Trade-Offs in Latino Politics: Exploring the Role of Deeply-Held Issue Positions using a Dynamic Tailored Conjoint Method

Yamil Ricardo Velez   *Columbia University*

The literature on Latino politics has emphasized the unique importance of immigration as a galvanizing issue for the community. Numerous studies have found that, in the aggregate, Latinos are attentive to immigration policy and oppose candidates who take restrictionist positions. However, it is unclear how Latinos navigate trade-offs when deeply-held issue positions conflict with group-relevant policies. In this paper, I design a dynamic tailored conjoint experiment that leverages the large language model, GPT-3, to examine whether immigration or deeply-held issue positions elicited in an open-ended question are stronger determinants of candidate choice. I consistently find that AMCEs for core issue positions are larger than AMCEs for immigration across two samples of Latinos. Implications for the literature on issue importance, cross-pressures, and Latino politics are discussed.

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Yamil Ricardo Velez is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Columbia University, 420 W. 118th Street, New York, NY, 10027 (yrv2004@columbia.edu).

The 2020 election brought renewed attention to Latino politics, as pundits, scholars, and strategists alike commented on alleged swings in Trump's favor among Latinos. Despite a rise in immigration restrictionism and xenophobic rhetoric during the Trump presidency, Democrats were unable to improve their support among Latinos and may have even lost some voters, with political firms like Catalist estimating a pro-Trump shift of 8 percentage points.[1] These descriptive patterns suggest that many Latino voters were not solely motivated by "consensus" issues like immigration, and may have departed from the group norm due to election-specific considerations regarding Covid-19 (Ocampo et al. 2021) and broader trends such as ideological sorting (Fraga et al. 2023).[2]

Debates over the 'Latino shift' speak to one of the central questions, if not the central question, in the literature on race, ethnicity, and politics: how do members of marginalized groups balance personal preferences and group objectives? (White et al. 2014; Hochschild et al. 2021). A vast body of work has considered the importance of group attachments in shaping vote choice and turnout (Fraga 2018), how to measure these attachments (Spry 2021), and how demographic characteristics such as education and income predict support for group-relevant policies (De la Garza 2004; Rhodes et al. 2017). A recent strand of research has illuminated the power of social pressure in coalescing marginalized groups around common goals (White et al. 2014; Wamble et al. 2022; White and Laird 2020). These studies have examined social dynamics within the Black community grounded in a process of "racialized social constraint" that cultivate a collective identity and commitment to advancing group interests.

In contrast to the mechanisms identified in Black politics, pan-ethnic communities such as Latinos and Asian Americans in the US lack the binding force of a shared historical experience, and internal diversity on the basis of identities such as national origin can present additional challenges in maintaining a united political front (Beltrán 2010). Moreover, research on Latino and Asian American politics has found mixed success in applying concepts derived from the literature on Black politics, such as linked fate, to these communities (Sanchez and Vargas 2016; Gay et al. 2016). Given these challenges, it becomes crucial to understand the unique underlying factors that contribute to the "political core" of these allegedly unified voting blocs.

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[1] https://catalist.us/wh-national/

[2] This study was pre-registered on AsPredicted. See Appendix H.

Along with language and values, unity on the issue of immigration has been proposed as a possible bonding agent (Sanchez and Masuoka 2010, 521). Descriptive studies of Latino public opinion have found that immigration tends to rank highly among other issues, even if it is not identified as the *top* issue for Latino voters (Morales et al. 2020). Research has also found that issue priorities predict Latino vote choice, such that Latinos who prioritize the issue are more likely to support Democratic candidates (Stokes-Brown 2006; Barreto and Collingwood 2015). Finally, common experiences as immigrants, along with perceptions of discrimination, have been identified as predictors of Democratic partisanship and vote choice (Branton 2007; Rouse et al. 2010; Len-Ríos 2017; Jones et al. 2019; Berry et al. 2022), dovetailing with research on Asian American politics that finds similar patterns (Kuo et al. 2017).

Despite a seeming consensus on immigration as a key issue on which Latinos are unified, studies have documented significant cross-pressures. Most notably, variation on political dimensions such as ideology and partisanship has been shown to predict support for immigration restrictionism (Rocha et al. 2011; Stringer 2016; Wallace and Zepeda-Millán 2020; Collingwood et al. 2020). For some group members, other issues may take precedence over immigration in the short-term (e.g., Covid-19) (Ocampo et al. 2021) or long-term (e.g., stable issue priorities), driving them to depart from group norms. Moreover, individuals may not feel connected to their pan-ethnic group, instead favoring their country of origin, rendering the normative pull of group politics less potent (Masuoka 2008). Furthermore, mechanisms such as social pressure and internalized norms that are especially salient in studies of Black politics (White et al. 2014; White and Laird 2020) may operate weakly within pan-ethnic communities, given the lack of a cohesive shared history and institutions that "cultivate a system of accountability" (Smith 2021).

Setting aside these theoretical questions, studying the causal effect of issues is fraught with challenges. First, traditional measures of issue attitudes and importance are constrained by the number of issues presented, tending to focus on those that are nationally salient. However, national importance does not entail personal importance, as there are subsets of the population who hold stable attitudes toward a subset of political issues (Miller et al. 2017). Second, traditional closed-ended measures of issue importance may not always capture personally meaningful attitudes. Due to social

desirability pressures, some participants might feel inclined to rate issues as higher in importance to demonstrate political competence or because doing so signals a strong group identity (Ryan and Ehlinger 2023). Third, estimating the independent effect of issue positions is difficult due to processes such as partisan cue-taking (Lenz 2013) and ideological constraint (Converse 2006).

To address these challenges, I design a tailored conjoint experiment that measures deeply-held issues using open-ended questions and assesses how these issues compare against immigration-related policies in two studies of Latinos (N = 1,652). First, I ask respondents to write about a deeply important issue in an open-ended question, a method that recovers strong, stable, and personally meaningful attitudes that persist over time (Ryan and Ehlinger 2023, 35). Then, I leverage large language models (LLMs) to generate personalized conjoint experiments that allow participants to make choices between candidates who randomly vary on demographics (e.g., age, education, ethnicity), partisanship, immigration stances, and positions pertaining to their core issue.[3] This experimental design allows issue-related trade-offs to be directly assessed in the context of candidate choice.

Across both studies, I find that immigration is rarely mentioned as a "core issue," ranking 8th and 11th in Experiments 1 and 2, respectively. Instead, consistent with prior work, nationally salient issues such as abortion, inflation, health care, and gun control tend to dominate the list of issue priorities. Moreover, while I find that immigration stances affect candidate choice, effect estimates tend to be substantially smaller than effect estimates for core issue stances. This suggests that while immigration may be an important concern, it may not be a *key* determinant of political decisions for Latino voters. Indeed, even when candidates take restrictionist positions on immigration (e.g., deporting all undocumented immigrants), these profiles are selected between 48% and 53% of the time if they also take a position that is aligned with Latinos' core issues.

Taken together, the study makes several contributions. The findings provide a more nuanced understanding of issue importance among Latino voters. Though immigration is an important determinant of vote choice, the study suggests that other issues such as the economy, healthcare,

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[3]Throughout the manuscript, I use the term "core issue" as short-hand for the issue identified in this open-ended task.

and education can dominate in a setting where the independent effect of issues can be isolated. Second, the research demonstrates that a candidate's restrictive stance on immigration may not necessarily be a decisive factor or "deal breaker" if they align with Latino voters on other fundamental concerns. These findings suggest that political strategies relying on blunt appeals to "consensus issues" like immigration may not be as effective as those that take into account the diversity of issue positions within pan-ethnic communities. Finally, the study develops a cost-effective dynamic tailored experimental design that can be applied to assess how other minoritized communities weigh group-relevant policies against more idiosyncratic concerns.

Latinos, Immigration Politics, and Cross-Pressures

Though the nature of ethnic politics has long occupied researchers studying American politics (Wolfinger 1965), increasingly narrow national election outcomes have brought renewed attention to the political behavior of panethnic groups, with Latinos being seen as a critical voting bloc. Decades of research on the topic of Latino politics have presaged many of the conversations that have emanated out of post-election analyses by news organizations in recent decades that (1) Latinos are not a monolith, (2) their political beliefs and behaviors are shaped by a multitude of factors, and (3) their political preferences can change over time (Jones-Correa et al. 2018).

Even granting these points, existing literature has still identified some central tendencies with respect to partisan identification, issue priorities, and immigration attitudes. For example, regarding partisanship, pro-Democratic margins tend to fluctuate between 30 and 40 percent across elections.[4] On the topic of issue priorities, Latinos are more likely to view immigration as important relative to other groups (Abrajano and Alvarez 2011). Third, although other issues may surpass immigration in importance depending on the electoral context, immigration is described as a "gateway or validating issue" that influences vote choice (Morales et al. 2020). Finally, studies have found that Latinos tend to hold more favorable views towards immigrants and immigration policies compared to other groups (Cowan et al. 1997; Rocha et al. 2011).

Despite its distinctive nature as a group-relevant issue, studies assessing the correlates of par-

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[4]https://centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/are-latinos-deserting-the-democratic-party-evidence-from-the-exit-polls/

tisanship and candidate choice have revealed a mixed picture as to whether attachments to the issue of immigration offer predictive leverage. Barreto et al. (2002) find that those who viewed immigration as more important were more likely to be undecided between Gore and Bush during the 2000 election. Abrajano and Alvarez (2011) uncover evidence that Latinos were equally likely to view immigration and the Iraq War as an important issue; though, Latinos ranked immigration higher than Anglos. Moreover, the authors find that when placed in a multivariate regression, immigration attitudes exert little predictive power when adjusting for attitudes toward abortion, school vouchers, and government redistribution. These findings align with Saavedra Cisneros (2017) who provides evidence suggesting immigration issue importance also does not predict Democratic identification after adjusting for other issue positions.

The dueling forces of different issues and how they figure into vote choice among Latinos is supported by a broader literature on cross-pressures (Lazarsfeld et al. 1968). Even among Latinos for whom immigration is personally relevant, other issue areas may dominate vote choice if they are seen as more important or pressing at a given point in time. Studies of issue cross-pressures have generally examined these processes in observational settings by considering the predictive impact of different sets of policy positions. This literature has revealed that cross-pressures due to candidates taking positions on personally meaningful issues can contribute to vote choice that is discordant with one's partisan predispositions (RePass 1971; Hillygus and Shields 2009). A distinct, but related, literature on policy importance finds that personal importance accorded to issues is often more predictive of political behavior than national importance (Miller et al. 2017). These studies set up the possibility that deeply held issues may push Latinos to deviate from group norms. In other words, personal issue preferences may lead Latinos to prioritize these concerns over group-based interests or partisan affiliations. As a result, their voting behavior may diverge from what might be expected based on group identity alone.

Challenges in Measurement   Existing measures of issue importance may be subject to social desirability issues, acquiescence bias, and lower levels of reliability. First, respondents might overstate their level of interest in an issue due to group expectations. For example, knowing that immigration is often described as a "Latino issue," group members might feel that highly ranking the issue is an

important expression of their group identity. Second, respondents may be tempted to rate issues as important simply to appear politically knowledgeable. Finally, traditional closed-ended measures of issue importance can exhibit low reliability over time (Ryan and Ehlinger 2023, 35-38).

Open-ended questions can be used to mitigate these issues. Open-ended responses allow respondents to provide a more nuanced answer, rather than being limited to a narrow set of options (RePass 1971, 391). Additionally, open-ended questions can capture unique reasons why a particular issue is important to an individual. Moreover, these measures score highly on reliability. Velez and Liu (2023) use open-ended questions to generate tailored outcome measures via GPT-3 and find high levels of attitude strength and reliability for issue positions ascertained via open-ended questions. This dovetails with Ryan and Ehlinger (2023), who find relatively high levels of reliability over time for open-ended measures versus more traditional measures.

Challenges in Causal Identification   Assessing the impact of issues is complicated by the possibility that issue priorities and attitudes can be influenced by various factors such as salience and elite messaging (Weaver 1991). Thus, what may seem like issue voting in a given time period may simply be the result of partisan cue-taking. Indeed, studies have shown that political attitudes often follow exogenous shifts in party position-taking, suggesting that issue priorities are often unstable and estimated effects may be confounded by factors such as partisanship, media exposure, and political knowledge (Lenz 2013; Barber and Pope 2019).

In recent years, scholars have leveraged conjoint designs to examine the causal effects of issues on candidate choice (Mummolo et al. 2021). Conjoint designs are high-dimensional factorial designs that vary many features of competing profiles and assess how respondents decide between different options (Hainmueller et al. 2014). Studies have revealed that despite the artificial nature of these tasks, they can recover externally valid estimates (Hainmueller et al. 2015). In candidate choice conjoint designs, features such as party affiliation, candidate positions, and demographic characteristics of the candidate can be manipulated (van Oosten et al. 2023). By doing so, researchers can observe how changes in these features influence vote choice and also examine trade-offs between different issue positions.

Ryan and Ehlinger (2023) propose a novel method for studying these trade-offs when issues are

personally meaningful. Their tailored conjoint method proceeds by asking respondents to write about a core issue in an initial wave and creating a personalized conjoint in a follow-up wave that presents participants with candidate characteristics (e.g., age, gender, education, occupation), along with varying positions on this core issue. The authors find that the effects of core issues measured via open-ended responses tend to be greater than those retrieved using traditional methods. These "bespoke conjoints" allow researchers to examine the causal effect of deeply-held issues on vote choice, making it a promising tool for studying trade-offs and voting behavior within communities of color.

Data and Methods

The existing literature offers a mixed picture regarding the role of immigration in shaping political decisions among Latino voters. On one hand, it is often described as a unifying issue for the community. On the other hand, studies have found significant heterogeneity in when and among whom it is politically consequential. To further understand the role of immigration and other core issues in shaping political decisions among Latino voters, I apply a tailored conjoint method to two online samples of Latinos. Given the costly and labor-intensive nature of the two-wave Ryan-Ehlinger design and obstacles in recruiting minority populations to participate in multi-wave studies, I leverage GPT-3 to generate tailored conjoints on the fly in the survey software, Qualtrics.[5] GPT-3 is a large language model developed by OpenAI that has achieved superior results in a variety of categorization and prediction tasks, including the coding of political issues (Mellon et al. 2022), the production of plausible political text (Argyle et al. 2022), and political persuasion (Voelkel et al. 2023). GPT-3 can take a prompt such as "produce a summary of this issue and three different issue positions" and create a tailored experiment for each participant. GPT-3 has demonstrated proficiency in summarizing and categorizing text, coming close to achieving human-level performance (Mellon et al. 2022). I validate whether GPT-3 is capable of correctly summarizing issue positions using open-ended text and find that only 5% of participants report that the machine-generated conjoint factor is unrelated to their issue (see App. C).

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[5]In this paper, the term "GPT-3" is used to refer to the more recent class of language models released by OpenAI, including more recent models that are referred to as "GPT-3.5".

FIGURE 1. Dynamic Tailored Conjoint Design

(a) Open-ended question

Thinking about issues that define the American political system, what is an issue that you care deeply about and what is your position on that issue?

Please write a sentence or two about an issue that you care about and where you stand on the issue.

For example, if you care about farm subsidies, you can write "I believe farm subsidies should be increased to help farmers."

I believe people need to learn more re CRT, not less. Hiding from uncomfortable subjects doesn't make us happier, it makes us realize how weak our collective backbone is. Who could be happy living like that?

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(b) Personalized Conjoint

	Candidate 1	Candidate 2
Partisanship	Democrat	Democrat
Race/Ethnicity	Asian American	Black
Asylum Policy	Allow political refugees to obtain asylum	Allow economic refugees to obtain asylum
Religion	Catholic	Presbyterian
Career	State representative	Agriculture
Veteran Status	Served	Did Not Serve
Critical Race Theory	The amount of education on Critical Race Theory should remain the same	People should learn more about Critical Race Theory, not less
Deportation Policy	Identify and deport all undocumented immigrants	Identify and deport all undocumented immigrants
Social Spending	Decrease spending on social programs that assist immigrants	Keep spending on social programs that assist immigrants the same
Sex	Female	Male
Border Wall Policy	Build a physical wall along the entire southern border	Build a physical wall along parts of the southern border
Age	62	66

Note: Screenshots of the survey design. (a) Participants begin by responding to an open-ended question about their most important issue, which is used to generate a personalized conjoint task. (b) Participants complete a set of candidate choice trials with their tailored issue position featured alongside immigration issue positions and demographic characteristics.

In a single wave, participants write about their most important issue, this information is sent to an API that returns a personalized conjoint within seconds, and participants complete a set of candidate choice trials with their core issue featured alongside immigration issue positions and demographic characteristics. Figure 1 illustrates how these two phases of the design were presented to participants. As displayed in the figure, a participant who wrote about critical race theory (CRT) was shown CRT-related issue positions in a conjoint setting, along with immigration-related positions, partisanship, and candidate demographics. This design allows for a direct examination of the role of both immigration and core issues in shaping political decisions among Latinos. By comparing coefficients of the two issue groupings, I can assess the relative importance of each issue in shaping candidate choice.

Experiment 1: Comparing Core Issues to Immigration Stances

From January 26 to 27, 2023, I recruited Latino participants using the online survey provider CloudResearch.[6] After completing the consent form, participants were asked to write about a

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[6]Online convenience samples often replicate ATEs and CATEs observed using nationally representative samples (Mullinix et al. 2015; Coppock et al. 2018). In the context of Latino samples, Velez et al. (2022, Appendix M) find that CloudResearch recovers effects that have also been detected using "higher-quality" samples.

deeply important issue to them. The open-ended question asked the following: "Thinking about issues that define the American political system, what is an issue that you care deeply about and what is your position on that issue?" Given that the design depends on legible text, the response was passed to an API that coded the quality of the open-ended response on the fly. As in Velez and Liu (2023), the API is effective in identifying low quality responses, and scores predict other indicators of attentiveness.[7] Following the pre-registration plan, 284 surveys deemed to have low quality open-ended responses were automatically terminated after this initial screening. In 28 cases, GPT-3 was unable to provide output, resulting in a final sample of 1,003.

In Experiment 1, it was possible for a respondent to write about immigration as a core issue, which renders it difficult to make comparisons between the core issue and immigration. However, these cases comprised a small percentage of the sample (4%) and AMCEs are unaffected by their removal. Experiment 2 addresses the duplication problem directly by asking participants to write about their preferred immigration position *and* a core issue. If the core issue is immigration, a second attempt is made to elicit a core issue unrelated to immigration. Non-immigration core issues remain an important determinant of candidate choice even among participants who mention immigration as their core issue (see App. F).

Among those who provided a legible response, the open-ended response was passed to a GPT-3 API that (1) summarized the issue topic (e.g., abortion for an open-ended response about abortion) and (2) generated three issue positions for the issue topic (i.e., positive, negative, and intermediate). Thus, a person who wrote about maintaining the legality of abortion would see candidates taking one of three policy positions: a position that aligns with the participant, a position calling for abortion to be illegal, and an intermediate position (e.g., allowing abortion to be legal in some cases). This information was then appended to a conjoint design as an additional factor and returned to Qualtrics within the same survey (see App. A for examples of GPT-3 output and a more detailed description of the design). An interactive demonstration of how GPT-3 summarizes and presents issue positions in

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[7]The API produces a measure of quality on a three-point scale, where 0 is low quality, .5 is medium quality, and 1 is high quality. Assessing performance on a pre-treatment attention check, the passage rate for those scoring at the minimum of open-ended response quality was 17%, whereas the passage rates for those scoring at the midpoint or maximum are 33% and 58%, respectively.

a conjoint setting can be found here: https://tailoredexperiments.com/tailored_conjoints/.

Participants were asked to judge 10 pairs of candidate profiles for a hypothetical Congressional race. Candidate characteristics and issue positions included sex, race/ethnicity, partisanship, age, religion, career, veteran status, deportation policy, border wall policy, position on social spending for immigrants, policy regarding asylum seekers, and positions on the core issue. All factors had an equal probability of being assigned with no constraints on randomization (see App. E for an examination of implausible conjoints). Candidate profiles were presented side-by-side and participants were asked to choose the candidate they would be most likely to vote for in a Congressional election.

Estimation Strategy I estimate the average marginal component effect (AMCE) of each attribute by regressing candidate choice on candidate sex, race/ethnicity, partisanship, age, religion, career, veteran status, deportation policy, border wall policy, position on social spending for immigrants, policy regarding asylum seekers, and positions on the core issue. The model takes the following form:

$$\text{Choice} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Sex} + \beta_2\text{Race/Ethnicity} + \beta_3\text{Partisanship} \tag{1}$$

$$+ \beta_4\text{Age} + \beta_5\text{Religion} + \beta_6\text{Career} + \beta_7\text{Veteran Status} \tag{2}$$

$$+ \beta_8\text{Deportation Policy} + \beta_9\text{Border Wall Policy} + \beta_{10}\text{Social Spending} \tag{3}$$

$$+ \beta_{11}\text{Asylum Policy} + \beta_{12}\text{Core Issue} + \epsilon \tag{4}$$

Given that the experiment aims to assess how Latino voters navigate the trade-off between immigration issue positions and more deeply-held issues, comparisons between β_{12} and the set of immigration positions β_8-β_{11} are of particular interest. Note that this comparison inherently offers four opportunities for the causal impact of immigration issue positions to exceed that of the core issue, rendering it a more difficult test for the "core issue." The equation above is estimated using OLS with clustered standard errors for each respondent. All reported p-values reflect two-tailed hypothesis tests.

Results I present three sets of estimates. First, I report AMCEs across candidate characteristics and issue positions. Then, in an exploratory analysis, I explicitly assess trade-offs by examining how marginal means for the core issue position vary across levels of deportation issue positions. Finally, I assess pre-registered conditional effects due to linked fate, generational status, and nativity status. These moderators are included to capture possible variation due to higher levels of group consciousness (Lien et al. 2003) and more direct experience with immigration (Jones et al. 2019), factors that may influence the weight that individuals place on the personal versus group issue.

Figure 2 presents the AMCEs and corresponding 95% confidence intervals. We detect slight preferences for candidates who are Latino, Democrat, and Catholic, which is consistent with the literature on Latino politics (Jones-Correa et al. 2018). Next, focusing on immigration policy, we see that whereas asylum policy positions do not have a meaningful effect on candidate choice, the deportation policy positions have the most substantively significant effect on candidate choice, followed by border wall policy and social spending for immigrants. With the most restrictive policy of deporting all undocumented immigrants set at the baseline, the AMCE for two of the policy positions (i.e., deporting felons and drug offenders; granting legal status to non-felons) are .10 (SE = .01; p < .001) and .09 (SE = .01; p < .001), respectively. This means moving deportation policy positions from the most restrictive option to the most supported option produces a 10pp increase in candidate choice, averaging over all other features. Still, these effects are dwarfed by the AMCE of the core issue. The AMCE for candidates who stake out an intermediate position between the supporting and opposing position is .10 (SE = .01; p <.001), which is comparable to the AMCEs for the most preferred issue positions on the question of border policy. However, observing a candidate who is aligned with the participant's core issue produces an AMCE of .20 (SE = .01; p<.001). This means that comparing a candidate who opposes the participant on the basis of their deeply-held issue to one that supports their preferred policy produces a 20pp increase in candidate choice, which is twice the size of the largest immigration-related AMCE.

To illustrate the trade-off, I consider how marginal means vary across the core issue and best-performing immigration factor (i.e., deportation policy). In contrast to AMCEs, which capture the effect of an attribute when all other attributes are determined at random, marginal means are the

FIGURE 2. AMCE Estimates (Experiment 1)
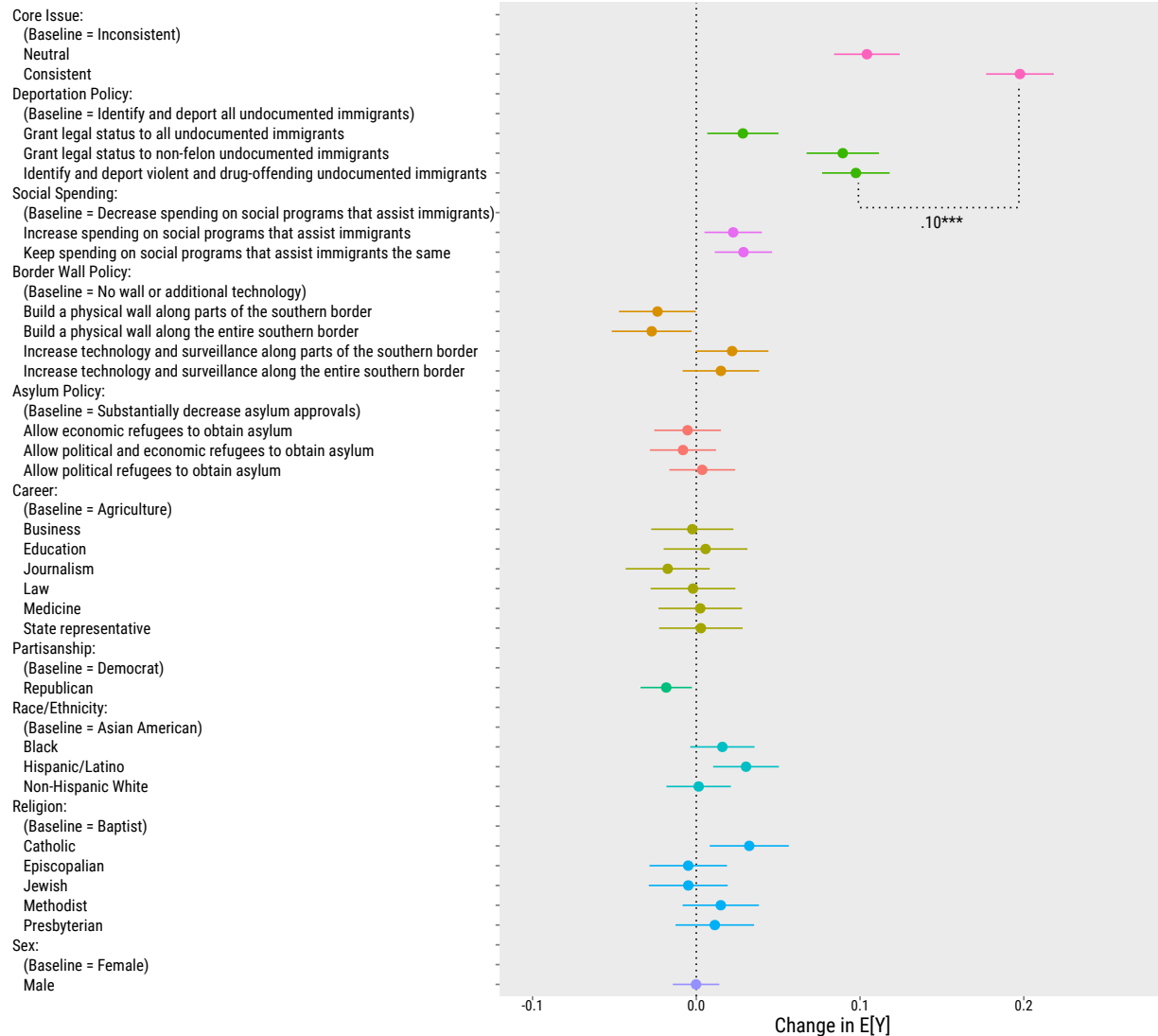
Note: AMCE estimates and corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The AMCE for a candidate taking a position that is consistent with the participant's core issue is 10pp larger than the AMCE for the best-performing immigration policy position

FIGURE 3. Marginal Mean Estimates (Experiment 1)
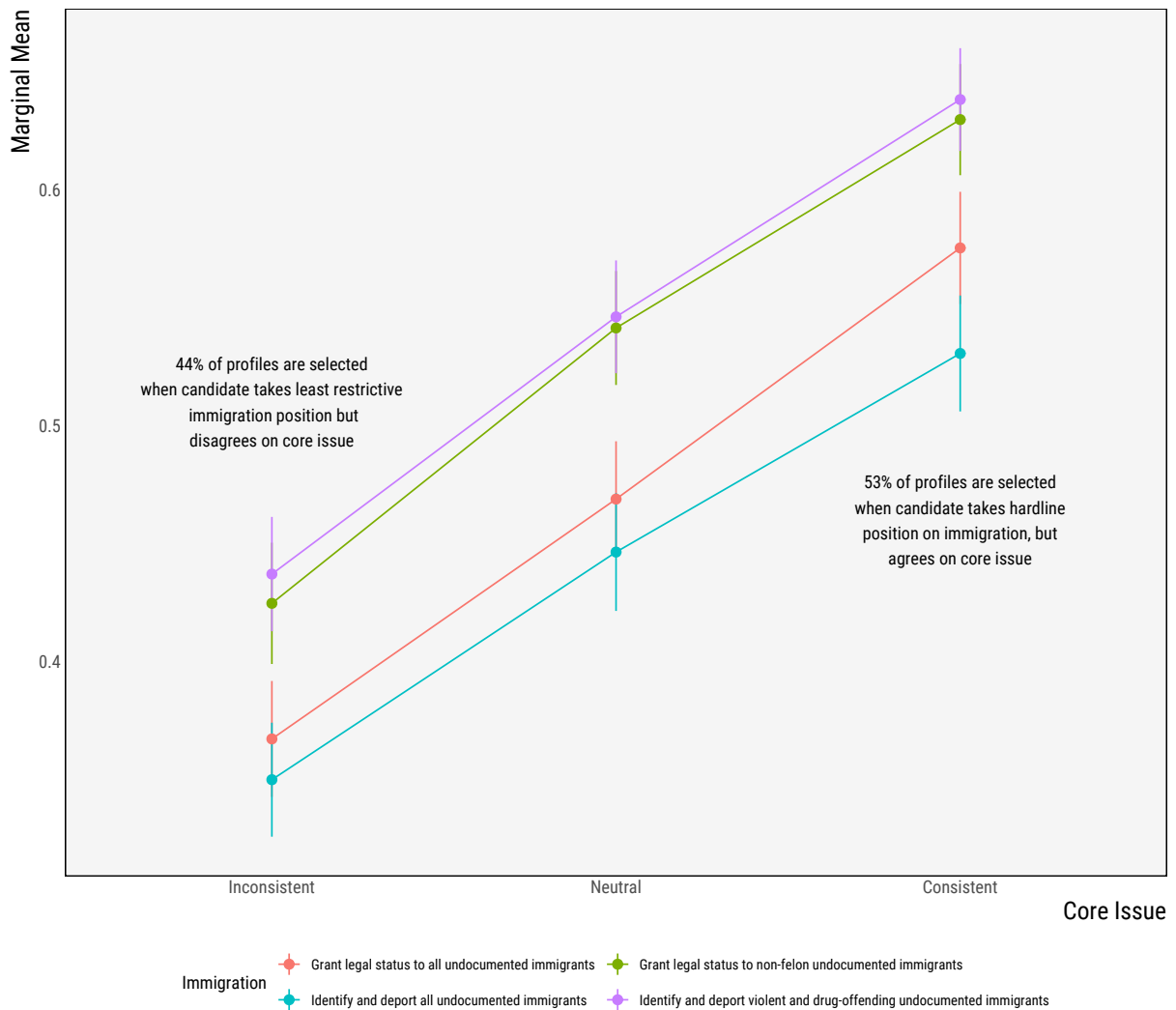
Note: Marginal mean estimates and corresponding 95% confidence intervals. Candidate profiles that take inconsistent positions on core issues, but support the most popular immigration position are selected 44% of the time, whereas candidate profiles that take the least popular immigration policy position, but take a concordant position on the core issue are selected 53% of the time.

proportion of trials that a candidate with a particular attribute is selected. Candidates who stake out discordant positions with participants on the core issue are chosen less than 45% of the time, even if they take adopt a popular position on immigration. In contrast, even if a candidate supports the least popular position on immigration, they are selected 53% of the time if they agree with the participant on the core issue. Overall, the findings imply that even if candidates take an unpopular stance on immigration, they still have a high chance of being selected if they are aligned on the core issue.

Turning now to subgroup effects, we find that the core issue performs better than the best-performing immigration policy across the three pre-registered moderators: linked fate, generational status, and foreign-born status. We report marginal means, given that the difference-in-AMCEs only report relative differences in support across different feature levels, rather than absolute differences (Leeper et al. 2020).[8] In every case, the marginal mean for the consistent issue position is larger than the marginal mean for the most supported immigration policy position. Differences in marginal means are detected when comparing those at the lower and upper tertile of linked fate, such that the "core issue" is weighed less. However, the gap between concordant and discordant profiles for the core issue is still larger than the gap between the most and least-preferred immigration policy (i.e., deporting violent undocumented immigrants and drug offenders versus deporting all undocumented immigrants).

While Latino participants also considered immigration when deciding between candidates, positions on idiosyncratic but deeply-held issues were more likely to influence candidate choice. These patterns held even when considering the two factors in tandem. When navigating the trade-off between the immigration issue and the core issue, Latino participants were generally more inclined to prioritize their deeply-held issue position.

One possible limitation of the initial design is that the immigration positions were pre-loaded into the conjoint task, whereas the core issue appeared on the fly for respondents. To the extent that there is a "surprise effect" that may cause increased attentiveness, effects for the core issue could be exaggerated. This is especially concerning for conjoints involving rare issues. To investigate whether

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[8]This is a deviation from our pre-analysis plan. However, difference-in-AMCE estimates also reflect similar patterns across subgroups.

FIGURE 4. Subgroup Analysis (Experiment 1)
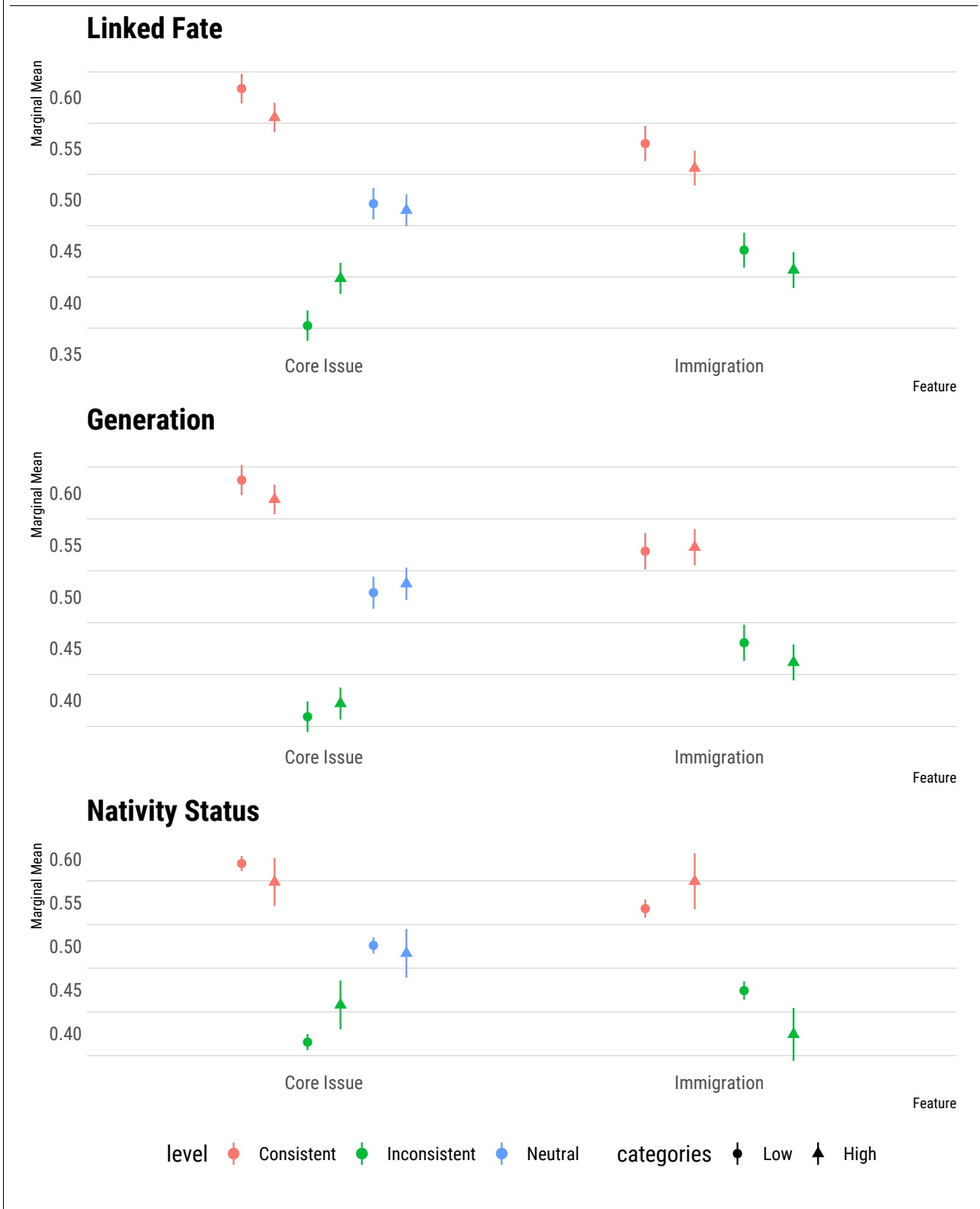
Linked Fate

Generation

Nativity Status

Note: Point estimates reflect marginal means. 84% confidence intervals are presented to facilitate visual comparison of statistically significant group differences in marginal means. Low and high reflect lower and upper tertiles for linked fate and generational status. Low and high values for nativity status reflect US born and non-US born respondents.

the "surprise effect" is related to the rarity of the core issue mentioned by the participant, I examine conditional effects for participants who wrote about salient issues such as abortion, gun control, taxes, environmental issues, healthcare, Covid-19, and policing. In App. D, I find that the AMCE for the core issue is comparable regardless of whether a nationally salient issue is mentioned in the open-ended response.[9] An additional concern with the existing design is that the study took place during a time of low immigration salience. Though issues that are personally meaningful ought to exhibit stability even in times of low salience, it is possible that the results could differ if the study were to prime immigration directly. I attempt to address these two concerns in Experiment 2.

Experiment 2: Tailoring Core Issue and Immigration Stances

Though the analysis above helps address the possibility of a "surprise effect" due to highly idiosyncratic issues being featured in the experiment, it may still be the case that seeing a core issue increases attentiveness. Moreover, the reduced national salience of immigration might affect how respondents weigh the issue in their decision making. I attempt to address these concerns in Experiment 2 by producing two tailored issue positions that appear in the conjoint: a core issue position and a respondent-specific immigration position. Given that both issue positions are tailored, any generic "surprise effect" should be mitigated. Moreover, since I am prompting participants to explicitly think about their own immigration-related position, this design should also increase the salience of immigration in the context of the experiment.

Following Experiment 1, Experiment 2 were collected from February 8 to February 11 using CR. 649 participants provided legible output and received a tailored conjoint.[10] Upon agreeing to participate in the study, participants were asked two open-ended questions that were presented in a

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[9]I also consider whether viewing unrealistic conjoints alter AMCEs and fail to find support for this hypothesis in App. E.

[10]1,038 participants entered the study. Of those 1,038, 277 were identified to have provided low-quality responses. Of the remaining 761, 112 did not receive a tailored conjoint because GPT-3 did not produce output, leaving 649 participants. This is likely a function of the more complicated nature of task (i.e., producing two conjoint factors). Given that both the quality check and GPT-3 errors are occurring before randomization to different conjoint features, there is no risk of confounding.

randomized order: a question eliciting a core issue as in Experiment 1 and another question asking the participant to describe their ideal immigration policy. Specifically, participants were asked the following: "Please write a sentence or two about your ideal policy for immigration. This could be any aspect of immigration that you deeply care about." As in Experiment 1, these responses were used to construct a tailored conjoint on the fly. In this case, the open-ended responses populated two conjoint factors: a "core issue" factor and a tailored immigration factor. For example, a respondent writing about nuclear power and DACA would receive a tailored conjoint with the demographic characteristics from Experiment 1, along with candidate stances on both issues. To reduce overlap between factors, the 8% of participants who mentioned immigration as their core issue were asked to write about a non-immigration issue.

As in Experiment 1, participants completed ten trials. After the conjoint task, participants were asked to rate the importance of each issue and select the most important issue from the two options. I report the AMCEs for each of the factors, and additional demographic characteristics in Figure 5. Consistent with Experiment 1, I find that the core issue possesses a larger AMCE than the tailored immigration issue. Whereas a consistent issue position on the tailored immigration policy produces an AMCE of .17 (SE = .01; p < .001), the AMCE for the "core issue" is .25 (SE = .01; p < .001), an 8pp difference (p < .001). Turning now to marginal means across both factors, we observe a similar dynamic that was evident in Experiment 1: even candidate profiles who disagree with respondents on immigration policy are selected 48% of the time if they agree on the core issue, whereas candidate profiles who disagree with respondents on their core issue are only selected 41% of the time if they simultaneously take a consistent immigration position. Moving on to subgroup effects, I observe similar levels of support across subgroups as in Experiment 1. Profiles with issue positions that are consistent with the participant on the core issue are generally selected more often than profiles that stake out a position that is consistent with the respondent on immigration policy.

In addition to the conjoint task, I rely on two descriptive measures of relative issue importance as an additional examination of how voters think about the two issues: a binary item asking respondents to select the topic that is most important to them and a Likert item measuring issue importance on a 5-point scale. On both of these metrics, the core issue receives a higher score than the tailored

FIGURE 5. AMCE Estimates (Experiment 2)
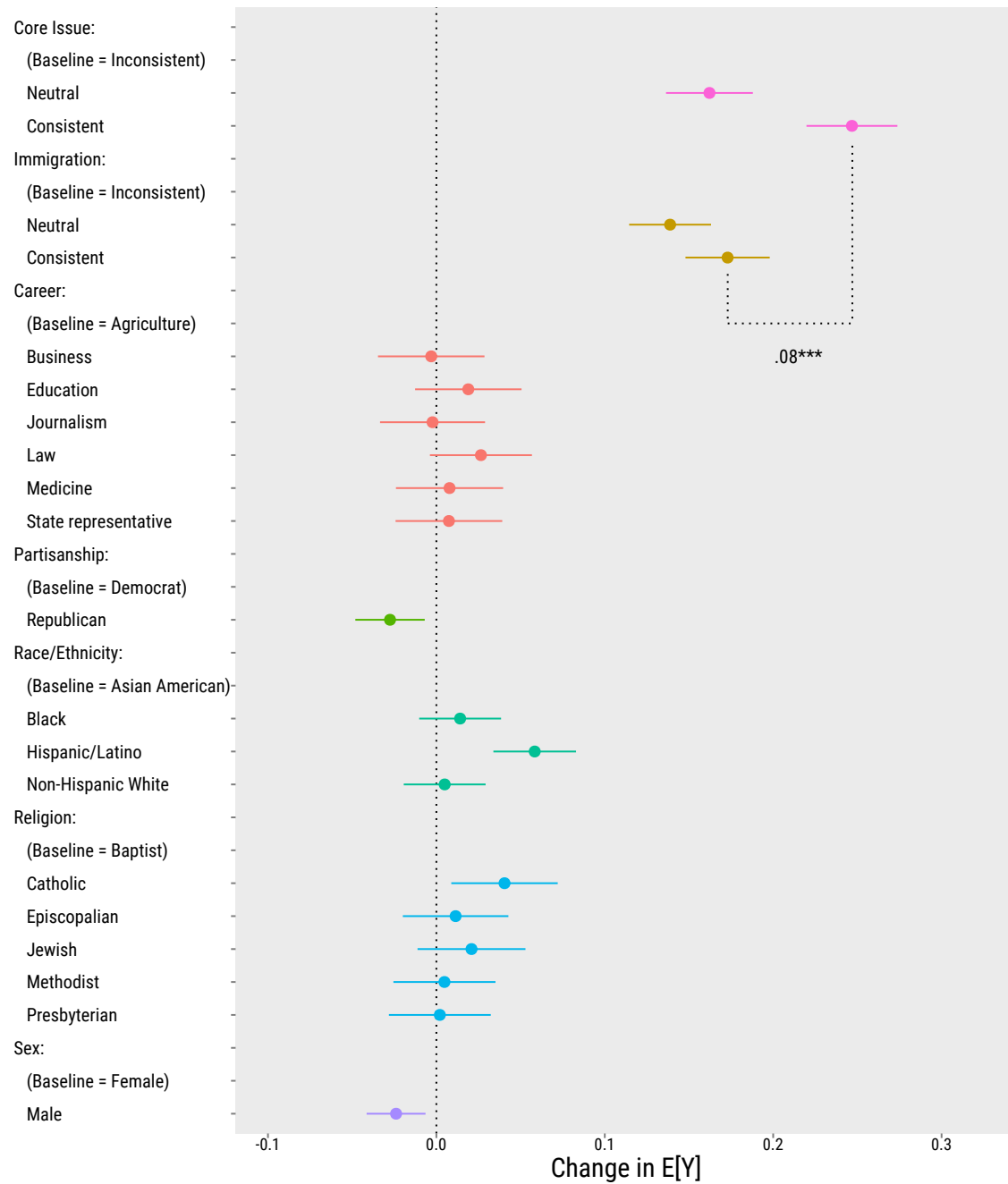
Note: AMCE estimates and corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The AMCE for a candidate taking a position that is consistent with the participant's core issue is 8pp larger than the AMCE for the tailored immigration position.

immigration issue. Specifically, 79% of participants select the core issue over immigration when asked which issue is most important, and the difference in issue importance between the core issue and tailored immigration policy is .45 scale points (SE = .05; p < .001). This suggests that the core issue is not only more influential in affecting participants' choices, but potentially also more salient. This is consistent with Velez and Liu (2023), who find that issue attitudes elicited using an open-ended task score at the upper end of strength and exhibit high levels of stability over time.
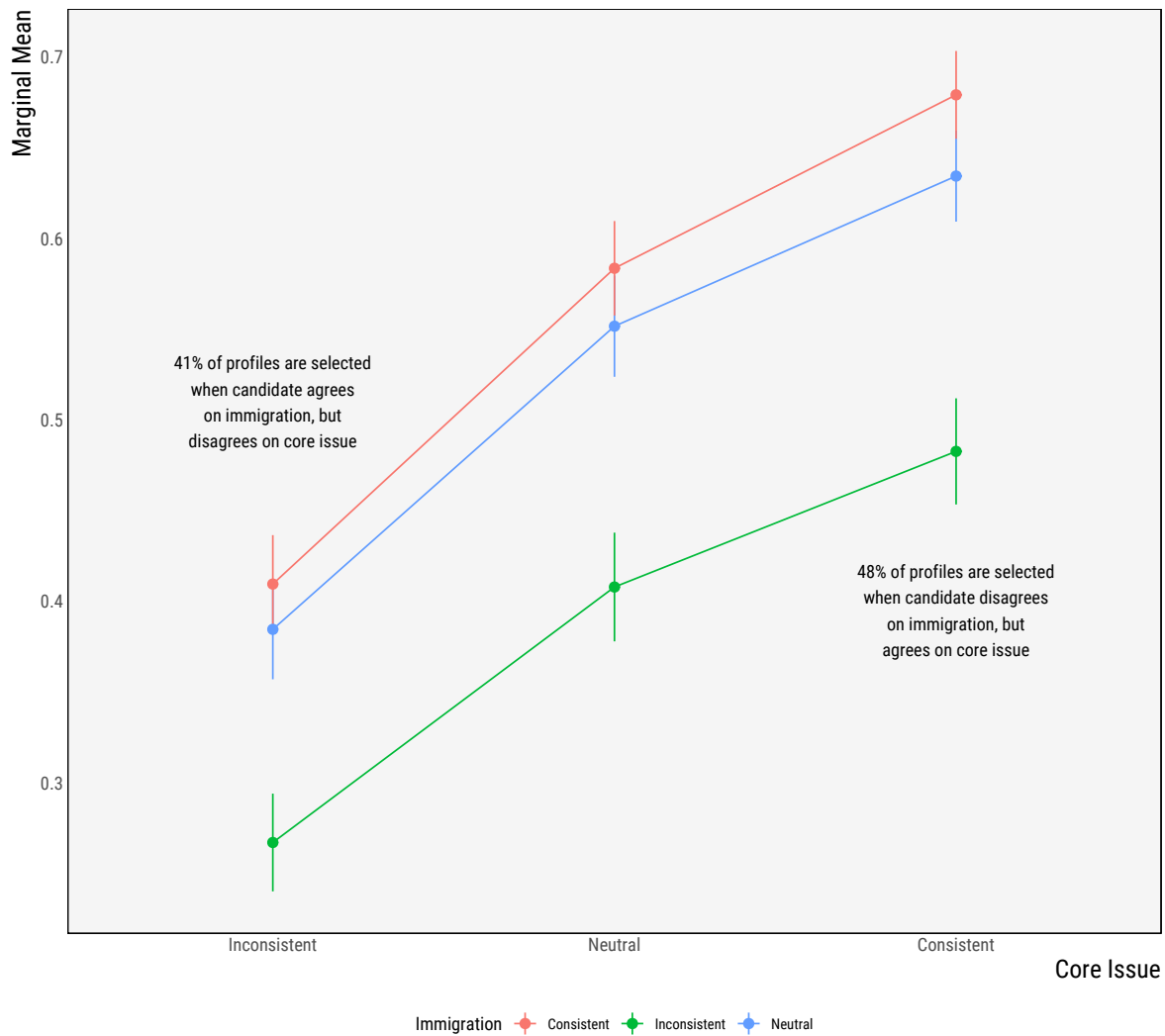
Variation in Core Issues

Although the evidence suggests that core issues carry more weight than immigration stances, it is worth noting the issues that respondents describe in their open-ended responses. Due to the vast number of issues, I use sub-topics from the Comparative Agendas Project to capture general issue domains. Keywords associated with the issue domains are employed to convert GPT-3 topics to CAP subtopics, as described in Velez and Liu (2023). As depicted in Figure 8, abortion is the most frequently mentioned issue, with 15% of respondents discussing it in Study 1 and 14% mentioning it in Study 2. Other commonly mentioned issue areas include ethics, inflation, healthcare, economic issues, gun control, institutions (e.g., polarization, gridlock), climate change, economic inequality, and education. Immigration ranked 8th and 11th in Studies 1 and 2, respectively. This provides further evidence of the decreased importance of immigration, but it also demonstrates high levels of heterogeneity in core issues among Latino voters. Furthermore, heterogeneity in issue *positions* on topics such as abortion adds to this complexity.

Discussion

Across two pre-registered experiments using Latino samples, I uncovered evidence that core issues elicited through an open-ended question figured more prominently in candidate choice than positions on immigration. In Experiment 1, I devised a dynamic tailored conjoint experiment that used issues provided by participants to create a respondent-specific candidate choice task. More than demographics or positions on a variety of immigration issues, positions on core issues had the largest observable AMCEs. Moreover, when focusing on the trade-off between immigration and the core issue, candidates who supported core issues were selected often, even when those candidates

FIGURE 6. Marginal Mean Estimates (Experiment 2)

41% of profiles are selected
when candidate agrees
on immigration, but
disagrees on core issue

48% of profiles are selected
when candidate disagrees
on immigration, but
agrees on core issue

Marginal Mean

Core Issue

Inconsistent   Neutral   Consistent

Immigration   Consistent   Inconsistent   Neutral

Note: Marginal mean estimates and corresponding 95% confidence intervals. Candidate profiles that take inconsistent positions on core issues, but are concordant with respect to immigration are selected 41% of the time, whereas candidate profiles that take a discordant position on immigration, but take a consistent position on the core issue are selected 48% of the time.

FIGURE 7. Subgroup Analysis (Experiment 2)

Note: Point estimates reflect marginal means. 84% confidence intervals are presented to facilitate visual comparison of statistically significant group differences in marginal means. Low and high reflect lower and upper tertiles for linked fate and generational status. Low and high values for nativity status reflect US born and non-US born respondents.

FIGURE 8. Variation in Comparative Agendas Project Subtopics

Note: Distribution of core issues in Experiments 1 and 2. Note: Sub-topics are based on the Comparative Agendas Project and are constructed using keywords associated with each issue domain. Those who repeated the example prompt (i.e., farm subsidies) are excluded from the figure (N = 78).

took restrictionist positions on immigration. In Experiment 2, I tailored the conjoint design to account for personally meaningful positions on immigration as well. I replicated the results from Experiment 1, finding that the AMCE for the core issue also exceeded immigration in the conjoint task. I supplemented these results with closed-ended questions of issue importance, finding that participants rated the core issue as more important than the tailored immigration position. Finally, I found considerable heterogeneity in the topics mentioned by Latino participants, and observed evidence that immigration ranked below other issues such as abortion, gun control, and health care.

Future research could expand upon these findings by examining additional sources of heterogeneity across subgroups and political contexts. First, the study was conducted using predominately English-dominant Latinos. Though subgroups associated with higher immigration support were considered, incorporating less acculturated Latinos who speak Spanish could yield important insights about whether certain subgroups approach the trade-off differently. Second, the study was conducted during a time of relatively low immigration salience. Experiment 2 addresses this concern by directly priming immigration, but future studies should assess alternative ways of making the issue more salient or assessing whether these effects hold in high-salience time periods. Finally, concerns about external validity are worth mentioning. Though conjoints may appear artificial, studies in other contexts have found that they can replicate real-world preferences (Hainmueller et al. 2015). Recent studies suggest they are also an effective tool for minimizing social desirability (Horiuchi et al. 2022), which can be an important consideration when studying group-relevant policies or candidate characteristics, where expectations of group loyalty might affect responses.

The evidence provided here suggests that when Latino voters are forced to make a decision between a personally meaningful issue (e.g., abortion, healthcare, crime) and immigration, the former may be a more powerful determinant of vote choice. Though previous studies have examined the correlates of Latino voting patterns with issue positions included as covariates, parsing out causal effects has been a challenge. Following other research on issue voting, conjoint tasks provide a possible path forward. The findings also suggest that rather than "imputing issue importance" by selecting groups that are especially affected by a particular policy domain, eliciting core issues through open-ended questions can provide a more nuanced perspective on issue voting. As academe

and the public more broadly grapples with heterogeneity in the voting patterns of communities of color, moving beyond single issue approaches and recognizing the complexity of Latino political preferences will be essential for understanding their electoral behavior and influence.

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Appendix

A. Tailored Conjoint Details

In Experiment 1, participants were presented with twelve conjoint factors, including a tailored factor based on the respondent's core issue. The factors that were held fixed and seen by all participants were sex, race/ethnicity, partisanship, age, religion, career, veteran status, deportation policy, border wall policy, social spending, and asylum populations. Factor names and levels for the core issue were produced by OpenAI's completions API. GPT-3 was prompted to generate a topic and three positions: a supporting position, an opposing position, and an intermediate position between the two. In Experiment 2, participants were presented with the same fixed factors as in Experiment 1, except the four factors related to immigration were replaced with a single personalized immigration factor. In both experiments, participants were asked to select the candidate that they were most likely to vote for based on the presented profiles. All factors were randomly assigned without constraints. Participants completed 10 trials.

TABLE 1. Conjoint Factors and Levels in Experiment 1

Conjoint Factors	Factor Levels
Sex	Male, Female
Race/Ethnicity	Non-Hispanic White, Black, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino
Partisanship	Democrat, Republican
Age	35-75
Religion	Baptist, Catholic, Episcopalian, Jewish, Methodist, Presbyterian
Career	Agriculture, Business, Education, Journalism, Law, Medicine, State representative
Veteran Status	Served, Did Not Serve
Deportation Policy	Identify and deport all undocumented immigrants, Identify and deport violent and drug-offending undocumented immigrants, Grant legal status to non-felon undocumented immigrants, Grant legal status to all undocumented immigrants
Border Wall Policy	Build a physical wall along the entire southern border, Build a physical wall along parts of the southern border, Increase technology and surveillance along the entire southern border, Increase technology and surveillance along parts of the southern border, No wall or additional technology
Social Spending	Increase spending on social programs that assist immigrants, Keep spending on social programs that assist immigrants the same, Decrease spending on social programs that assist immigrants
Asylum Populations	Allow economic refugees to obtain asylum, Allow political refugees to obtain asylum, Allow political and economic refugees to obtain asylum, Substantially decrease asylum approvals
Core Issue	Support, oppose, intermediate position

Note: Factors and factor levels for Experiment 1. The same factors and factor levels were used in Experiment 2, except for the immigration-related factors. These factors were replaced with a tailored immigration factor that produced a supporting, opposing, and neutral position.

TABLE 2. Examples of User-Submitted Text and GPT-3 Output

Open-Ended Text	Topic	Supporting	Opposing	Neutral
Healthcare is one of the most important issues that I'm worried about	Healthcare	The government should provide universal healthcare coverage	The government should not provide universal healthcare coverage	Private insurance companies should be allowed to offer healthcare, but the government should still regulate it
I care mostly about finances and the government helping those in need of money	Government Financial Assistance	The government should provide more financial assistance to those in need.	The government should not provide any additional financial assistance.	The government should maintain its current level of financial assistance.
I think we should reduce the amount of plastic products being made to help the environment	Reduction of Plastic Products	The production of plastic products should be reduced to help the environment	The production of plastic products should not be reduced to help the environment	The production of plastic products should remain unchanged
Global warming is affecting our world and I think we need to take care of it better before we are more doomed	Global Warming	Governments should take more aggressive action to reduce global warming	Governments should take a less aggressive approach to reducing global warming	The government should focus on mitigating the effects of global warming
Showing IDs for voting! I think its very important for ensuring that a true vote gets counted	Voter Identification Requirements	Voters should be required to show identification when voting	Voters should not be required to show identification when voting	The implementation of voter identification requirements should vary by state
I believe that women have the right to choose if they want to terminate a pregnancy.	Abortion Rights	Women should have the right to choose if they want to terminate a pregnancy.	Women should not have the right to choose if they want to terminate a pregnancy.	The legality of abortion should be determined by local governments.

Note: GPT-3 was instructed to provide a supporting, opposing, and neutral position. The output for the neutral category is not neutral in a political sense, but use of the term "neutral" was effective in producing an intermediate position between the supporting and opposing position.

B. Demographics

TABLE 3. Demographics

	Age	Education	Income	Gender	Democrat	Mexican Heritage	Experiment
1	39.28	3.53	5.30	0.40	0.43	0.46	1
2	42.48	3.53	5.41	0.41	0.45	0.45	2

Note: Cell entries are sample means for each covariate.

C. Does GPT-3 return personally meaningful issues?

One concern with the use of GPT-3 is that it may return personalized conjoints that do not match the open-ended responses. This ought to work against detecting an effect because if a factor does not align with the issue the participant wrote down, presumably this factor should matter less in the conjoint task. In Experiment 2, I ask participants directly if they believe the topic selected by GPT-3 matches their open-ended text. 5% of participants reported that the topic did *not* match their open-ended text, compared to 18% who responded with "somewhat" and 76% who chose "yes." When combined with data on importance and other studies showing superior performance of open-ended responses (Velez and Liu 2023), GPT-3 appears to be recovering relevant and meaningful topics.

D. Addressing the Surprise Effect (Experiment 1)

Assuming that part of the reason for the larger AMCE is a "surprise effect" from seeing one's issue in the conjoint, we can assess if weaker AMCEs are recovered when more popular issues are featured. The logic here is that whereas a participant might be surprised to see an uncommon issue in the conjoint (e.g., nuclear power), they should be less surprised to see more commonly discussed issues such as abortion, gun control, taxes, environmental issues, healthcare, Covid-19, and policing. Therefore, if the larger AMCEs are indeed driven by surprise effects, we would expect to see smaller AMCEs for more commonly discussed issues. However, our results do not support this hypothesis. We find that even when more popular issues are featured in the conjoint, the AMCEs remain relatively large and stable. This suggests that the larger AMCEs for less commonly discussed issues are not solely due to surprise effects.

FIGURE 9. AMCEs in Subset of Respondents Who Mentioned Popular Issues
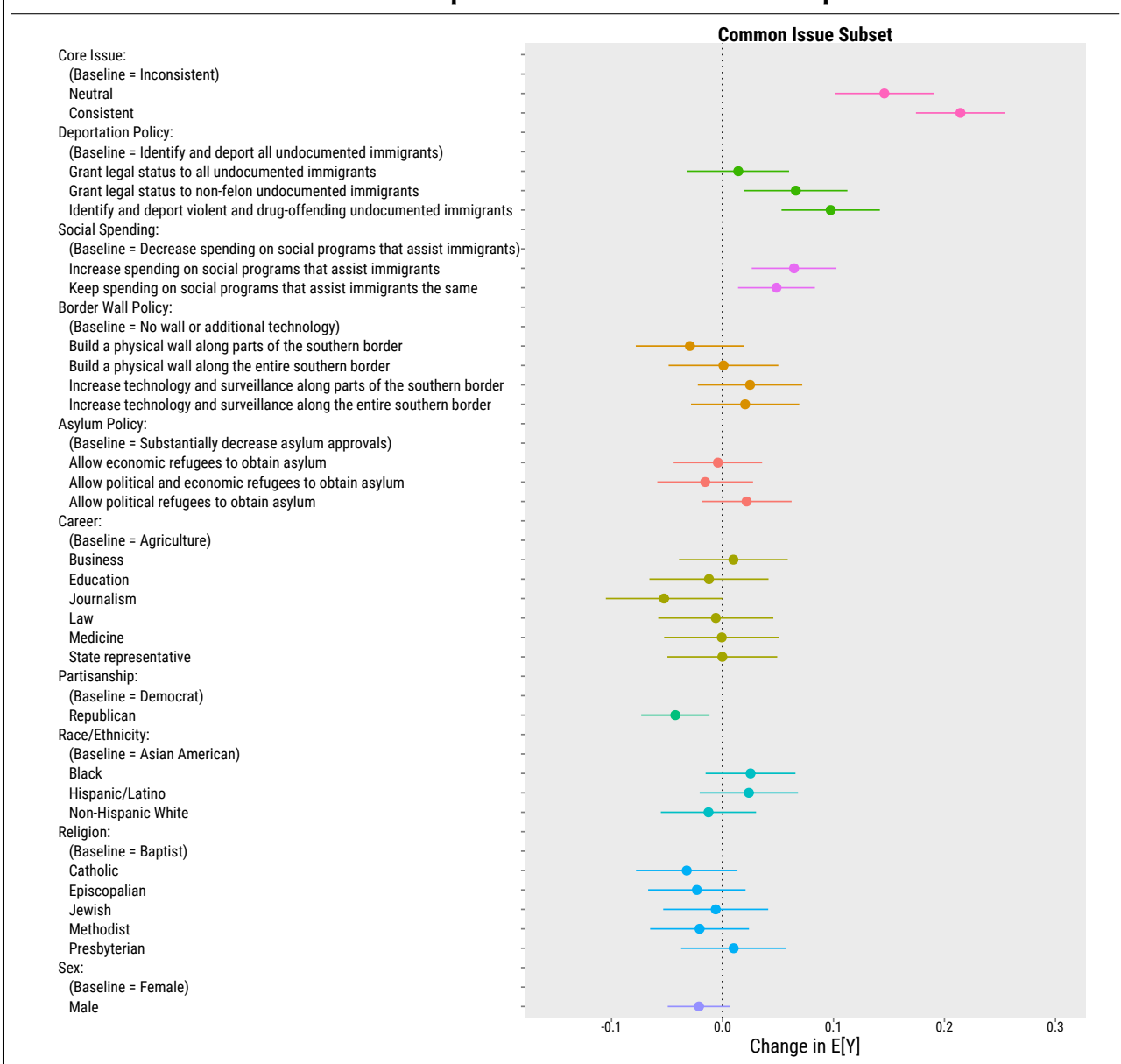
E. Implausibility Effects (Experiment 1)

To assess the effects of implausible conjoints that take inconsistent positions on immigration and therefore mute AMCEs for immigration policies, I analyze AMCEs after excluding two subsets of profiles. The first subset flags profiles that (1) support building a physical wall along the entire southern border while also supporting granting legal status to all undocumented immigrants or (2) support a policy of having no wall or additional technology while also supporting identifying and deporting all undocumented immigrants. These profiles are flagged as implausible since the two policy positions are unlikely to be paired in the real world. The second subset flags a wider range of unrealistic profiles, including those that combine extreme positions on border wall and deportation policies, as well as those that involve substantial increases or decreases in social spending on programs that assist immigrants and asylum policy positions that are at odds with one another. These profiles are also flagged as implausible since they present policy positions that are unlikely to be proposed by the same politician. Removing these observations yields similar AMCEs to the full sample. It is worth noting that the issue of implausible immigration positions is mitigated in Experiment 2, given that respondents only see positions related to their preferred immigration policy.
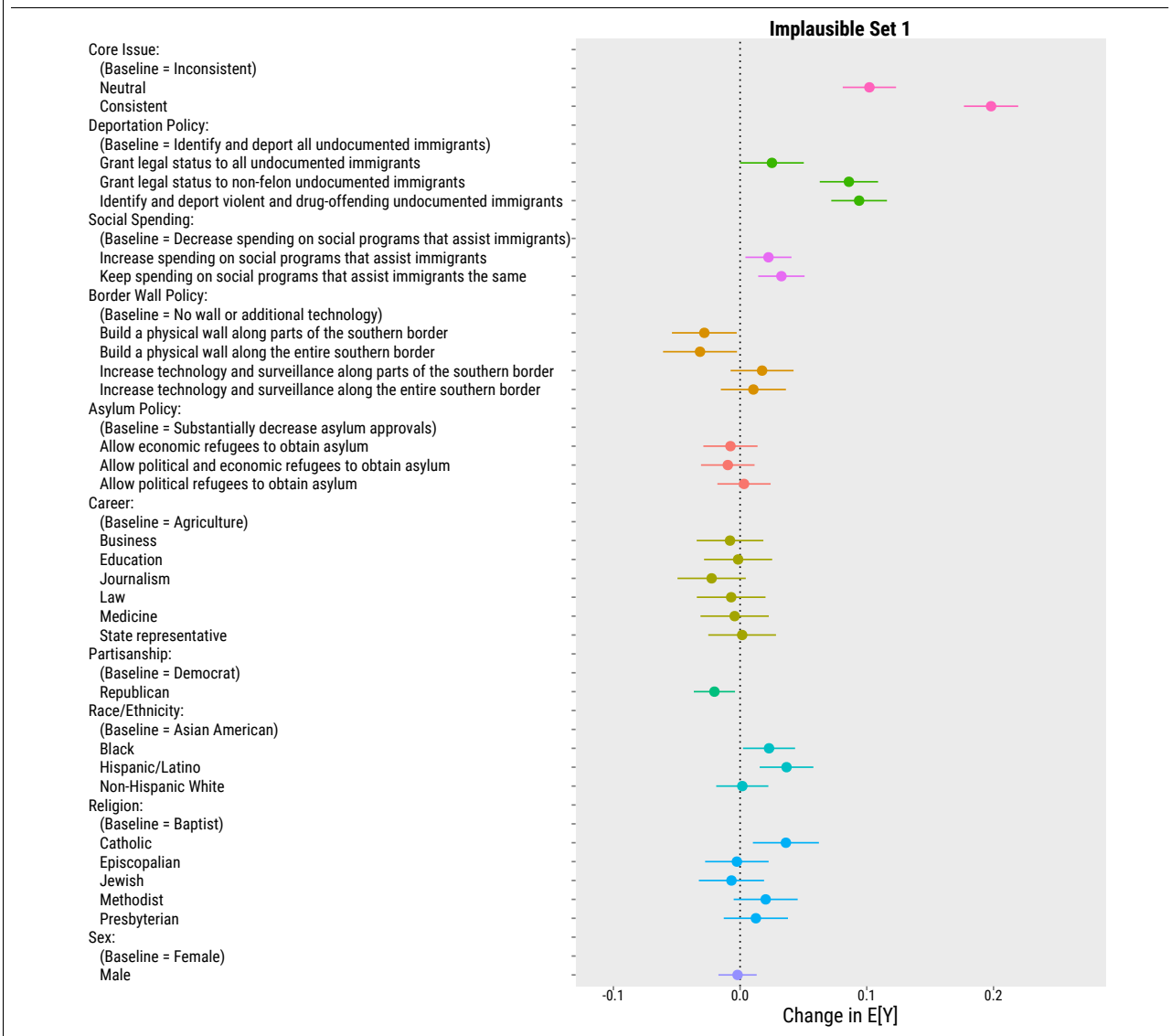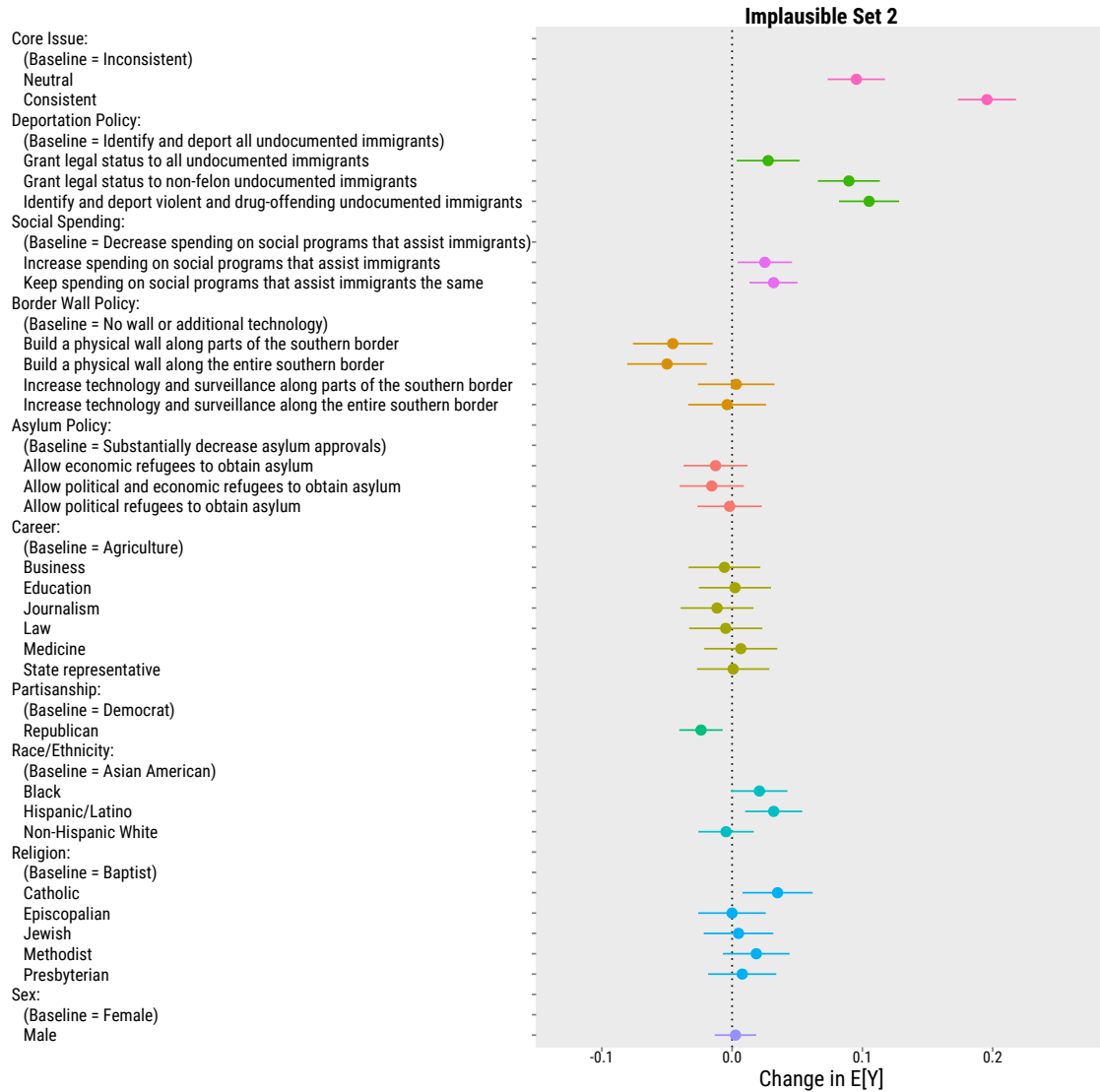
FIGURE 10. Removing Implausible Profiles (Set 1)

FIGURE 11. Removing Implausible Profiles (Set 2)

F. Subgroup Analysis - Immigration as Core Issue (Experiment 2)

As mentioned in the pre-registration, I also calculate AMCEs among those who mentioned immigration as a core issue. Given that this group is relatively small, the standard errors are large, and estimates are imprecisely estimated. However, I am unable to detect any significant differences in marginal means between immigration and non-immigration "issue publics."

FIGURE 12. Subgroup Analysis
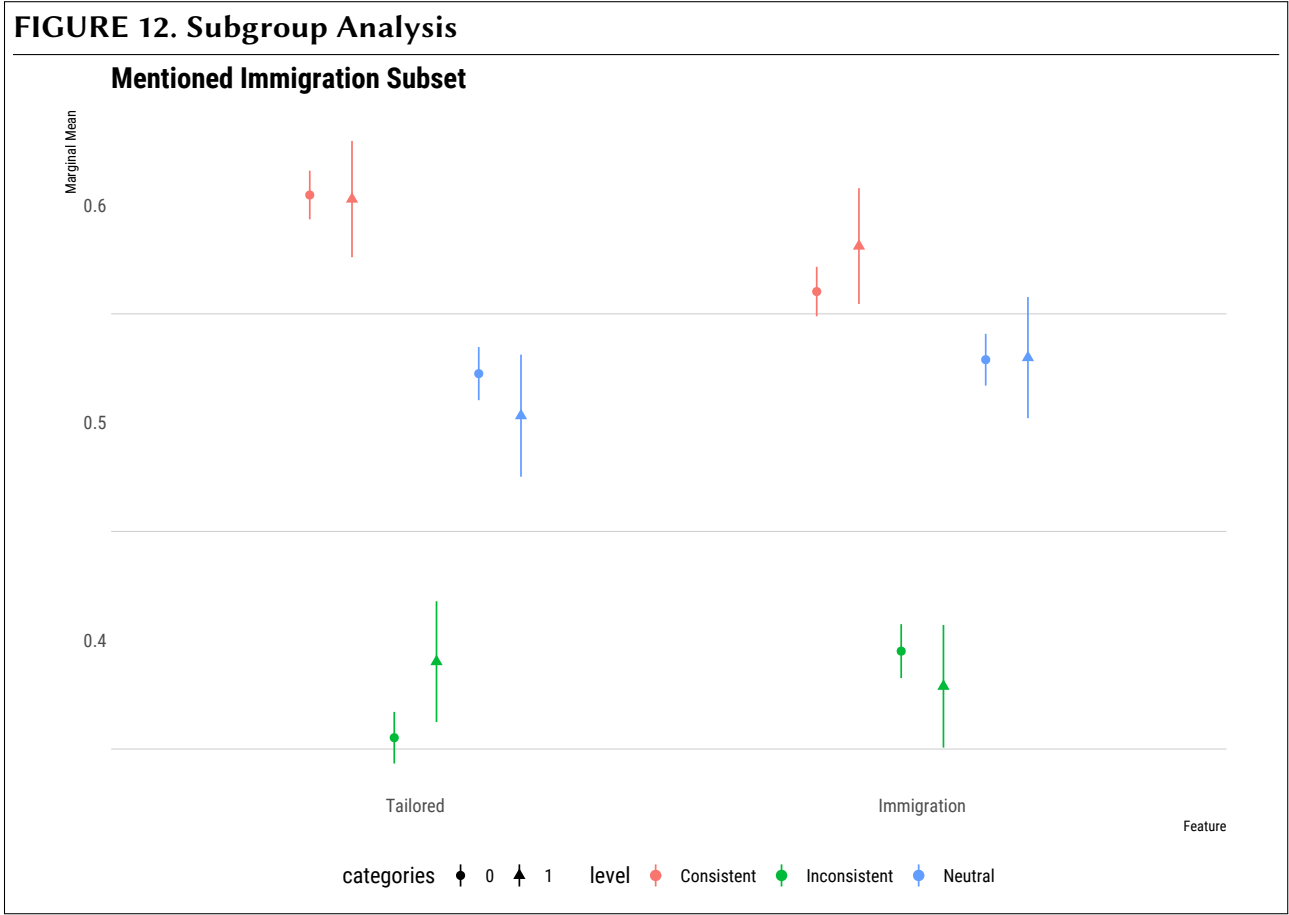
G. Attentiveness Findings

When conducting online surveys, attentiveness is a pressing concern that tends to bias effects toward zero due to treatment noncompliance. That is, attentiveness is unlikely to produce *larger* effects, and instead increases the likelihood of Type 2 errors. Still, I assess this assumption by evaluating if effects differ among a subset of respondents who passed a mock vignette check, a validated attentiveness measure that assesses the extent to which respondents pay attention to a pre-treatment vignette. Subsetting on this measure, I find that differences in AMCEs tend to be slightly larger than reported AMCEs, as expected.
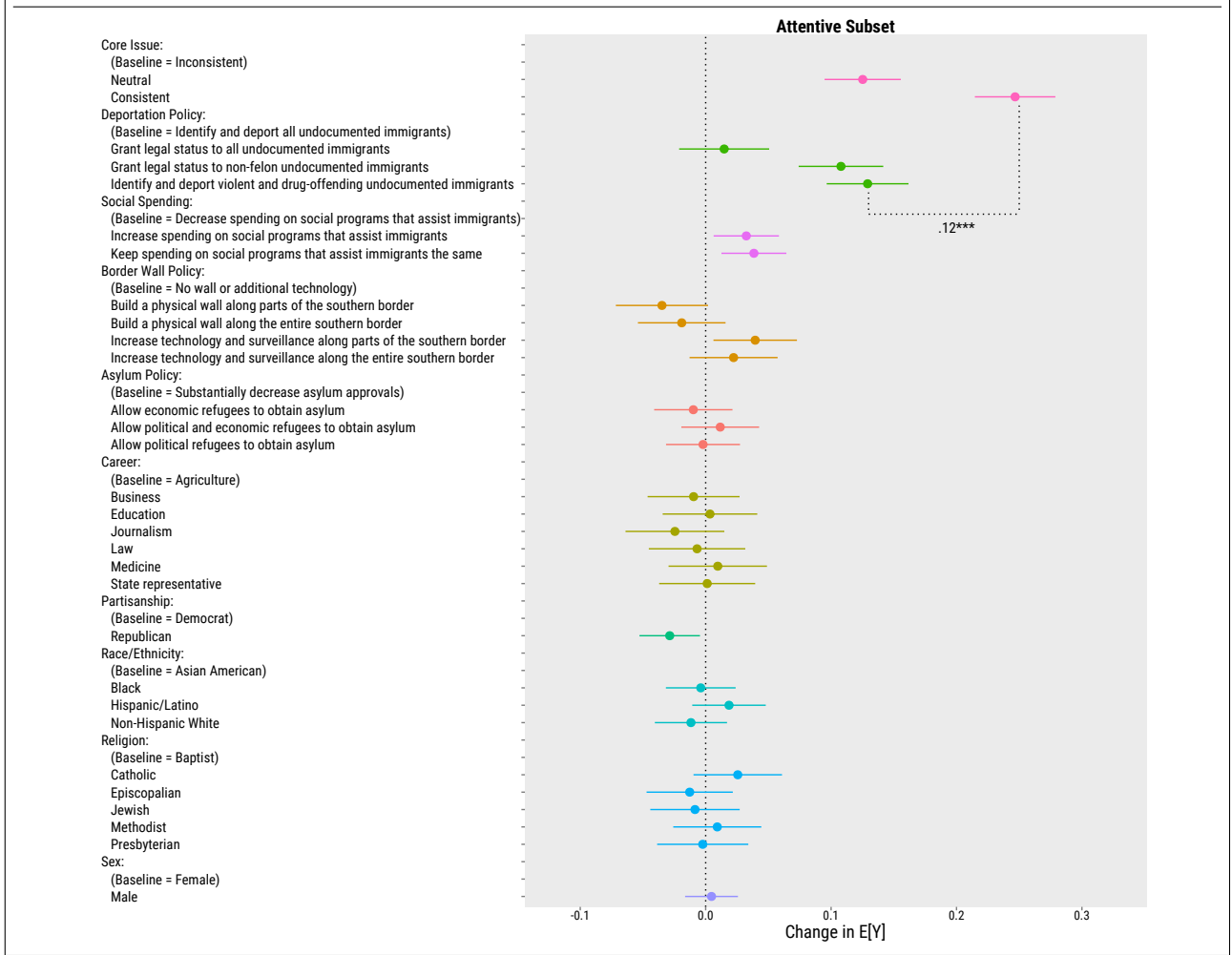
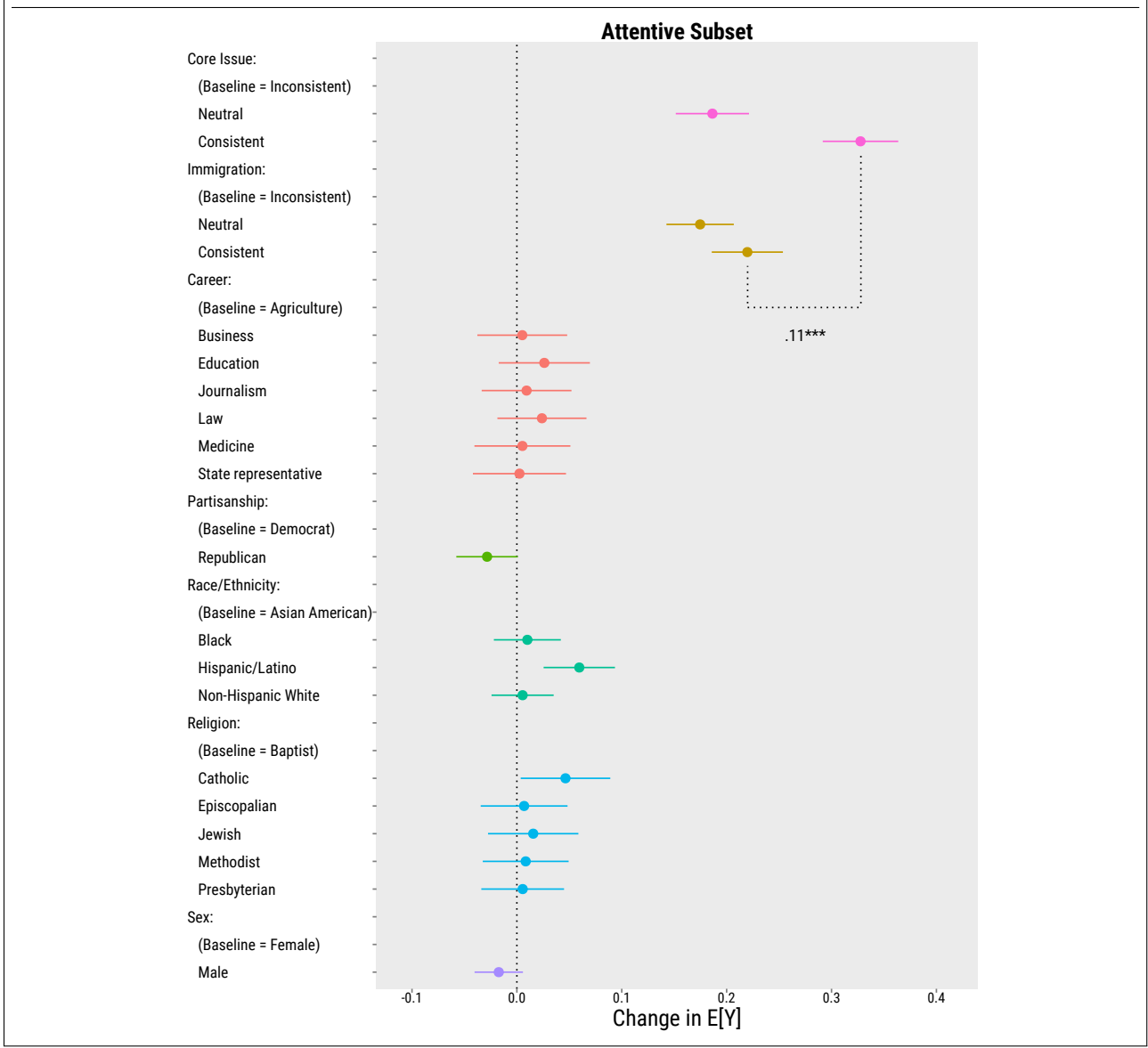

FIGURE 13. Subgroup Analysis (Experiment 1)

FIGURE 14. Subgroup Analysis (Experiment 2)

FIGURE 15. Pre-Analysis Plan (Study 1)

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Latino Issue Publics (2023) (#119983)

Created: 01/26/2023 02:49 PM (PT)

This is an anonymized copy (without author names) of the pre-registration. It was created by the author(s) to use during peer-review.
A non-anonymized version (containing author names) should be made available by the authors when the work it supports is made public.

1) Have any data been collected for this study already?
No, no data have been collected for this study yet.

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?
H1: Focusing on Latinos, do deeply held (non-immigration) issue positions receive a greater weight in candidate choice when compared to immigration?
H2: Are these effects conditional on factors such as linked fate or immigrant status?

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.
Candidate choice in a "bespoke conjoint setting" (Ryan and Ehlinger n.d.)

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?
A candidate choice conjoint that varies candidate positions/characteristics. Conjoint factors include positions on a deeply-held issue, immigration policy positions, age, sex, race/ethnicity, partisanship, career, veteran status, religion. Positions on the deeply-held issue will be taken from an open-ended question asking respondents to report a personally important issue. This information will be sent to the GPT-3 completion API to produce different positions on that issue on the fly. Every conjoint will include a factor defined by the issue mentioned in the open-ended question and positive, neutral, and negative candidate positions related to this issue. Candidate positions/characteristics will be randomly determined for the fixed factor levels. For the tailored issue, each candidate will be randomly assigned to a positive, negative, or neutral position related to the personally relevant issue.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.
I plan to estimate AMCEs for the aforementioned factors. I will assess the size of effects for the tailored issue vs. the immigration policy positions (and other candidate characteristics). I will also assess the difference in R-squared between models including/excluding the tailored issue and immigration policy positions to assess the degree to which these factors improve predictions of candidate choice. I also plan to conduct conditional analyses based on tertiles of linked fate, different immigration generation categories, and foreign-born versus native-born status for Latinos.

6) Describe exactly how outliers will be defined and handled, and your precise rule(s) for excluding observations.
The tailored conjoint design depends on legible open-ended input, given that this is used to populate the conjoint table. I will use a pre-trained classification model to filter out respondents who provide gibberish or nonsense responses. All of this will happen before the conjoint task.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the number will be determined.
1,000 Latinos

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., secondary analyses, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)
I also plan to use the open-ended responses to assess how often immigration is mentioned relative to other issues. I also plan to assess if effects are conditional on the participant and candidate having the same partisanship and whether it only emerges in cases where both candidates are of the same party. I also plan to conduct exploratory analyses that assess conditional relationships between the different factors.

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FIGURE 16. Pre-Analysis Plan (Study 2)

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Latino Issue Publics - Study 2 (2023) (#121383)

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1) Have any data been collected for this study already?
No, no data have been collected for this study yet.

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?
H1: Focusing on Latinos, do deeply held (non-immigration) issue positions receive a greater weight in candidate choice when compared to immigration?
H2: Are these effects conditional on factors such as linked fate or immigrant status?

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.
Candidate choice in a "bespoke conjoint setting" (Ryan and Ehlinger n.d.)

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?
A candidate choice conjoint that varies candidate positions/characteristics. Conjoint factors include tailored immigration and non-immigration issue positions, age, sex, race/ethnicity, partisanship, career, veteran status, and religion. Following Experiment 1, tailored issue positions will be taken from open-ended questions asking respondents about their policy preferences. This information will be sent to the GPT-3 completion API to produce different positions on the non-immigration and immigration-related topic on the fly (i.e., positive, neutral, and negative). Candidate positions/characteristics will be randomly determined with no constraints.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.
I plan to estimate AMCEs for the aforementioned factors. I will assess the size of effects for the tailored issue vs. tailored immigration positions (and other candidate characteristics). I will also assess the difference in R-squared between models including/excluding the tailored issue and tailored immigration policy positions to assess the degree to which these factors improve predictions of candidate choice. I also plan to conduct conditional analyses based on tertiles of linked fate, different immigration generation categories, and foreign-born versus native-born status for Latinos. I also plan to present marginal means for immigration and non-immigration issue positions via an interaction. Finally, I will compare the two sets of issues on traditional measures of issue importance using an ordinal item (i.e., "How important is the following issue/policy?") and binary outcome (i.e., "which issue/policy do you consider to be most important?").

6) Describe exactly how outliers will be defined and handled, and your precise rule(s) for excluding observations.
The tailored conjoint design depends on legible open-ended input, given that this is used to populate the conjoint table. I will use a pre-trained classification model to filter out respondents who provide gibberish or nonsense responses. All of this will happen before the conjoint task.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the number will be determined.
700 Latinos

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., secondary analyses, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)
I will report descriptive statistics regarding whether the GPT-3 topics reflect the content of the open-ended responses. I also plan to plot the distribution of issues mentioned in the open-ended task. To ensure that experimental factors are not repeated, those who write about immigration in the "core issue" task will be asked to write about a non-immigration issue. This will be flagged in Qualtrics. If there are enough respondents who mention immigration as their core issue (n>50), I will assess conditional effects for this group.

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