

# An Investigation of Chinese People's Attitudes Toward Black People

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**Abstract.** The present study investigated implicit racial bias among Chinese people toward Black people. To address this question, we used implicit association test (IAT) among 44 Chinese adults. The results suggested that Chinese people do not have racial bias against Black people. The investigation contributed to the study of implicit method and racial bias and point to the future work to further assess individual difference in racial bias.

**Keywords:** Implicit Association Test; Implicit Racial Attitude; Chinese; Black.

## 1. Introduction

As China becomes powerful and prosperous economically, China begins to establish diplomatic relations with many countries in the world. Many foreigners intend to work in China and try to blend in with Chinese culture. However, some foreigners' lives are hard. They need to tolerate discrimination from the Chinese. For example, in Guangzhou, a McDonald's displays a laminated paper sign with the words 'black people are not allowed to enter (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/mcdonald-s-apologizes-after-restaurant-china-bans-black-people-n1184616>). Also, a black woman is denied entry into a shopping center. Moreover, forcibly evicted from their apartments, African migrants are stranded on the streets. It is exceedingly obvious that racial discrimination exists among Chinese. However, the Chinese do not express racial discrimination in their explicit attitude. They would show kindness and a positive attitude toward foreigners with different skin colors even though their implicit attitude is opposite from their expressions.

In psychology, racial attitudes are divided into two types: explicit attitude and implicit attitude. An explicit attitude is a preference or opinion that people express intuitively. Implicit attitudes are some actions or decisions that performers may not be aware of and it is a kind of subconscious evaluation (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Thus, what people expressed does not exactly equal what they truly think. Since existing literature exclusively used explicit methods, less is known about their implicit attitudes, this article hopes to be further implemented in implicit measures.

In the literature of implicit bias, several measurements have been widely used. One of the most used is the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald et al., 1998). The IAT attempts to measure implicit attitudes by measuring potential automatic assessments. Therefore, the intent of IAT is like cognitive priming procedures used to measure automatic effect or attitudes (Bargh, Chaiken, Gollwitzer, & Pratto, 1992; Fazio, Sanbonmatsu, Powell, & Kardes, 1986; Fazio, 1993; Greenwald, Klinger, & Liu, 1989; Perdue, Dovidio, Gurtman, & Tyler, 1990; Perdue & Gurtman, 1990). We will focus on the result of the first combined task and the reversed combined task, by comparing the accuracy and response time of these two blocks, we may conclude the implicit attitude. IAT is widely used in many fields, including not only race but also gender, religion, sexuality (Charlesworth and Banaji, 2021).

Implicit biases have a wide range of personal and social responsibilities in all areas of human life, including politics, healthcare, education, finance, employment, justice, and even dating (Chugh, 2004). Based on the finding of Dunham, Baron, and Carey (2011), minimal group phenomenon exists in children, and children are more likely to remember the positive actions of the character from the in-group and the negative behaviors of the person from the out-group (Dunham, Baron, and Carey, 2011). The result illustrates that minority are being discriminated seriously and the behavior starts from children. Specifically, implicit racial biases are one of the most significant and influential field among implicit biases.

Surprisingly, implicit racial bias develops quite early. According to the literature in child development by Qian, Quinn, Fu, Heyman, Messi and Lee (2016), the result of the IAT test provide

evidence for the implicit racial biases that Chinese children begin to have racial biases of favoring themselves as early as 3 years old, and the biases tend to favor whites rather than blacks as adults (Qian et al, 2016). This result also corresponds to the literature of Charlesworth and Banaji (2021) that children are usually biased towards their race and they will develop stereotypes about the traits and qualities of different racial groups (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2021).

Taken together, we aimed to examine the development of implicit racial attitudes among Chinese toward Black people. We hypothesized Chinese people would show implicit racial attitude against Black people.

## 2. Method

**Participants.** Forty-four Chinese were selected to participate in the study. All participants were currently living and working in China, with the age of 30-50 years old, and all individuals had a college degree or above. The survey was implemented in Beijing China. Eight participants were excluded because their accuracy rate is lower than 80%, and the response time is longer than 10,000 milliseconds.

**Measures.** To investigate the development of implicit racial attitudes among Chinese, we used the Implicit Association Test (IAT, Greenwald et al., 1998). Implicit attitudes are some actions or decisions that performers may not aware of and it is a kind of subconscious evaluation (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). IAT includes 7 blocks, with 20 to 40 trials in each block. The procedure includes: (a) initial target concept, (b) evaluative attribute, (c) first combined task, (d) reversed target-concept, and (e) reversed combined task (Greenwald & Banaji, 1998).

In order to investigate the development of implicit racial attitudes among Chinese, 7 blocks of Implicit association test were conducted. In the IAT, participants were asked to classify a word or an image of a face into different categories, positive/negative and Chinese/Black. The investigation includes 10 Chinese faces, 10 Black faces, 10 negative words, and 10 positive words. In block 1,2 and 5, two categories are in each block. Participants were required to classify the item into those two categories. In the block 3,4,6 and 7, one category will associate with another to form a big category. Then, participants can decide the word or face belong to which big category. Each category or big category will have a response key, A/L. Participants need to complete the entire test as soon as possible. The tests were sent out through WeChat and people can finish the questions on laptops.

Consistent with previous literature (Greenwald et al., 1998), we analyzed participants' response time and accuracy using SPSS Statistics.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Descriptive Results

The mean accuracy for "congruent" block where participants were asked to associate positive words with Chinese and negative words with Blacks is 0.97,  $SD = 1.25$ , and for "incongruent" block where participants were asked to associate negative words with Chinese and positive words with Blacks is 1.36,  $SD = 1.38$ .

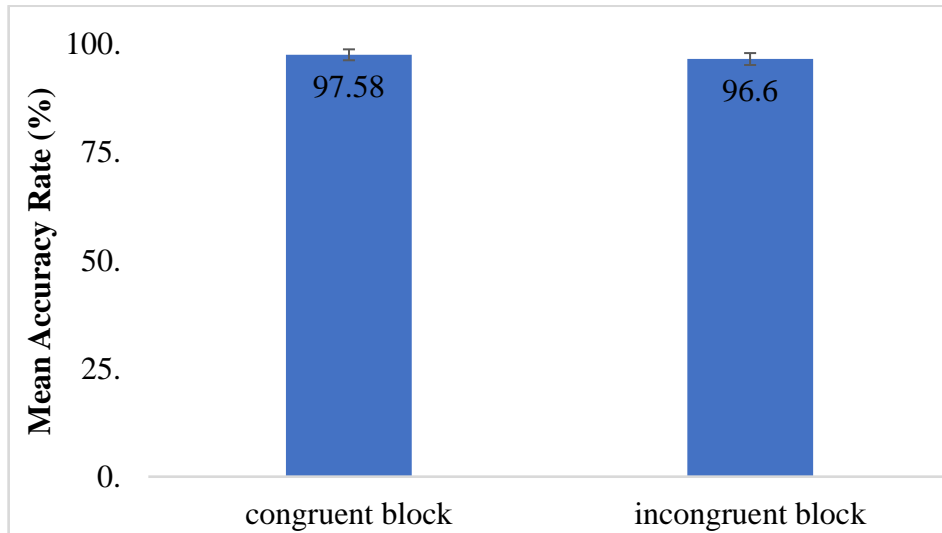
The mean response time for "congruent" block is 942.82 milliseconds,  $SD = 590.96$  and the mean response time for incongruent block is respectively correspond 901.91 milliseconds,  $SD=221.53$ .

### 3.2 Prescriptive Results

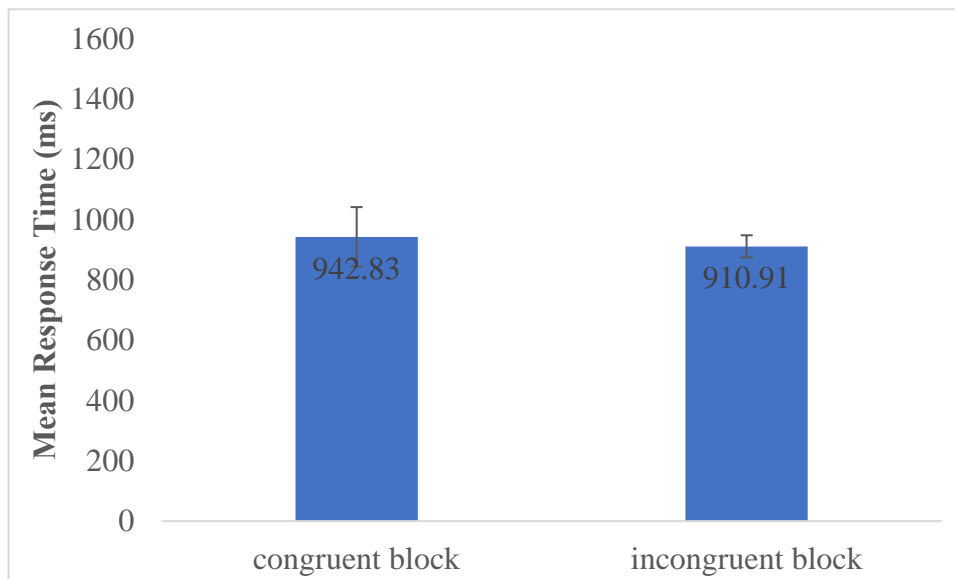
To examine whether Chinese participants showed implicit racial bias against Black people, we performed a paired-sample  $t$  test. The difference of the mean-value in accuracy rate between congruent block and incongruent block is 0.98%,  $SD=2.83$ . We found no significant difference between participants' accuracy in congruent block and incongruent block,  $t=-1.28$ ,  $p=0.209$ .

In order to investigate the implicit racial bias of Chinese against Black people, a paired-sample  $t$  test was performed based on the response time of congruent group and incongruent group. The

difference in mean value of the response time between congruent block and incongruent block is 31.92 milliseconds,  $SD=543.988$ . We found no significant difference between participants' response time in congruent block and incongruent block,  $t=0.35$ ,  $p=0.72$ . The congruent block and incongruent block are not significant. Therefore, there is no difference in the response time between congruent block and incongruent block.

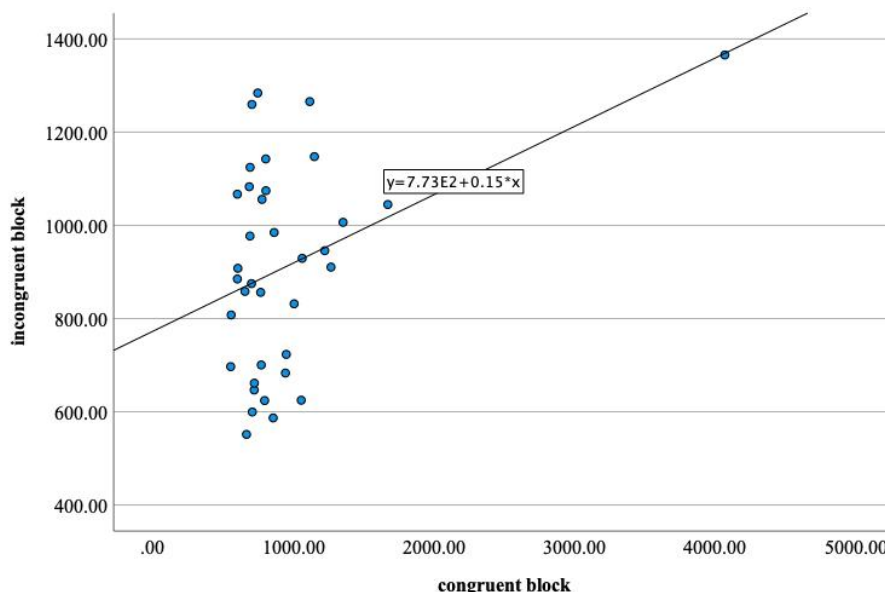


**Figure 1.** The mean accuracy of congruent and incongruent block. Error bars represent standard errors



**Figure 2.** The mean response time of congruent and incongruent block. Error bars represent standard errors

To examine whether participants' response accuracy in congruent block and incongruent block is correlated, we conducted a Pearson correlational analysis. We found that congruent block and incongruent block is insignificantly correlated,  $r = 0.04$ ,  $p = 0.821$ . The same correlational analysis found that response time in congruent block and incongruent block is  $r = 0.39$ ,  $p = 0.018$ , which means the response time between congruent block and incongruent block are significantly related.



**Figure 3.** The correlation of response time between congruent block and incongruent block

#### 4. Discussion

In the present study, we examined the development of implicit racial attitudes among Chinese toward Black people. Overall we found that Chinese do not have implicit racial biases toward Black people. Firstly, there is no difference in accuracy rate between congruent block and incongruent block. As for response time, we also found no significant difference between participants' response time in congruent block and incongruent block. Together, the results illustrate that participants equally associate positive words and negative words with Black and Chinese people.

The result of the present study is inconsistent with the result from previous literature. The result from Qian et al. (2016) indicates that Cameroonian children similar to Chinese children starts to favor their race at 3 years old, and that this trend of discrimination change to favor Chinese and White in adulthood (Qian et al, 2016). Chinese children manifested different response to the same stimuli, reacting more passive toward the same Black faces than Chinese faces (Qian et al, 2016). According to the result from Dunham, Japanese displays higher degrees of self-reported race discrimination (Dunham, 2006). Additionally, Setoh et al. (2019) claimed that there is a strong positive implicit racial bias exists among Chinese preschoolers who are part of dominant race in Singapore, but not in Indian preschoolers who are minor race in Singapore.

Many factors might lead to the inconsistency. For example, our sample might have extensive contact with other-race people. According to the book *The Nature of Prejudice* from Gordon Allport, "the hostile attitude is not merely a hasty prejudgment before one knows the facts" (Allport, 1979). Additionally, previous work has suggest that by frequent interracial contact, racial discriminations will be reduced over time (Dixon, 2010). The sample are people who are always involved in international projects and commercial activities, so they can acquire numerous opportunities to contact with different races. The harmonious contact is related to lower level of racial discrimination and blacks' willingness to believe that whites will treat them unfairly will decline (Dixon, 2010). Therefore, our sample will gradually accept people of other skin tones and the racial discrimination will be reduced and even be eliminated.

The limitation of the present research should not be ignored. First of all, the sample size is too small, and the participants are not diverse. Thus, our findings might not be generalizable to other population, such as those who have limited interracial contact. In addition, this study did not investigate explicit bias, the type of biases that are consciously aware-able. "Implicit attitudes and explicit measures would be directly related because they are likely to be rooted in the same

socialization experiences” (Dovidio et al, 2001). In this case, we could not compare explicit attitude and implicit attitude.

The present research contributed to the study of implicit method and racial bias. Theoretically, the investigation used implicit methods, which provides a different aspect for racial attitude than previous explicit methods. Practically, the results point to the future work to further assess individual difference in racial bias.

To conclude, the present research investigated the racial bias among Chinese toward Black people. We used implicit association test to gain results online. Our results showed that the Chinese do not have racial bias against Blacks, which is inconsistent with the conclusions of previous literatures.

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