American categorization* treatments. Given Equation 1 below, we expect $[\beta_4]$ and $[\beta_5]$ to be reliably different from zero, which would suggest that the relationship between partisanship and identity prioritization is dependent on each of our treatments.

$$Y_{Democrat} = \beta_{1,Latino\ categorization} + \beta_{2,American\ categorization}$$
$$+ \beta_{3,ID\ prioritization} + \beta_{4,Latino\ x\ prioritization}$$
$$+ \beta_{5,American\ x\ prioritization} + \varepsilon$$
$$(1)$$

Table 4 provides raw evidence supporting (H3). First, notice that in our control group, participants who prioritize their *Latino* identity are more likely to express *Democratic allegiance* by about one-third of a point on our 7-point scale of partisanship (0.302, SE = 0.045, $p < 0.001$), which is a substantively meaningful effect. Second, both interaction terms are highly reliable, suggesting the influence of *identity prioritization* on expressions of *Democratic allegiance* depends on how Latinos are categorized.

To better interpret the interactive effects from our model, we depict the change in *pro-Democrat*

[11] In Studies 3–4, we also measured expressive partisanship among respondents. These items are part of a companion paper. These expressive items *always* followed the conventional partisanship measure we analyze here, making our outcome here invulnerable to possible mediation effects (Hayes 2022).

allegiance in light of a ± 1 SD in Latinos' *identity prioritization* when exposed to *Latino categorization* or *American categorization*. Given *identity prioritization*'s coding, a positive SD indicates a shift toward prioritizing one's *Latino* identity, whereas a negative SD decrease reflects a shift toward prioritizing one's *American* identity. The depicted quantities are raw estimates drawn from these two subsets of data.

Panel A in Figure 4 reveals that when Latinos are characterized as a largely *ethnic* population, those who prioritize their *Latino* identity report stronger allegiance to *Democrats* (0.674, SE = 0.158, $p < 0.001$), while those who prioritize their *American* identity express reliably weaker allegiance to *Democrats* (−0.351, SE = 0.125, $p < 0.005$). The difference between both marginal effects is highly significant ($F_{(1, 1566)} = 44.26$, Prob > F = 0.000).
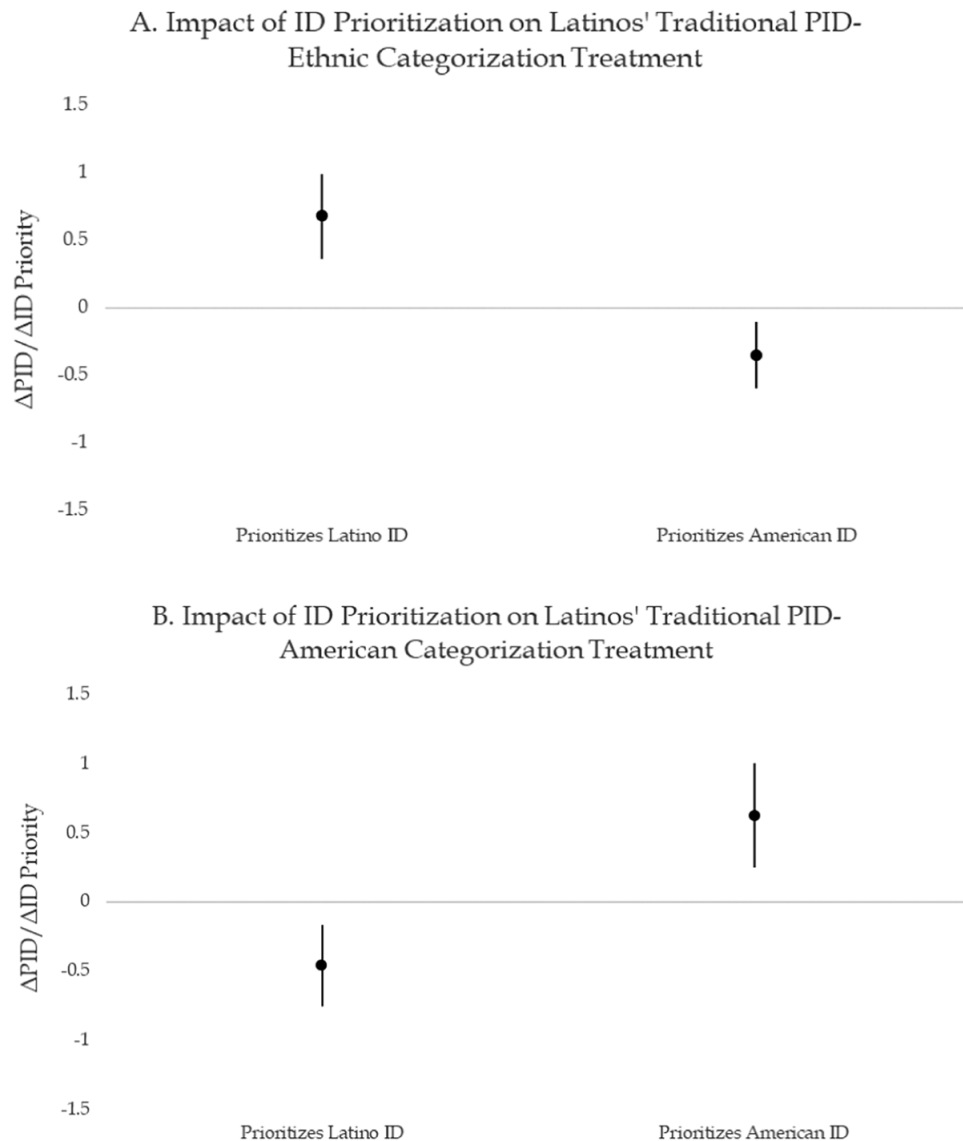
Substantively, this pattern implies that when Latinos are characterized as a largely pan-ethnic population, those who prioritize their *Latino* identity express greater allegiance to *Democrats* by two-thirds of a point (0.674) on our partisanship 7-point scale. However, the same treatment propels Latinos who prioritize their *American* identity to express lower allegiance to *Democrats* by about one-third (−0.351) of a point on the same partisanship scale. This trend suggests that Latinos' reaction to their group's depiction as *pan-ethnics* affirms allegiance to *Democrats* among those who prioritize their *Latino* identity but undermines allegiance to the same party among those who privilege their *American* identity. This finding suggests that public characterizations of their population as *pan-ethnics* stand to bring some Latinos closer to the *Democratic* party, but at the expense of losing some adherents—all because of how (mis)matched their prioritized identity is to public characterizations of their pan-ethnic population.

Panel B further shows that when Latinos are categorized as *Americans*, those who prioritize their *ethnic* identity express significantly weaker allegiance to *Democrats*, a decrease of nearly half a point on our partisanship scale (−0.459, SE = 0.149, $p < 0.002$). However, among those who prioritize their *American* identity, the categorization of Latinos as new *Americans* propels them to express greater allegiance to *Democrats*, an effect of about two-thirds of a point on our partisanship scale (0.625, SE = 0.192, $p < 0.001$). This shift in partisan allegiance is statistically reliable ($F_{(1, 1566)} = 20.61$, Prob > F = 0.000), indicating that categorizing Latinos as *Americans* increases *Democratic* allegiance among those who prioritize their *American* identity, but decreases it among those who prioritize their *pan-ethnic* identity. Our next study evaluates whether these patterns also characterize *identity prioritization*'s influence on Asians' partisanship.

STUDY 4: CATEGORIZATION THREAT AND IDENTITY PRIORITIZATION AMONG ASIAN ADULTS

Study 4 is a preregistered experiment with Asian adults aiming to conceptually replicate Study 3's findings (S.9). Study 4 followed the same structure as Study

FIGURE 4. Latinos' Categorization as *Pan-Ethnics* Activates Their *Identity Prioritization*

Note: The marginal effects depicted here are from the model reported in Table 4.

3 and also occurred online via Dynata's survey platform. Asian adults from Dynata's respondent panel were invited via email to participate in our study. After providing their informed consent, we collected demographic data and our measure of *identity prioritization*, which captures the degree to which Asian participants place greater importance on their *pan-ethnic* versus *American identity*. The primary difference between Studies 3 and 4 arises from the specific content of our manipulations, given that *Asian Americans* are considered a *foreign*, but *superior* minoritized outgroup and Latinos are considered a *foreign* and *inferior* outgroup (Figure 1).

After collecting demographic data, our measures of *identity prioritization* ($\alpha_{\text{American}} = 0.843$, $\alpha_{\text{Asian}} = 0.879$), and an attention check, participants were randomly assigned to a control group or one of two treatments.

All three conditions, again, exposed participants to a mock news article (attributed to the *Associated Press*) that presented an alternative perspective to another point of view on a matter. In the control, participants read a news brief about how, *contra* the views of some people, the number of giant tortoises around the globe is declining. In turn, our *American categorization treatment* discussed how, despite being characterized as a largely pan-ethnic population, many Asian individuals place greater weight on their *American* identity, as evidenced by wealth-induced increases in consumer purchases (which aligns with the construal of Asian individuals as *model minorities*, relative to Latino and Black people) (Kim 2003). In contrast, our *Asian identity treatment* explained that, despite their similarity to *Americans* in terms of some traits (e.g., optimism, hardworking), most Asians prioritize their *racial*

11

identity, as evidenced by increasing hate crimes against this population.

Post-treatment, participants answered a conventional 7-point scale of partisan identification. We again leave this partisanship measure, *Democratic allegiance*, in its raw metric and code it so that higher values indicate greater reported attachment to the Democratic party (1–7 range). Below, we report fully interactive models where the impact of *identity prioritization* on *partisan allegiance* is moderated by exposure to our *racial* and *American categorization* treatments.

STUDY 4 RESULTS

Similar to Study 3, we are looking for evidence that *identity prioritization* is activated in light of Asians' categorization as a primarily *pan-ethnic* or *American* population. This entails reliable and substantively meaningful interactions between *identity prioritization* and assignment to each of our manipulations. Table 5 provides our raw results, with some evidence reaffirming (H3). In our control group, participants who prioritize their *Asian* identity over their *American* identity are more likely to express *Democratic allegiance* by about one-fourth of a point on our 7-point scale of partisanship (0.267, SE = 0.051, $p < 0.001$), which is a substantively meaningful effect that is comparable to the one observed among Latinos in Study 3. Given that our constant (4.582) indicates a pro-Democrat outlook, our average effect here suggests an intensification of this allegiance based on one's *identity prioritization*.

What happens when we examine the activation of *identity prioritization* in light of Asian adults' categorization as a racial community? Very little, actually. In both substantive and statistical terms, the interaction between *identity prioritization* and *Asian categorization*

is essentially zero (−0.021, SE = 0.072, $p < 0.769$). Panel A in Figure 5 confirms this null pattern, where the difference between both depicted marginal effects is, statistically, zero ($\beta_{1, \text{racial categorization}} + \beta_{4, \text{racial x prioritize Asian ID}}$ = −0.118, SE = 0.118, $p < 0.321$ versus $\beta_{1, \text{racial categorization}} + \beta_{5, \text{racial x prioritize American ID}}$ = −0.061, SE = 0.176, $p < 0.728$).

Interestingly, however, when Asian individuals are categorized as new *Americans*, their *identity prioritization* levels behave similarly to what we observed among Latinos under the same type of categorization in Study 3 (Figure 4, panel B). The interaction between *identity prioritization* and our *American categorization* treatment is highly reliable and meaningful (−0.215, SE = 0.080, $p < 0.001$). Panel B in Figure 5 depicts this significant pattern. When Asian adults who prioritize their *Asian* identity are categorized as a primarily *American* population, they express weaker allegiance to *Democrats* (−0.179, SE = 0.121, $p < 0.139$). In turn, when Asian adults who prioritize their *American* identity are categorized as *Americans*, they report reliably stronger allegiance to the *Democratic* party (0.391, SE = 0.188, $p < 0.038$), with this difference in marginal effects being significantly different from zero ($F_{(1, 1662)} = 7.30$, Prob > F = 0.007). Similar to Latinos, then, Asians who value their *American identity* are more inclined toward the *Democratic party* when their ingroup is characterized as being composed of new *Americans*—an effect that comes at the expense of weaker *Democratic allegiance* among those Asian individuals who prioritize the pan-ethnic identity.
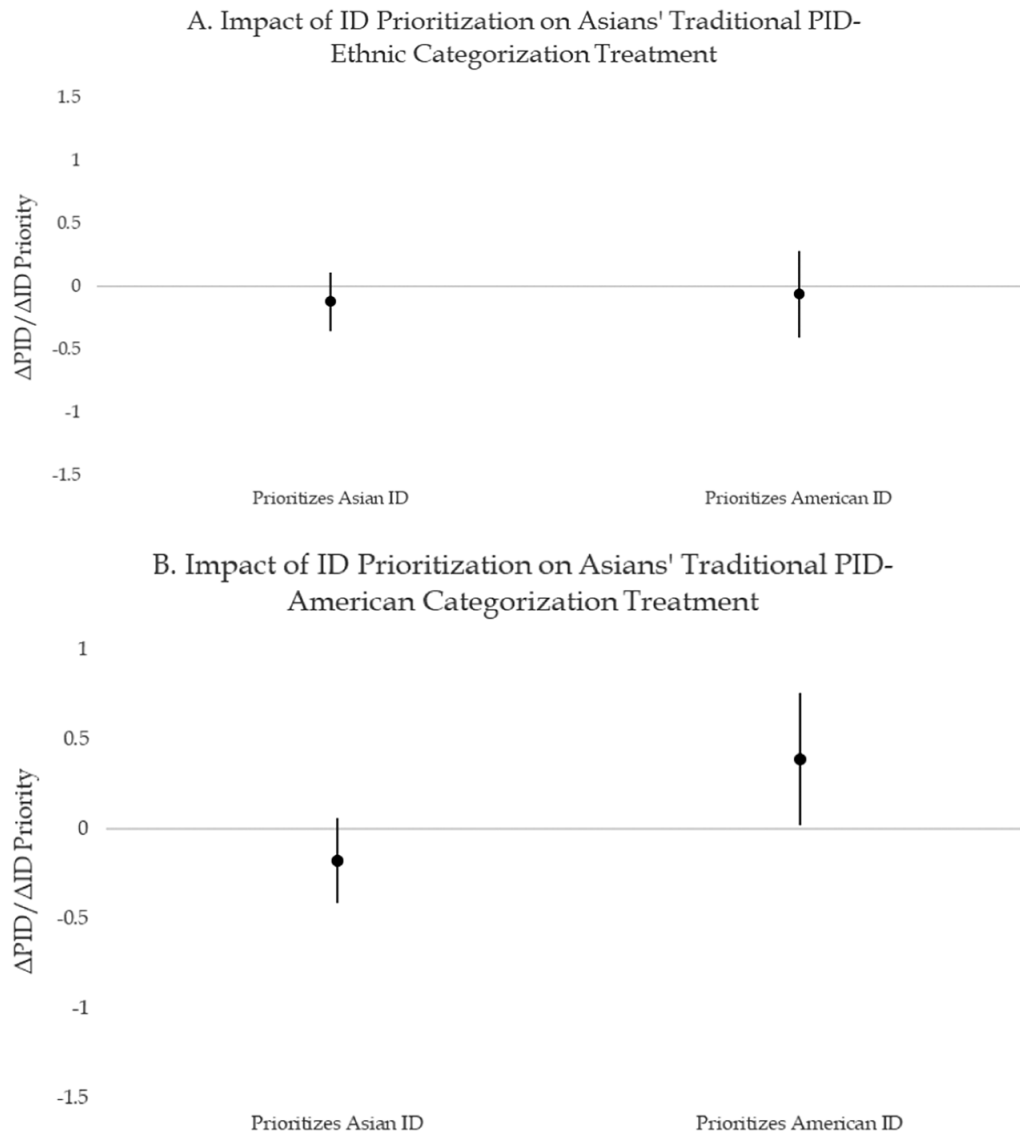
MINI META-ANALYSIS OF STUDIES 3–4

Here, we formally probe for any summary trends across our experiments by undertaking another pre-registered mini meta-analysis, using Goh, Hall, and Rosenthal's (2016) template (Supplementary SI.9). Table 6 reports a model based on a dataset that pools Studies 3–4. This model estimates the same interactive relationship in Tables 4 and 5, but tests whether meaningful trends emerge across our pooled sample.

Readers will recall that Latinos' *identity prioritization* was activated in the wake of their ingroup's *racial categorization*, but the same pattern was absent among Asians under this same circumstance (see Figure 4A versus Figure 5A). Consistent with that mixed pattern, our meta-analysis here shows that the impact of *identity prioritization* on *Democratic allegiance* among Latino and Asian adults (0.290, SE = 0.017, $p < 0.001$) is statistically similar across our control group and *racial categorization* condition (−0.161, SE = 0.109, *ns*). We cannot reject the null hypothesis that the effect of *identity prioritization* on *Democratic allegiance* in the control group versus the *racial categorization* is zero ($X^2_{(1)} = 2.19$, Prob > X^2 = 0.139). This means *identity prioritization*'s effects in light of *racial categorization* are specific to Latinos and do not apply to Asians in our experiments.

TABLE 5. Categorization as *Asian* or *American* Activates Identity Prioritization Among Asians

	Democratic allegiance (1–7)
Asian categorization	−0.089
	(0.116)
American categorization	0.106
	(0.118)
Identity prioritization	0.267***
	(0.051)
Identity prioritization x *Asian* categorization	−0.021
	(0.072)
Identity prioritization x *American* categorization	−0.215***
	(0.080)
Constant	4.582***
	(0.083)
N	1,668

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p < .001$, **$p < .050$.

FIGURE 5. Asians' Categorization as _Asians_ Activates Their _Identity Prioritization_

A. Impact of ID Prioritization on Asians' Traditional PID-Ethnic Categorization Treatment

B. Impact of ID Prioritization on Asians' Traditional PID-American Categorization Treatment

Note: The marginal effects depicted here are from the model reported in Table 5.

In contrast, the reader will recall that in light of _American categorization_, we observed parallel patterns in _identity prioritization_ among Latinos and Asians (see Figures 4B and 5B). In the wake of _American categorization_, Latinos and Asians who prioritize their _pan-ethnic identity_ expressed weaker _allegiance to Democrats_, while those who prioritize their _American identity_ reported significantly stronger _allegiance to Democrats._ That pattern is borne out by our meta-analysis: the effect of _identity prioritization_ on Latinos' and Asians' _Democratic allegiance_ is reliable in the control group (0.290, SE = 0.017, $p < 0.001$) and the _American categorization_ condition (-0.277, SE = 0.050, $p < 0.001$), with this difference

in effects being significantly different from zero ($X^2_{(1)} = 30.52$, Prob $> X^2 = 0.001$). This summary pattern is depicted in Figure 6, indicating that exposure to _American categorization_ steers Latino and Asian adults who prioritize their _pan-ethnic identity_ away from _Democrats_, but propels those who privilege their _American identity_ toward Democrats.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

We theorized and found that Asian and Latino adults vary significantly in their _identity prioritization_ (H1). We also hypothesized and discovered that variation in

13

TABLE 6. Does *Racial* (*American*) Categorization Activate Identity Prioritization Across Latinos and Asians?

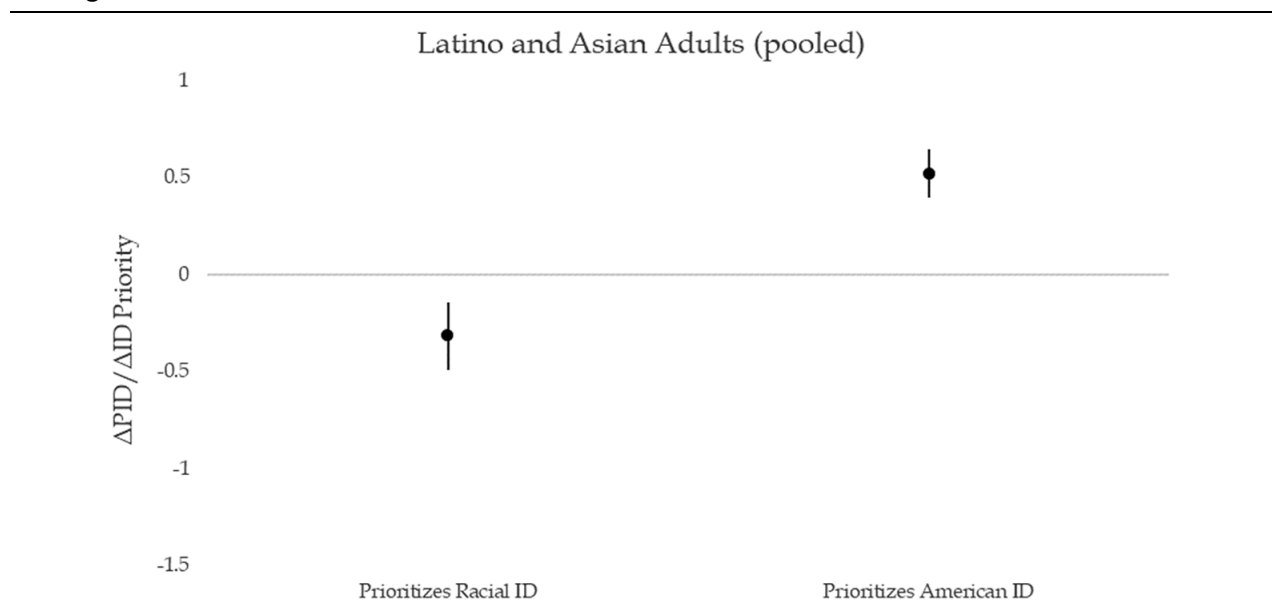|	Democratic allegiance (1–7)
Racial categorization	0.047
	(0.123)
American categorization	0.104***
	(0.013)
Identity prioritization	0.290***
	(0.017)
Identity prioritization x Racial categorization	−0.161
	(0.109)
Identity prioritization x American categorization	−0.277***
	(0.050)
Constant	4.497***
	(0.084)

Note: N = 3,240. Entries are GLS coefficients from a random effects model with robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.050$.

identity prioritization substantively predicts the intensity of Asians' and Latinos' partisan allegiance, with some evidence underlining its automatic nature (H2). Finally, we clarified when *identity prioritization* should affect Asian and Latino partisanship. Using two experiments that induced *categorization threat*, we found that Asians and (especially) Latinos react to this sense of jeopardy by reaffirming their allegiance to Democrats or Republicans.

We think a major implication of our work is the underappreciated sensitivity that members of these pan-ethnic populations have to how their respective racial ingroups are characterized. It is a truism among social scientists that Asians and Latinos are internally diverse populations. And while that assertion is, on the surface, correct, less understood is what this internal diversity implies for the political incorporation of these groups. Our findings underline one way this internal heterogeneity can matter politically—the partisan allegiance that Asian and Latino individuals feel is shaped by whether a party reflects the importance these individuals attach to their *American* or *pan-ethnic* identity. If we make the reasonable assumption that most Asian and Latino individuals trend toward the Democratic party (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010; Wong et al. 2011), our evidence implies that this steady drift toward the major parties can be slowed or even reversed depending on whether Asian and Latino individuals believe their more prioritized identity is overlooked. Of special relevance here is the centrality of *American* identity among significant shares of Asian and Latino individuals. When these people believe their prioritized identity is overlooked, they become less enthusiastic supporters of the Democratic party, the "natural" home of their respective pan-ethnic population. Against a backdrop of measurable gains by Republicans among segments of these communities (Fraga, Velez, and West 2024), our evidence points to the role that *identity prioritization* might play in these evolving dynamics.

Our results also suggest the value of sifting through available models of partisanship formation in order to make new connections. Various scholars of race and politics have correctly noted that parental socialization cannot fully explain partisanship among populations with deep immigrant roots. Yet we think that in dismissing this element of that model, Race, Ethnicity, and Politics (REP) scholars are also, incorrectly, too quick

FIGURE 6. Mini Meta-Analysis: Identity Prioritization Activated in Light of American Categorization Among Latino and Asian Adults

Note: The marginal effects depicted here are from the model reported in Table 6.

to dispense with *all* elements in this framework. In particular, the role of social groups, parties, and the mental associations between them offer a potential link to how some PoC and white individuals learn to be Democrats or Republicans. As Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2002) and others have taught us (Zhirkov and Valentino 2022; Westwood and Peterson 2020), individuals are attracted to specific parties based on various social identities that are "owned" by each party. The stability of partisanship, in turn, stems from the strength and consistency of these associations over time. Our studies indicate that many PoC adhere to this cognitive process, too, where they associate their *pan-ethnic* group with Democrats and *Americans* with Republicans. Given the robust sense of partisanship among PoC and the rich variation in it, our research also suggests these trends are steady and long enough for Asians and Latinos to have sorted themselves comfortably into respective Democratic and Republican camps. As our nation continues to racially diversify, political scientists will need to wrestle further with whether standing models of political behavior should be discarded in favor of new frameworks that reflect the reality of specific communities of color or whether revised, but more generic models can effectively accommodate the broad realities of a multiracial mass public.

One fruitful direction here is to consider the extent to which *identity prioritization* is also influenced by party competition and other dynamics. Consider Margolis (2018), Egan (2020), and others (Agadjanian and Lacy 2021; Hopkins, Kaiser, and Pérez 2022), who all demonstrate that under some conditions, partisan identities can shape the strength and direction of one's racial or ethnic identity. This aligns with social psychological research establishing the role of identity as both a cause and an effect of intergroup dynamics (Doosje, Spears, and Ellemers 2002). Consequently, while our evidence supports the viability of *identity prioritization* as an influence on partisan allegiance, more work is needed on evaluating the path of influence from partisanship to *identity prioritization.*

Another promising direction involves the tension between partisanship's stability among Asian Americans and Latinos over time (Hopkins, Kaiser, and Pérez 2022; McCann and Jones-Correa 2020) and the shifts in partisan identity observed here. Some of this disjuncture is simply due to levels of analysis, where differences between individuals can coexist with aggregate stability, akin to models of macro- and micro-level politics (Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002). Yet some of this gap is likely theoretically meaningful, which should encourage scholars to explore when and why individual-level shifts in partisan identity among Asians and Latinos translate into more durable, longer-run shifts in the distribution of partisanship in these publics.

While our observational and experimental research designs generally supported our hypotheses, this evidence places a stronger emphasis on *average* correlations or effects. This evidence should not be construed as implying that there are no meaningful differences detected between Asian Americans and Latinos, which are to be expected given the heterogeneous composition of each population (Schmidt et al. 2010) and the varying efforts of Democrats and Republicans in mobilizing these voters during presidential elections (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010; Chan, Kim, and Leung 2022; Fraga 2018; Fraga, Velez, and West 2024; Kuo, Malhotra, and Mo 2017; Wong et al. 2011). Indeed, in some instances, we find that some of our results are relatively stronger for Latinos than Asian Americans, which raises interesting questions on their own. Although outside of the scope of this paper, we think that, theoretically, these nuances reflect, to some degree, variation in the intensity and consistency of mobilization efforts aimed at these populations by partisan and non-partisan operatives, as well as the relatively unique historical experiences of these two groups in the US (Fraga 2018; Fraga, Velez, and West 2024; Ramírez 2015; Schmidt et al. 2010; Wong 2005). We encourage researchers to further leverage this heterogeneity to yield more insight into partisanship's origins among Asians and Latinos.

Finally, we call attention to what our findings imply about the heterogeneity of partisanship among Asian Americans and Latinos. A panoramic view of partisan identity within these two pan-ethnic populations indicates a robust central tendency in favor of Democrats, with 66%–75% expressing allegiance to this party and acting on it during elections. But this consistent focus on averages glosses over the nontrivial share of Asian and Latino individuals who identify, enthusiastically, with the Republican party. For those scholars who may wonder why the share of Asian and Latino Republicans is not lower, our findings point to *identity prioritization*'s role. It suggests that the strong allegiance that some Asians and Latinos express toward the Grand Old Party (GOP) is less likely a function of false consciousness, lack of knowledge, or misinformation, and more likely rooted (at least partly) in the fact that they perceive Republicans as the guardians and stewards of *Americans*—a social identity that substantial shares of Asians and Latinos deem central to them (Silber Mohamed 2017). Without further attention to this dynamic, scholars risk being surprised, repeatedly, about the lack of enthusiasm for Democrats in some elections among these populations or by the commitment of some Asians and Latinos to a Republican party that is outright hostile to racial diversity. Therefore, we invite political scientists to continue probing the roots and nature of partisan identity among members of these two critical pan-ethnic populations.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit http://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055424001217.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research documentation and data that support the findings of this study are openly available at the American Political Science Review Dataverse: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/E8SFJP.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

The authors declare the human subjects research in this article was reviewed and approved by the UCLA Institutional Review Board and certificate numbers are provided in the supplementary information (SI.10). The authors affirm that this article adheres to the principles concerning research with human participants laid out in APSA's Principles and Guidance on Human Subject Research (2020).

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