



# FRIDAY, JAN. 18

## DAVID YANG

Harvard University

### **The Coordination Consequences of Media Censorship: Experimental Evidence from China**

Media censorship ensures that regime-threatening information stays out of reach from the citizens. Does exposure to uncensored information change citizens' beliefs regarding others? Does it affect citizens' decisions to engage in collective actions against the regime? We combine a field experiment with a series of lab experiments in China, where we randomly provide college students with free access and encouragement to browse uncensored information for 18 months. Treated students experience substantial changes in their knowledge, economic beliefs, and political attitudes. The exposure to uncensored information makes students more likely to believe that others are equally well informed, and share their pessimism of the economy and skepticism of the regime. In other words, treated students tend to think others are just like themselves. Moreover, the newly-exposed students are significantly more likely to participate in collective actions supporting politically sensitive organizations. Using a global game framework, we show that the increased collective action inclination is primarily driven by changes in beliefs regarding others. These results suggest that shaping citizens' beliefs about others is an important aspect through which censorship enhances the regime stability.

## BIO

---

David Yang's research focuses on political economy, behavioral and experimental economics, economic history, and cultural economics. In particular, David studies the forces of stability and forces of changes in authoritarian regimes, drawing lessons from historical and contemporary China. David received a B.A. in Statistics and B.S. in Business Administration from University of California at Berkeley, and PhD in Economics from Stanford. David is currently a Prize Fellow in Economics, History, and Politics at Harvard and a Postdoctoral Fellow at J-PAL at MIT. He will join Harvard Economics Department as an Assistant Professor in 2020.

UCLAAnderson  
THINK IN THE NEXT

BEHAVIORAL  
DECISION MAKING  
COLLOQUIUM

UCLA Anderson  
12:15 PM – 1:30 PM  
Cornell Hall, Room D-310