

## Making Friends with Foreigners: The Effect of Contact Level and Implicit Bias

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### Abstract

**This study aims to examine the effect of contact level and implicit bias on the behavior of making foreign friends. In this report, self-report questionnaire and the 'Inclusion of the Other in the Self' (IOS) task had been used to form a conclusion that international high school students had relatively higher level of contact with foreigners, exhibited less implicit bias and showed more positive behaviors in interaction with foreigners. Moreover, the questionnaire and the IOS task suggested that implicit bias was correlated with the contact level and the behavior of making friends with foreigners.**

### Keywords

**Contact level, implicit bias, behavior in interaction.**

### 1. Introduction

Currently, people are getting used to have foreign friends during study or work, along with the trend of globalization, culture integration and living diversity. By living diversity, it means people adapt to the diversity in culture, ethnics, sexuality and in many other aspects. More Chinese students are sent to international schools to get courses taught by foreigners, via English, and accompanied by classmates with different ethnicities. Questions are about whether the international schools are actually cultivating students to be international and does the level of contact with foreigners affect participants' behaviors of making friends. Participants were divided into two groups according to their personalities. One group were extroverted people and the other group were introverted people. The null hypothesis is that more contact with foreigners and implicit bias have no effect on the behavior of making foreign friends. In this way, researchers will be able to find out whether international schools in China are actually benefiting students by providing an environment of higher ethnic diversity.

### 2. Literature Review

Many studies have found both co-national and host national friendships occur in international schools. In the case of host national friendship, foreign students appear more willing to make friends with host nationals. Conversely, co-national friendship indicates that despite foreign students migrating abroad to study in international schools, they are more likely to make friends with others. This reinforces their national identity. [1]

Studies have highlighted a wide array of benefits that can result from multinational friendship. For host students, having foreign friends can aid in the development of a more complex

cognitive map. Furthermore, these students also learn about the cultures of other nations. Consequently, students have fewer social difficulties and improved communication competence. [2] One study shows that extroversion is the only personality trait that increases selecting friends over time.[3] Extroverts are generally more talkative and active when meeting strangers; introverts, in contrast, might be more cautious while interacting.[4]

Considering those researches, following hypotheses were being made.

H1: More contact with foreigners will increase the inclination of students in international high schools to make foreign friends.

H2: Implicit bias leads to less positive behaviors.

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 80 male and 80 female students from two types of schools in China: international high school and non-international high school. The ratio of the students from those two kinds of schools was approximately 1:1.

#### 3.2. Materials [5]

The participants were required to recall foreigners they had known and listed them by their first names. Then they were asked to take the Inclusion of the Other in the Self (IOS) task [5]. They were given Figure 1 with X indicating the individuals just being identified and were asked to determine which of the circles best described the overall relationship between X and themselves. Each circle corresponded with a score under a 7-point scale. [5]

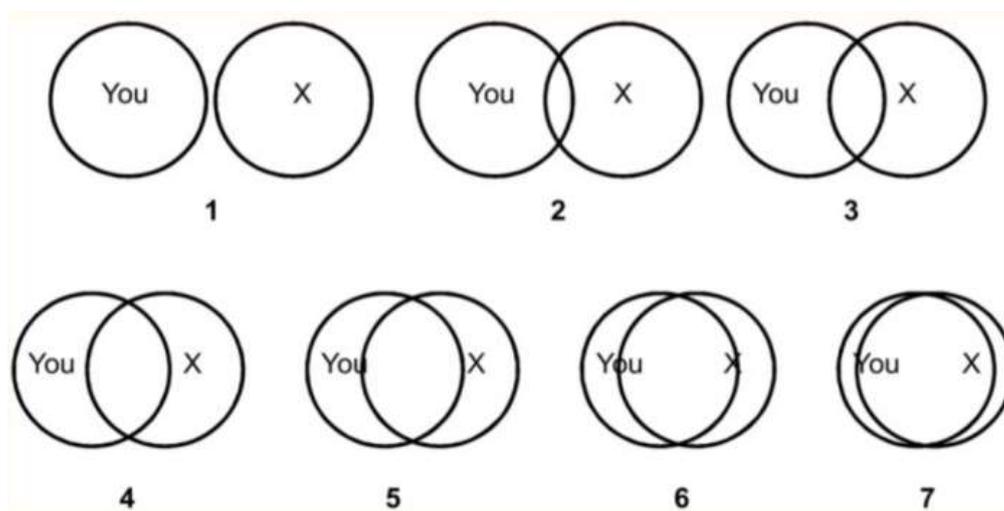


Fig 1. IOS scale [5]

Second, they were tested upon Subjective Closeness Index (SCI) based on the following two questions.

"Relative to all your other relationships how would you characterize your overall relationship with X?" and "Relative to what you know about other people's close relationships, how would you characterize your overall relationship with X?"

Lastly, the RCI scales were being examined. The participants were given three blocks of questions: the first asking the overall frequency of interaction between X and themselves lately, the second asking the overall diversity of activities they did lately, the third asking the overall extent of influence X had on themselves. All the answers were being scored separately under a 10-point scale [5].

Based on these three scales, a rough judgment of the relationship between X and the participants was given out. Participant's level of contact with foreigners was divided into three degrees: no contact, acquaintance and friend.

Participants then were asked to do the personality test questionnaire. The test had 91 statements of opinions that they should rate on a five-point scale of how much they agreed with each. It would cost 10-15 minutes for most people to complete.

To examine explicit bias, a questionnaire with 50 statements about the participants' attitude towards foreigners was created. Each question was required to be scored under a 7-point scale with 1 indicating totally disagree and 7 indicating totally agree. The implicit bias was tested through the Implicit Association Test (IAT). The procedure of the test was 1) sort words relating to the concepts; 2) sort words relating to the evaluation; 3) sort both concept and evaluation words; 4) the placement of the concept switches; 5) the categories are combined in a way that were opposite what they were before. Based on the score, the participants were categorized as slight, moderate or strong on behalf of the level of implicit bias. [6]

After finishing the tests above, the participants were invited into a room in which a camera and a recording device was set up. A foreigner first entered the room and had a conversation with the participant upon the topic of family relationship for 15 minutes. Then the foreigner found an excuse to leave the room and a Chinese entered the room in order to "replace" him. The Chinese continued the discussion for another 15 minutes. The video tape and audio clip were shown to random people. Then the observers were rating for the participants' behaviors based on seven categories: self-disclosure, responsiveness, assertiveness, criticism, conflict, and the positive and negative nonverbal affective cues under a 7-points scale.

### 3.3. Experiment

Firstly, data were collected and divided them into two groups by the results of the personality test. One group consisted of introvert participants and the other were all extrovert participants. All participants were randomly matched with a native or a foreigner. The videotaped interactions were coded. Ten "blind" coders were selected from volunteers. Behavior ratings referred to the overall intensity with which a participant displayed the specific behavior under investigation during the time a given topic was discussed. Ratings were made on a 6-point scale ranging from low to moderate, to high. These coders rated each partner's behavior in terms of seven categories of verbal and nonverbal behavior. [7] These behavioral categories were chosen to match the types of behavioral interactions that are used to measure positive and negative friendship quality in the "Friendship Quality Scale" (FQS). Finally, participants were informed about the real purpose of the research and coders and were thanked for their participation.

## 4. Results

A repeated-measures ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was performed to assess potential mean differences between Group A, which is non-international high school students and Group B, which is international high school students, on the positive and the negative dimensions of behaviors of making friends with foreigners. The results revealed no multivariate rater effect, indicating that the results did not vary systematically. Using the Pearson Correlation, the predicted p-value is less than 0.05, the conclusion that a significant difference does exist. Univariate analysis showed that Group B reported higher levels of positive behaviors and lower levels of negative behaviors of making friends was being made.

For the seven categories of observed behavior, there was no multivariate effect of the within-subjects factor, indicating that these results also did not vary, and no interaction effect emerged between the within-subjects factor and sex. There was, however, a multivariate main effect of

contact level to foreigners does exist as the predicted p-value is less than 0.05. Univariate analysis showed that Group B were more responsive, self-disclosed more often, showed more positive effect, criticized less, and showed less conflict behavior toward their foreign partners. Implicit bias towards foreigners served as the mediator between the contact levels to foreigners and the behaviors of making friends with foreigners. Both Group A and Group B reported higher levels of negative behaviors of making friends with foreigners than the locals. A Pearson Correlation showed that there was a significant difference between the level of contact and implicit bias,  $p < 0.05$ . The results indicated that there was a negative relationship between the level of contact and implicit bias,  $r = -0.3$ . Furthermore, there was a significant difference between the implicit bias and the behavior in interaction. The findings indicated that there was a negative relationship between them,  $r = -0.4$  (assumed data). Hence, implicit bias was associated with the contact level and the behavior of making friends.

Personality has an impact on establishing a relationship. Individuals who rated themselves as high on extroversion tended to be more responsive and motivated to engage in discussion, which indicates a higher level of positive interaction.

## 5. Discussion

Since these are only predicted results of the study, alternatives need to be provided for preciseness. The implicit bias might not be the mediator. The study only considered implicit bias as a factor that could vary the result, but factors did not be testes. Another possible alternative result would be if local students and international students show different levels of past exposure to foreigners and comments from the observers while roughly equal scores regarding explicit and implicit bias, it would therefore indicate that explicit and implicit bias are not the mediator between past exposure level and actual behaviors. If international education system is proved to be successful, more schools in China should consider incorporating elements from the international education system into the local education system.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, despite limitations in this study, the present findings suggest that more contact with foreigners are related to lower implicit biases, leading to more positive behavior in interaction. Those students who reported of being extroverted are more responsive and demonstrate positive interaction. The present research shows that international school still plays an important role in making a bridge for native students and foreign students to communicate with each other and establishing interethnic contact situations. Under this circumstance, the implicit bias between them may be reduced by more positive behavior of making friends. This paper may, if the hypothesis being demonstrated as valid, shed light on how education system would improve, not only in international schools but also traditional Chinese high schools to improve their teaching strategies to shape a more fully developed teenager.

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