How Asians React to Discrimination Does Not Depend on Their Party Identification

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Abstract
How do individuals respond to discrimination against their group? The authors help answer this normatively important question by conducting a survey with a large, national, quota-based sample of 2,482 Asians living in the United States during December 2020. In the survey, the authors provide respondents with truthful information about the increasing prevalence of anti-Asian discrimination in the United States during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and ask them to write about what this makes them feel or think about life in America. Using automatic text analysis tools to analyze this rich, novel set of personal reflections, the authors show in this visualization that Asian reactions to discrimination do not meaningfully differ across partisan identification. These findings extend the large literature showing partisan differences in perceptions of racial discrimination and its effects by the general public and show at least one way in which partisan polarization does not influence American views.

Keywords
Asian American, AAPI, discrimination, partisanship, text analysis

Findings
Using a new automatic text analysis tool (Eshima, Imai, and Sasaki 2021) to analyze this rich, novel set of nearly 2,500 personal reflections, we show that Asian reactions to discrimination do not vary on the basis of party identification, in contrast to the literature that shows partisan differences in views about racial discrimination and its effects. We show that Asian reactions do not generally vary by substance (Figure 1) or by tone (Appendix). Importantly, respondents from all political backgrounds focus their responses primarily on prejudice and bias and spend little time talking about the potential political antecedents of this bias or the threats it poses to their individual security. In general, these findings depart significantly from the growing literature about how partisanship in America shapes a wide range of perceptions and policy preferences (Bisgaard and Slothuus 2018).

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Discussion

Anti-Asian discrimination has been on the rise throughout the United States since the COVID-19 pandemic began. In contrast to the large emerging literature about the influence of partisan affiliation on American perceptions, including perceptions of discrimination, our analyses show that Asians respond to these attacks similarly, no matter their political background. Collectively, our findings underscore that there are limits to the effects of partisanship in American life and that Asians across parties view the country much the same in light of increasing discrimination against their group. Future work should examine whether the differences we observe between our results and existing work on the relationship between party identification and perceptions of discrimination arise because we use a new approach or because we focus on the perceptions of Asians as opposed to other racial groups.

References

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