

Exploring Effective Digital Strategies to Combat Anti-Blackness in the Chinese-American Immigrant Community: A Survey Experiment

By Jinxia Niu October, 2024

Abstract

In order to find out the effective digital intervention to reduce the anti-Blackness disinformation and sentiments in the Chinese-American community, we conducted a survey experiment with a 4X1 factor design: 3 treatment groups where participants receive different formats of information trying to portray the Black community in a positive tone and aim to build solidarity between the Black and the Chinese-community, and a control group. After analyzing the 323 survey responses, we found that all treatment information showed a positive effect in reducing anti-Blackness: all treatment groups showed stronger support in addressing anti-Blackness, with the “interview”/storytelling content showing the strongest effect. The result underscores the significance of progressive digital engagement and highlights the importance of storytelling. However, we also found a “backfire” effect of providing alternative solutions for community safety. This warns us of a more cautious and indirect strategy needed in engaging the community on safety issues.

Background

Anti-Black narratives and sentiments have been proliferating in Chinese ethnic and social media amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Many false narratives and disinformation have erroneously pinned the blame on the African community for the surge in anti-Asian hate crimes and attacks. This trend is deeply concerning but sadly not new, as anti-Blackness has long been a prevalent issue in the Chinese-American community.

In my role as a digital engagement manager at Chinese for Affirmative Action(CAA), a civil rights organization, I have witnessed instances of anti-Blackness within our community's anti-Affirmative Action campaigns on Chinese messaging app WeChat even before the pandemic. Additionally, I have encountered numerous stories rooted in racial prejudice, both through social media sources and anecdotes shared by friends and colleagues.

As an organization dedicated to promoting racial and social justice, as well as multiracial democracy, it is imperative for me and my team to comprehend the underlying reasons for anti-Blackness in our community. Equally important is identifying effective interventions to mitigate it, particularly through initiatives aimed at dispelling negative stereotypes and fostering cross-cultural understanding via digital media and engagement platforms. Our ultimate goal is to foster solidarity between the African community and the Chinese-American community in progressive movements and campaigns.

Research questions

1. Why does the Chinese-American immigrant community harbor long-standing anti-Black sentiments? Does the dissemination of information by right-wing conservative ethnic media and social media regarding the African community contribute to this issue?

2. What messages or digital content are effective in reducing Anti-Blackness in the Chinese-American immigrant community?

I would like to conduct an online survey experiment to answer these questions.

First, I would like to survey the Chinese-immigrant community's media and social media usage, as well as their current attitudes towards the African community to understand why and where these anti-Black sentiments come from, is there a strong correlation of people who consume the right-wing conservative ethnic media and social media information and their level of anti-Blackness.

Second, I would like to conduct a survey experiment to test which message or digital content are effective in reducing Anti-Blackness in the Chinese-American immigrant community.

literature review

As a form of prejudice reduction, anti-Blackness reduction has also been studied with experiments in the past decades. Roni Porat, Chelsey S. Clark, and Donald P. Green's paper, ["Prejudice Reduction: Progress and Challenges" published in 2021 by Elizabeth Levy Paluck](#) gives an in depth review of the past decade's research on prejudice reduction. Particularly, the article reviews 418 experiments reported in 309 manuscripts from 2007 to 2019 to assess which approaches work best and why. The article summarizes and critically evaluates these recent contributions to the literature both

quantitatively and qualitatively. Our quantitative review uses meta-analysis to assess the extent to which interventions inspired by different theoretical approaches reduce prejudice. For example, how successful is cognitive or emotional training, contact, or social categorization? We consider intervention success with different targets of prejudice (e.g., groups defined by ethnicity, religion, sexuality, etc.) and ask to what extent success depends on different ways of gauging prejudice (e.g., explicit versus implicit attitudes) or on the time frame within which measurement occurs (e.g., immediately after exposure versus days or weeks later). Our study sample reveals recent trends in prejudice reduction research, such as the study of minor or light touch interventions and of synergistic theoretical tests.

It is important to note that “A largest group of studies involves some kind of cognitive or emotional training. These interventions, which train individuals to use thinking and emotion regulation strategies to fight off their personal prejudices, are tested in more than one-quarter of recent scholarly work. The emphasis on this type of work stands in contrast to interventions that attempt to provide information that breaks down negative stereotypes or promotes cross-cultural understanding, which have become relatively rare.”

[“Shooting the Messenger to Spite the Message? Exploring Reactions to Claims of Racial Bias”](#), by Jennifer R. Schultz¹ and Keith B. Maddox published in 2013 uses two experiments examining aspects of the communicator, message, and audience in producing evaluative backlash toward minorities who make claims of ongoing racial bias. In Experiment 1, participants evaluated a White or Black confederate who gave a speech expressing no claim, a mild claim, or an extreme claim of racial bias. Results indicated a race-specific evaluative backlash: Participants more negatively rated Black compared with White communicators, but only when the claim was extreme. Experiment 2 found that participants more negatively rated Black (vs. White) communicators when they used low-quality arguments, but this backlash was eliminated when Black communicators used high-quality arguments. Furthermore, participants who held stronger meritocracy beliefs and who heard low-quality arguments were more likely to evaluate Black communicators harshly. These findings clarify the conditions under which people from advantaged groups are more likely to recognize claims of racial bias as legitimate and respond favorably to the communicator. This article is helpful because it tested both the effect of message and messengers in reducing or increasing racial bias. It gives me the example of how a survey experiment can be designed to test and analyze the different impacts of messages and messengers in reducing anti-Blackness in the Chinese-American community.

[Ironic Effects of Antiprejudice Messages: How Motivational Interventions Can Reduce \(but Also Increase\) Prejudice](#) by Lisa Legault, Jennifer N. Gutsell, and Michael Inzlicht, published in 2011 uses survey experiments to understand if it is possible that some

prejudice-reduction policies and interventions result in the precise opposite of their intended effect—an increase in prejudice? The authors examined this question by exploring the impact of motivation-based prejudice-reduction interventions and assessing whether certain popular practices might in fact increase prejudice. In two experiments, participants received detailed information on, or were primed with, the goal of prejudice reduction; the information and primes either encouraged autonomous motivation to regulate prejudice or emphasized the societal requirement to control prejudice. Ironically, motivating people to reduce prejudice by emphasizing external control produced more explicit and implicit prejudice than did not intervene at all. Conversely, participants in whom autonomous motivation to regulate prejudice was induced displayed less explicit and implicit prejudice compared with no-treatment control participants. The article is helpful in both the way the survey experiments are designed and the alarming findings: I am also planning to develop interventions to reduce anti-Blackness prejudice. What are the roles of different motivations in my treatment messages? For example, is a message calling for Chinese and African solidarity counted as external motivation? And messages showcase the personal views of how important and even “cool” to reduce prejudice counted as internal motivation? How would the effect of these different treatments be impacted by the “motivation” angle?

[Do Survey Measures of Racial Prejudice Predict Racial Discrimination? Experimental Evidence on Anti-Black Discrimination.](#) K Peyton, GA Huber published in 2018 examines the predictive power of both measures in explaining anti-black discrimination. In Study 1 we obtain a behavioral measure of racial discrimination using the Ultimatum Game (UG). We find that white responders engaged in costly discrimination against black proposers by rejecting offers they would otherwise accept from whites. Overt prejudice predicts which whites discriminate whereas symbolic racism does not. In Study 2, white third-party observers evaluate intergroup interactions in the UG, and overt prejudice predicts racially biased evaluations of the fairness of resource distributions made by black proposers to white responders, but symbolic racism does not. The article is interesting because it is directly trying to explain the different racial dynamics in anti-Black discrimination or prejudice. It gives me deeper insights of why the long-standing anti-Blackness sentiments and stereotypes exist in the Chinese-American community: it is connected also with the overt bias and discrimination towards Black community in U.S. history.

[Effects of Anti-Black Political Messages on Self-Esteem, published online by Cambridge University Press in 2015.](#) The study examines how anti-Black political rhetoric affects race-specific collective self-esteem (R-CSE) and internal political efficacy among African-Americans and Whites. Results from an experiment in which subjects received an anti-Black stereotype-accentuating message attributed to either a political figure or

an “ordinary American,” or no message at all, demonstrate that the political message undermined how African–Americans regard their own racial group, activated beliefs about how others regard African–Americans as a predictor of how African–Americans regard their own racial group, and undermined internal political efficacy. For Whites, the results demonstrate that the political message moderated the relationship between how they regard their own racial group and beliefs about how others regard their racial group, though the political message did not significantly increase or decrease racial group-regard or political efficacy overall. These results provide empirical confirmation of the role that government and politics can play in self-esteem. The study is helpful because it provides a good example of how to design experiments to test different messages and messengers’s impact, and it also explored the anti-Black political rhetoric’s role and impact on different communities. It makes me think of what the Asian Americans “model minority” stereotype’s impact on both the Chinese-American community and the African community is, and ways of how to incorporate this into my treatment design.

Experimental design

A 4X1 factor experimental design, 4 total groups, [3 test groups and 1 control group](#).

The three test groups will be three different types of messages that aims at reducing Anti-Blackness with different angles:

- Treatment 1: A fact-checking message developed by a Chinese immigrant to clarify the disinformation related to anti-Blackness
- Treatment 2: An interview with a Black youth who led the “anti-Asian Hate” march, also a story to explain the history and culture gaps between the two communities and to foster racial solidarity
- Treatment 3: A message from the non-profit Asian American organization, Coalition for Community Safety and Justice (CCSJ) titled “Black communities still face unfair mass incarceration, and community safety requires alternative solutions”.

These treatments will be randomly received by three groups of participants.

The **independent variables** in my survey experiment are the three different types of treatment messages designed to reduce anti-Blackness.

The **dependent variable** will be designed to ask the participants’s attitudes towards the Black community after receiving the treatment messages. The main questions and scales are as below:

Q. How do you feel about the government’s efforts to address discrimination against Black Americans?

- ☐ The government should do more
- ☐ The government response should stay the same
- ☐ The government should do less
- ☐ I don't know

Q. How much would you support or oppose new funding for youth development programs for youth from racial minorities, including Asian and Black youth, in your county?

- ☐ Strongly support new funding
- ☐ Somewhat support new funding
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose new funding
- ☐ Somewhat oppose new funding
- ☐ Strongly oppose new funding
- ☐ I don't know

Hypothesis

My primary hypothesis posits that all treatments (different formats of digital content) will yield a positive effect in reducing anti-Blackness sentiments compared to the control group. This implies that the digital content provided to the treatment groups will be positively associated with increased levels of support for government efforts to address discrimination against Black Americans, as well as greater support for funding directed towards the Black community.

My secondary hypothesis is that the storytelling treatment message will exert a stronger positive effect than the other two treatment messages. This is because it delves beyond the superficial level of anti-Blackness, addressing its root causes such as historical and cultural disparities. Additionally, by portraying surprising narratives of Black individuals supporting and aiding the Asian community, this treatment is likely to resonate more deeply with community members, thus amplifying its impact.

Data collection

The [Qualtrics survey](#) is available in English, traditional Chinese and Simplified Chinese and was launched on April 15, 2024.

Given that our target survey participants are primarily Chinese-Americans who engage with Chinese-language news, we promoted the survey through various channels. These include advertising in Chinese ethnic media such as World Journal (both web and print ads) and Sing Tao (web ads), as well as utilizing digital social media platforms like WeChat (through CAA affiliated accounts and other public accounts). Since our survey ads predominantly targeted media platforms in San Francisco (with only two WeChat

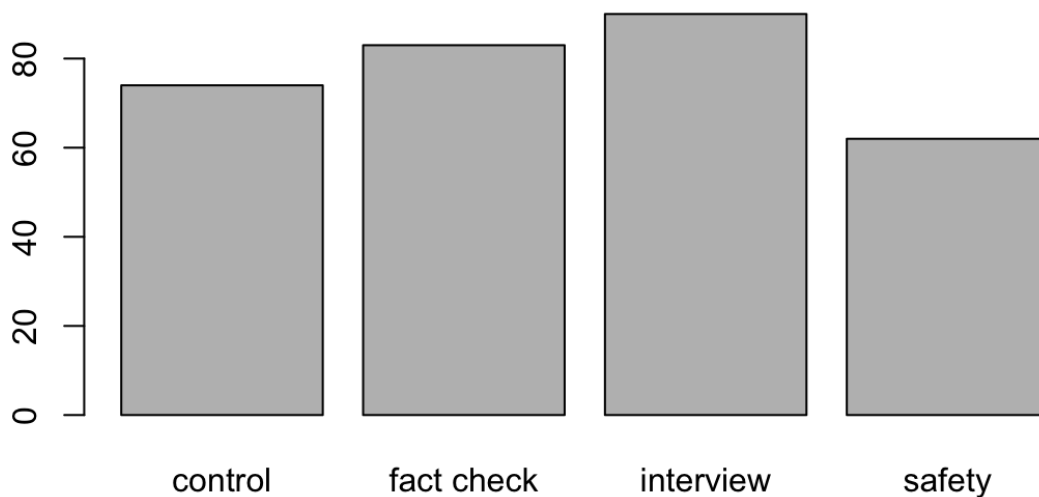
ads targeting Los Angeles and New York City for one day), it's anticipated that the majority of the data will originate from the Chinese-American community in San Francisco.

As of June 30, 2024 (final data), we have accumulated a total of 575 survey responses, with the number of "real responses" (excluding previews, tests, and other non-valid responses) amounting to 341.

Data Analysis & Results

Sample

Of the 341 valid survey responses, 32 participants dropped the survey experiment section. This left 74 subjects in the control group, 83 subjects in the fact-checking content groups, 90 in the interview content group, 62 in the “community safety solution” content group.



Among the valid sample subjects, there are 196 female participants, which is more than twice the number of male participants, totaling 76.

63% of the sample use Cantonese as their primary language, 31% use Mandarin. Additionally, 94% of the sample were not born in the U.S., and 90% are relatively new immigrants, having lived in the U.S. for 4-10 years. Furthermore, 59% of the valid sample do not possess a college degree.

The sample shows a high representation of low-income individuals: 33%(82 samples) report a household income of less than \$50,000 a year, with nearly 27% (68 samples) reporting a yearly household income below \$25,000.

The majority of the sample comprises middle-aged or elderly individuals, with 49% falling between the ages of 35-54 and 30% between the ages of 55-75+.

Additional details about the full sample and each subgroup can be found in the table below.

1.1. Gender

Response	Count	Percent	valid_percent
Man	76	22.3%	0.27536232
Other	4	1.2%	0.01449275
Woman	196	57.5%	0.71014493
	65	19.1%	

1.2. Language

Response	Count	Percent	valid_percent
Cantonese	174	51%	0.63503650
English	15	4.4%	0.05474453
Mandarin	85	24.9%	0.31021898
	67	19.6%	

1.3. USborn

Response	Count	Percent	valid_percent
Confidential	7	2.1%	0.02464789

No	267	78.3%	0.94014085
Yes	10	2.9%	0.03521127
	57	16.7%	

1.4. YearsinUS

Response	Count	Percent	valid_percent
0-4	21	6.2%	0.07664234
10-30	7	2.1%	0.02554745
4-10	246	72.1%	0.89781022
	67	19.6%	

1.5. Education

Response	Count	Percent	valid_percent
College degree	94	27.6%	0.4051724
No college degree	138	40.5%	0.5948276
	109	32%	

1.6. Income

Response	Count	Percent	valid_percent
\$100,000-250,000	45	13.2%	0.18218623
\$25,000-\$50,000	82	24%	0.33198381
\$50,000-\$100,000	44	12.9%	0.17813765
less than \$25,000	68	19.9%	0.27530364
more than 250K	8	2.3%	0.03238866
	94	27.6%	

1.7. Age

Response	Count	Percent
18-34	72	21.1%
35-54	169	49.6%
55-75+	100	29.3%

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of sample

Balance Test

I performed Pearson's Chi-squared test to analyze the distribution of different age groups among the four experimental groups. The resulting p-value of 0.4304 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in age distribution between our groups.

Similarly, Pearson's Chi-squared test was conducted to assess the gender distribution across the experimental groups, yielding a p-value of 0.6239. This suggests that there is also no statistically significant difference in gender distribution between our groups.

Chinese media usage and CAA's Chinese Digital Engagement platforms usage analysis

Out of the 341 participants, YouTube and WeChat are the most frequently chosen news source, 17.3% and 16.3%. See Figure 2 below.

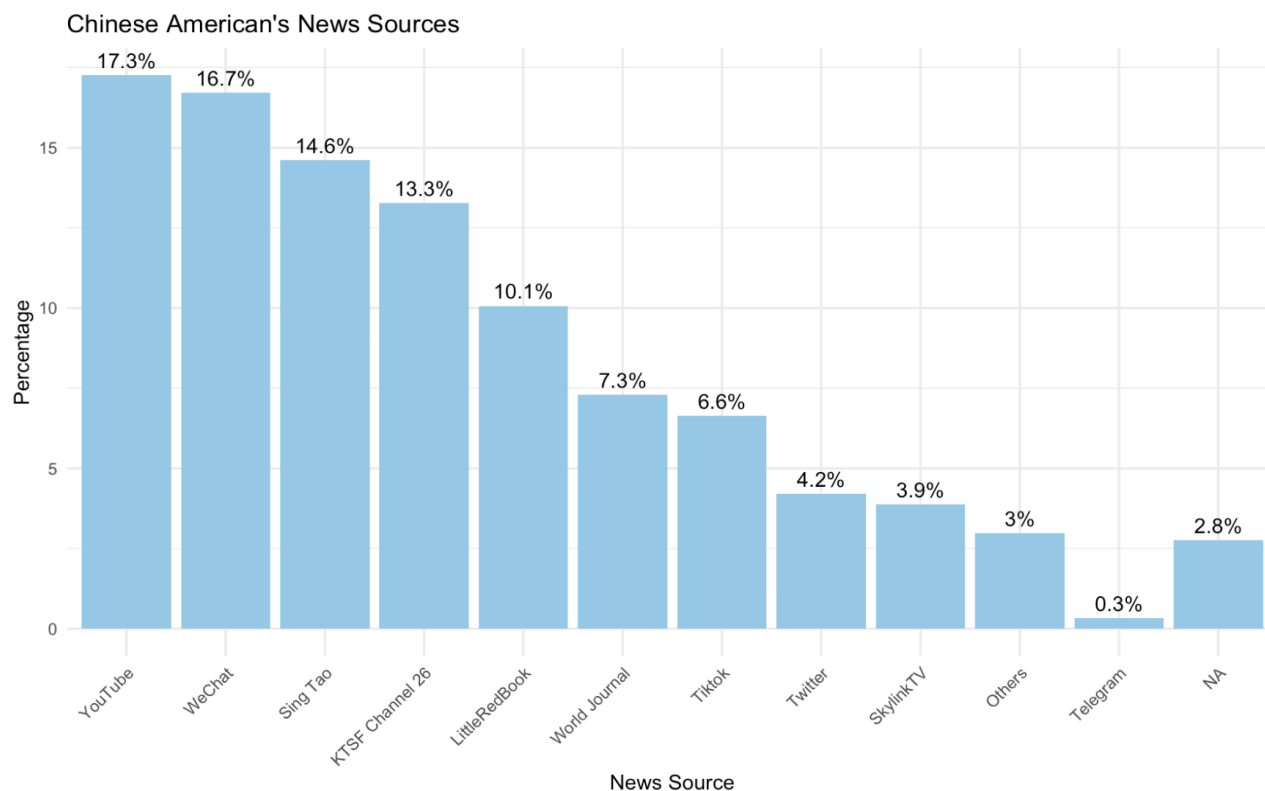


Figure 2: Chinese-American's News Sources

Regarding awareness and usage of CAA's affiliated Chinese Digital Engagement (CDE)'s platforms, nearly 28.9% of the sample had never heard of us. Among the other near 70% who were aware of us, the majority had heard of the CAA WeChat public account, followed by CAC WeChat, JusticePatch and Piyaoba. See in figure 3.

Among the people who have heard of Chinese Digital Engagement (CDE)'s platforms, more than 51.4 % of them know our platform through WeChat, followed by 25.9% heard of our platform through friends. And 94% of them think our platform is helpful. See details in figure 4 and figure 5.

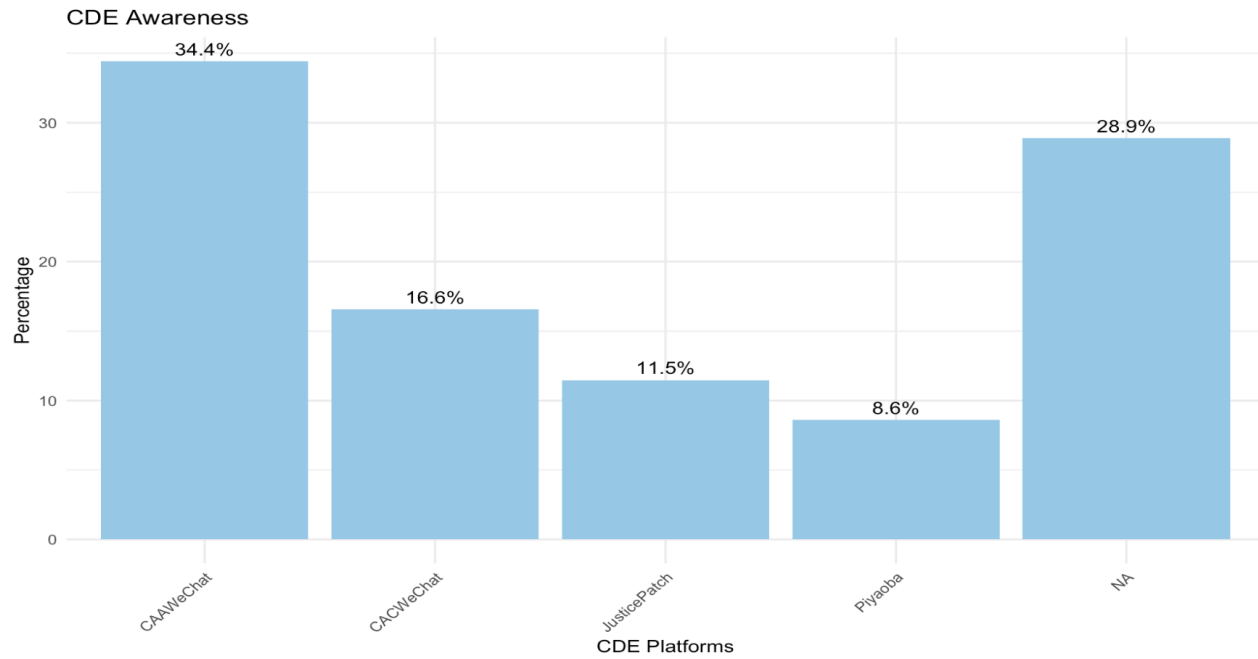


Figure 3: Chinese Digital Engagement Platforms awareness

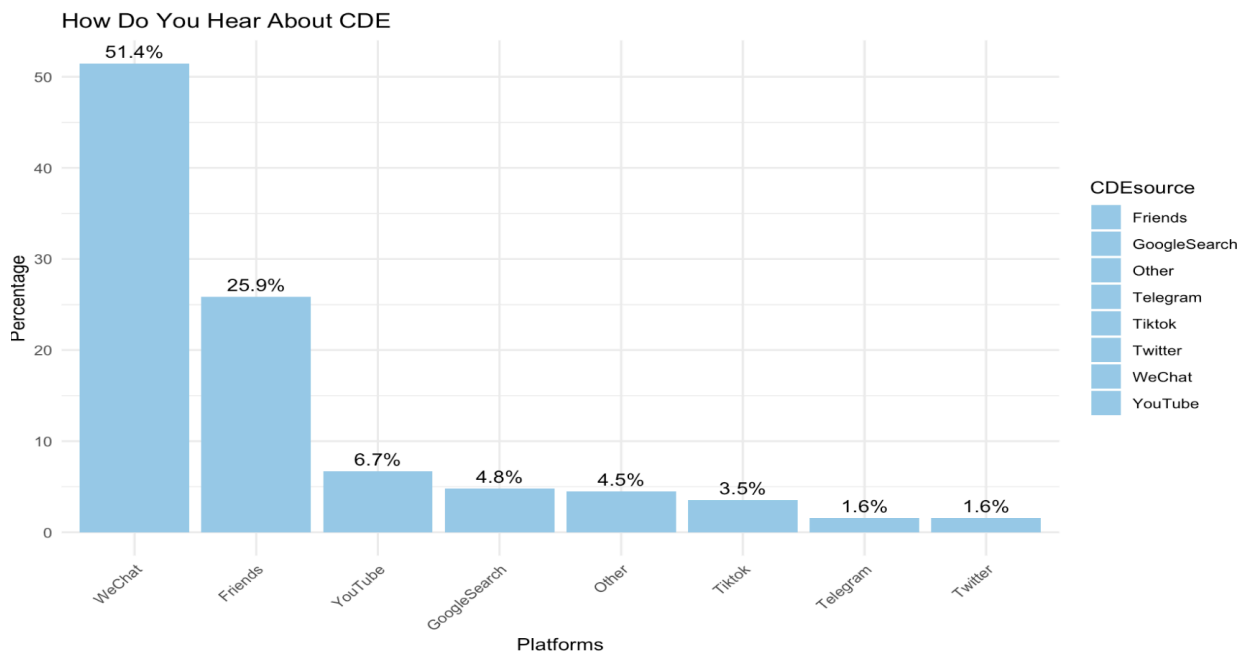


Figure 5: Do you think CDE helpful

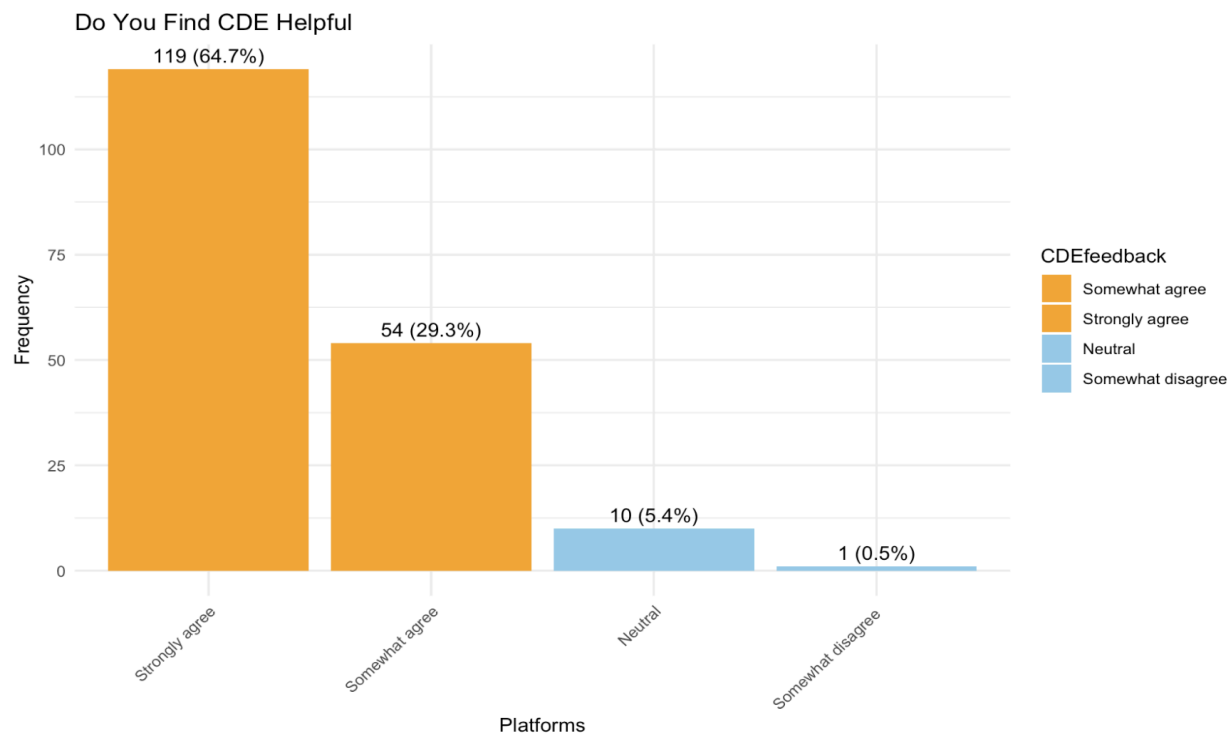


Figure 5: Feedback of Chinese Digital Engagement Platforms

[CDE survey feedback](#)

Chinese-American's opinions and beliefs towards community safety and Black community

We would like to establish the "baseline" of our community's attitudes towards community safety, which is closely linked to issues of anti-Blackness. Before conducting our survey experiment on interventions against anti-Blackness, it's crucial to gauge the level of anti-Blackness within our community. However, crafting appropriate survey questions to measure these aspects is challenging. We recognize that our current set of questions has limitations, such as the ambiguity in asking whether "Asians and Black share the same values" without defining "values," potentially leading to confusion and inaccurate responses.

It is still important to conduct these surveys because we also would like to have a “temperature check” of people’s overall attitudes and try to find if there is a correlation between their attitudes and their media usage.

According to Figure 6 below, **the top two surveyed solutions for community safety are "Harsher punishment"(22.4%), "Strict gun law(18.6)" and "Harsher punishment(15.9%)".**

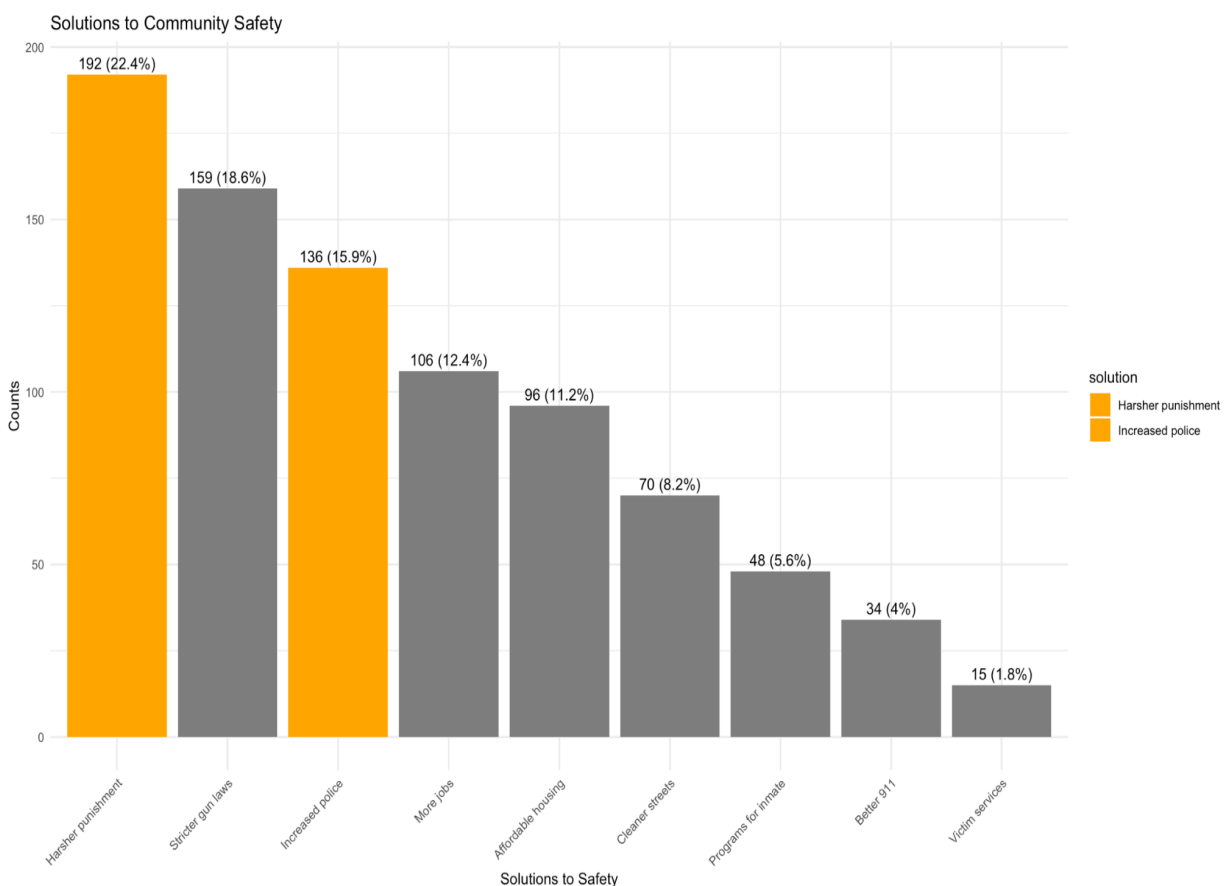


Figure 6: Chinese-American’s solution to community safety

When asked if Asians and Black share common values, nearly 52% of the sample reported either somewhat disagree (20%), strongly disagree (13%) or Neutral (19.5%) ,

while only 22% of the sample reported somewhat agree, and 19% reported strongly agree. See details in Figure 7.

Although this survey question has its limitations, the results still indicate a strong disagreement among Chinese-Americans with the Black community.

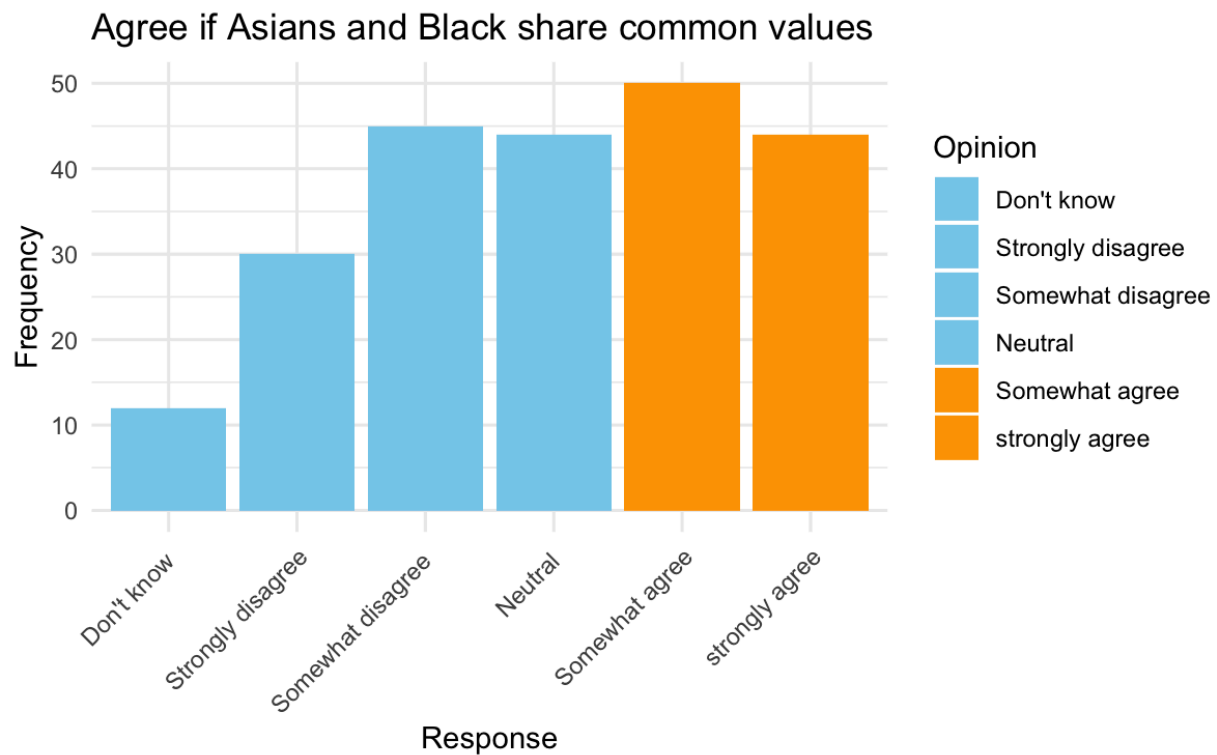


Figure 7: If Asians and Black share common value

Survey experiment result/Average Treatment Effect Analysis

While the pre-experiment survey results of measurement of anti-Blackness shows Chinese-Americans are overall conservative and nearly half of them don't think Asians and Blacks share common values, **the post-experiment survey shows quite a sharp increase in terms of supporting Black community.**

When asked of the dependent variable question: “How do you feel about the government’s responsibility to address discrimination against Black Americans” after the survey experiment, 54.51% of valid 210 responses choose “the Government should do more”, 17% responded with “Government should do the same” and about 11% respond with “Government should do less”. See figure 8 below.

Similarly, when asked the dependent variable question: “How much would you support or oppose new funding for youth development programs for youth from racial minorities, including Asian and Black youth, in your county?” 48% showed “strongly support” and 32% showed “somewhat support”. See figure 9 below.

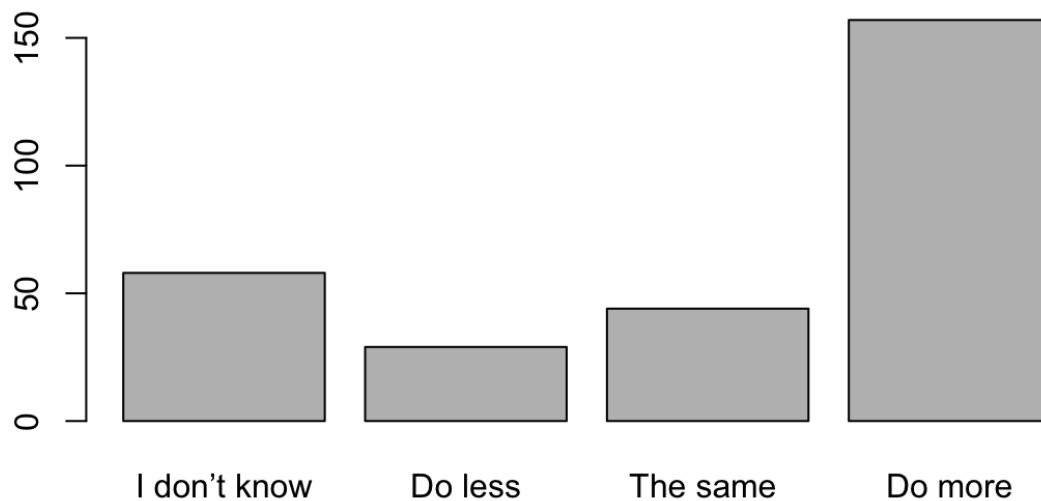


Figure 8: Post-survey experiment measurement of dependent variable 1: “How do you feel about the government’s responsibility to address discrimination against Black Americans”

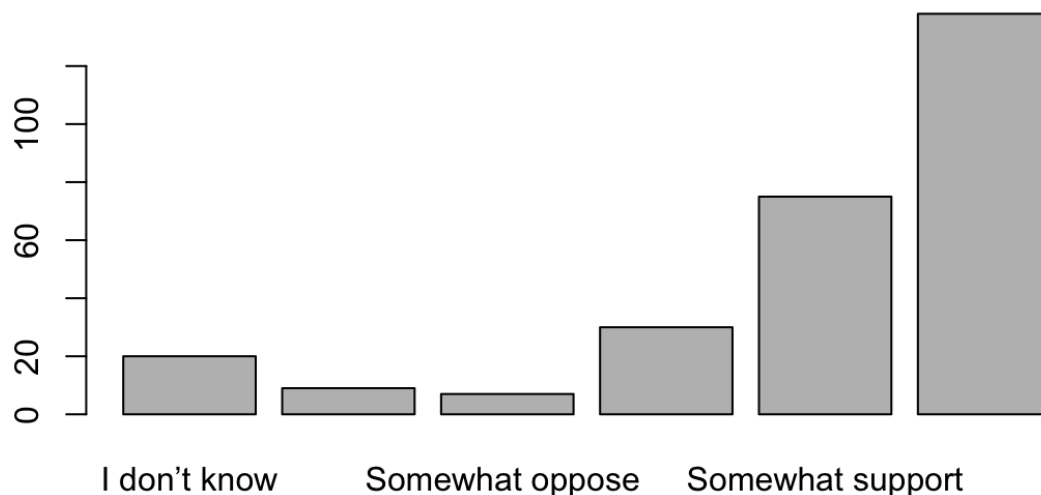


Figure 9: Post-survey experiment measurement of dependent variable 2: "How much would you support or oppose new funding for youth development programs for youth from racial minorities, including Asian and Black youth, in your county?"

It seems that our treatments/interventions are effective! To precisely determine the average treatment effect across different treatment groups, I conducted a linear regression model using the treatment groups and the two primary dependent variables. The first regression table examines the dependent variable "support level for whether the Government should do more to address anti-Blackness" across different groups (refer to Figure 10 below). Additionally, visualizing the average treatment effect with confidence intervals (see Figure 11 below) reveals two crucial findings:

treatment_group	Predicted	95% CI
interview	3.06	2.80, 3.31
control	2.79	2.50, 3.08
fact check	3.13	2.86, 3.39

Figure 10: Regression results of treatment effect between different groups of if support government should do more to address anti-Black

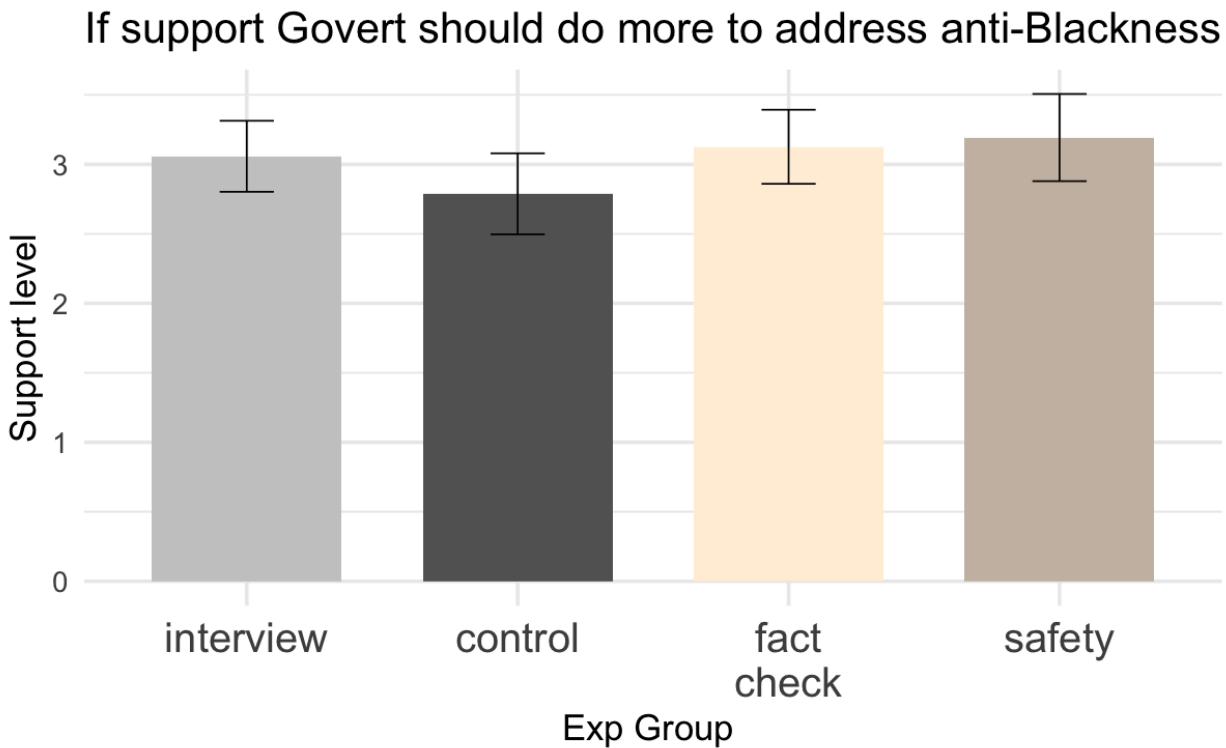


Figure 11: Visualized average treatment effect with confidence interval levers of if support address anti-Black

1. Compared with the control group, where participants merely read a message about climate change, all three treatment groups' content demonstrated a positive impact in increasing the community's support for the government's efforts to address anti-Blackness. This underscores the significance of progressive digital engagement in addressing anti-Blackness, whether the digital content takes the form of fact-checking to debunk disinformation within the Black community or storytelling aimed at fostering solidarity between Asian and Black communities.

2. Among the various treatment groups, the "community safety" group showed the "best result". Followed by the "community safety solution" treatment group and the fact-checking treatment and the interview group.

Let's check if the results are consistent with a different dependent variable: "How much would you support or oppose new funding for youth development programs for youth from racial minorities, including Asian and Black youth, in your county? Similar methods were performed to get the different treatment effect between different groups:

Figure 12: Regression results of treatment effect between different groups of if support funding to minority group, including Asian and Black community

treatment_group	Predicted	95% CI
interview	4.98	4.66, 5.29
control	4.91	4.55, 5.27
fact check	5.09	4.76, 5.42
safety	4.78	4.39, 5.17

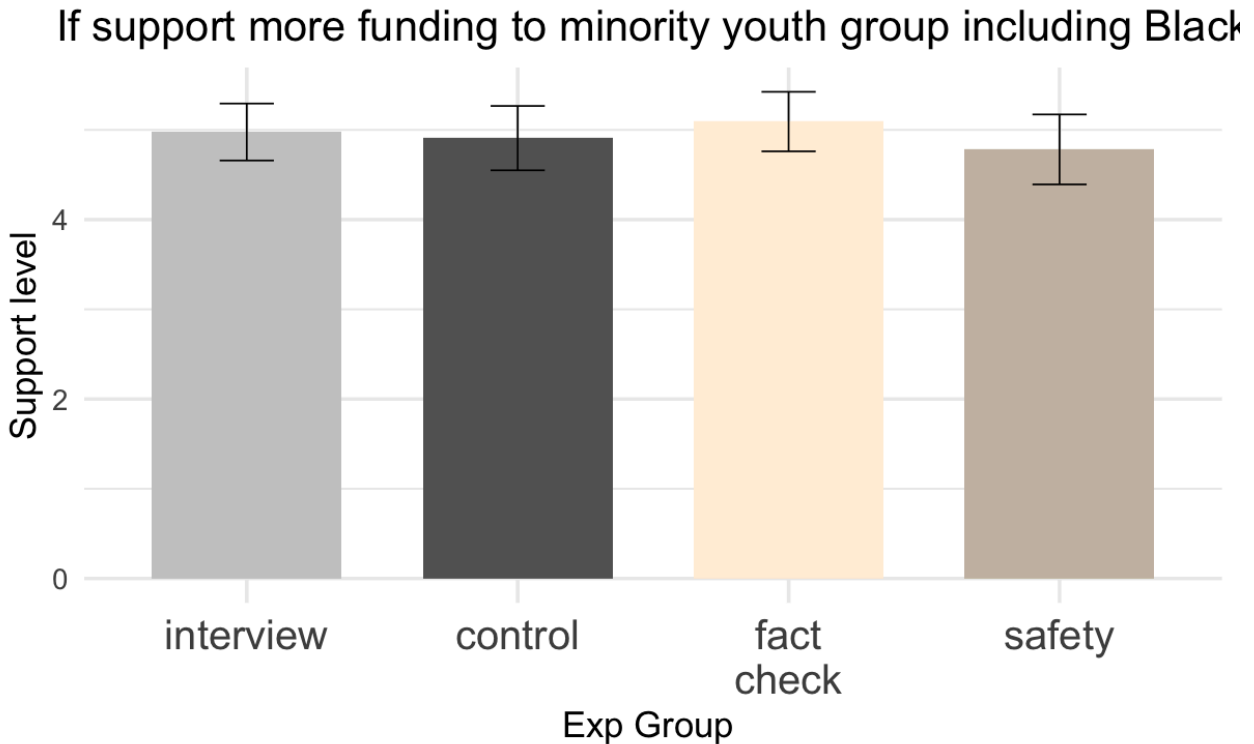


Figure 13: Visualized average treatment effect with confidence interval levels with support funding to minority groups

From the above results, we observe a significant difference:

Both the "interview" and "fact-check" treatment groups demonstrated a positive effect in changing community members' attitudes toward supporting increased funding for minority groups, including Asian and Black communities.

Conversely, the "community safety solution" treatment group displayed a backfire effect: following receipt of this treatment/message, support levels dropped compared to the control group.

What happened? One evident factor is that the "community safety" treatment group received a message from the non-profit Asian American organization, Coalition for Community Safety and Justice (CCSJ), entitled "Black communities still face unfair mass incarceration, and community safety requires alternative solutions" ([see original message here](#)). However, in our pre-survey, when asked about their preferred solutions for community safety, 15.9% of respondents advocated for "Increased police presence," while 22.4% favored "Harsher punishment", meaning nearly 40% tended to approve "tough" solutions.

Although among alternative solutions such as stricter gun laws(18.6%), more jobs (12.4%), affordable housing (11.2%), improved employment opportunities.

Basically, our survey participants just disagreed with the “community safety” treatment message, and they expressed this disagreement with saying no to increasing funding to minority groups including Black youth, even with also saying no more fundings to Asian youth. And this could also be just another reflection of deeply rooted anti-Blackness among the Chinese-American community.

Conditional Treatment Effect Analysis

Could the treatment effects of different groups be influenced by age? In the Chinese-American community, there's a common belief that first-generation older immigrants tend to be more conservative, while second-generation or younger immigrants lean towards progressivism. How does age factor into shaping the treatment effects observed in various groups?

After conducting an interaction regression model between age and the different treatment groups to predict their combined effect on people's support levels regarding whether the government should do more to address anti-Blackness, the results indicate significant variability in the role of age across different treatment groups, as illustrated in Figure 14 below.

Contrary to a simple "young people are more progressive" assumption, the findings reveal nuanced patterns. For instance, in control group, young people are in general more progressive. In the control and fact-checking groups and community safety group, individuals aged 18-24 exhibited lower support for addressing anti-Blackness, only interview groups shows more progressive.

However, individuals aged 35-54, representing the middle age bracket, demonstrated higher levels of support in fact-check and safety groups. It's worth noting that this could be influenced by the larger sample size within this age group.

And 55-75+ age group is overall more “conservative” than the 35-54 groups.

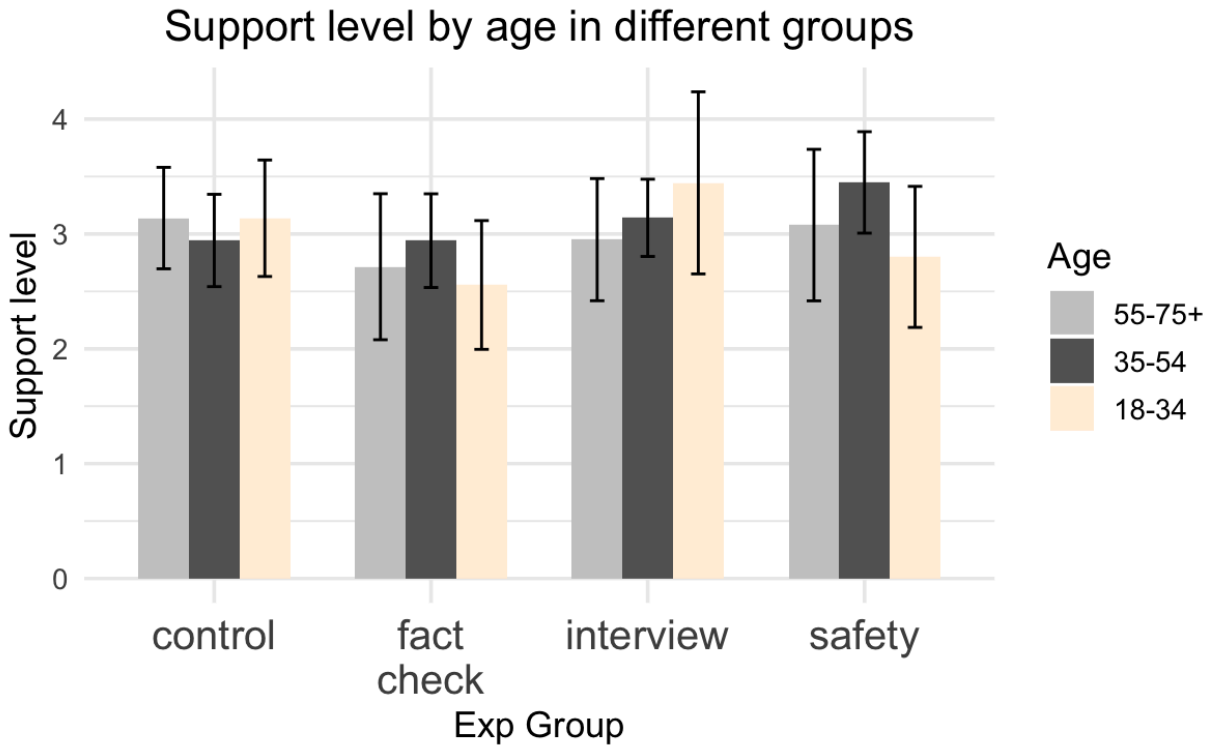


Figure 14: Interaction result with age and treatment group with dependent variable 1: if support government should do more to address anti-Black

Conclusion & Discussion

In analyzing the most effective digital engagement strategy for reducing anti-Blackness in the Chinese-American community, our survey experiment demonstrates the efficacy of using interviews, fact-checks and research of community safety to share personal stories aimed at fostering solidarity between the Black and Chinese communities.

However, the observed "backfire" effect associated with presenting alternative solutions to community safety, as opposed to advocating for increased policing and harsher punishment—Treatment 3: "Black communities still face unfair mass incarceration, and community safety requires alternative solutions"—highlights the challenge of directly engaging a community entrenched in negative stereotypes and traditional views on safety measures. This suggests the need for sustained community education efforts to gradually dismantle prejudices and foster acceptance of new ideas.

Further analysis is warranted to delve into the nuances of the experimental results. For instance, exploring the pre-survey "baseline" attitudes toward the Black community across different groups could shed light on their influence on post-survey measurements. Additionally, the formulation of dependent variable questions may impact responses; for example, a decline in support for funding Black youth programs could be linked to negative perceptions or disapproval of reparations proposals for the Black community in San Francisco and California.