

The Effect and Its Duration of Imagined Contact on
Intergroup Attitude of Japanese

Summary

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2021

Abstract

The imagined contact method of cognitively manipulating intergroup relations has been reported to be widely successful in improving attitude toward the outgroup (Crisp & Turner, 2009; Stathi et al., 2014; Miles & Crisp, 2014). The imagined contact paradigm was devised by Crisp and Turner (2009), who have conducted a series of studies attesting to its effectiveness in changing intergroup attitudes, reducing prejudice, and increasing motivation to engage in direct contact with the particular outgroup. As a result of experiencing an imagined contact, people feel more comfortable, and have less anxiety about having an actual contact with the outgroup (Turner et al., 2007).

This research marks the first attempt at testing the effects of imagined contact on Japanese, who are relatively inexperienced at cross-cultural contact. Another purpose of this study was to determine if the effects last beyond the laboratory experiment.

Study 1 was essentially exploratory, with the purpose of determining whether the Japanese hold negative attitude and prejudice toward foreigners. As a result, Japanese hold negative image toward Chinese and Koreans, and have a stronger negative attitude toward Koreans than Chinese.

Study 2 and Study 3 were conducted to create original imagined contact scenarios that are suitable for people in a country where there are only few opportunities for direct contact with outgroup member. We controlled contact conditions with the outgroup and empirically verified the imagined contact effect. As a result, imagined contact approach was successful in Japanese context. Also, as a result of examining the effect of imagined contact approach on Japanese prejudice toward outgroup, the experimental group who read and imagined about imagined

contact scenario had shorter social distance, less anxiety and threat toward future contact with outgroup members. From these results, the imagined contact approach could be considered to be an effective tool for prejudice reduction on Japanese.

In study 4 and 5, it has examined the durability of imagined contact approach. There are only few studies on effect of imagined contact outside of laboratory. Even if the outgroup attitude was improved by the imagined contact approach, the effect may disappear in a short period of time. It is essential to experiment on sustainability of imagined contact. As a result, imagined contact was effective on improving intergroup attitude right after conducting the approach, which is consistent with previous studies. In addition, the effect remained even one month after the imagined contact approach on social distance. However, same effect was not shown on other measure, such as intergroup anxiety and outgroup evaluation.

Overall, the purpose of this research was to determine the effect of imagined contact on Japanese attitude toward foreigners and its durability. Three findings were indicated through this research: 1) Japanese tend to hold negative image toward Chinese and Koreans. 2) Imagined contact approach has a potential to reduce prejudice and improve intergroup attitude toward Chinese and Koreans. 3) Imagined contact has potentials but low sustainability for people who have less chances to have daily interaction with outgroup.

This study developed imagined contact approach that suit for the Japanese cultural background and it was successful to improve intergroup attitude even before experiencing direct contact with foreigners. In the future, it can be expected that imagined contact approach could be a preventive measure for conflicts that may occur between Japanese and non-Japanese residences.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In this chapter, theoretical background of the research is reviewed. Research in the field of prejudice and stereotypes have concocted various methods to investigate how such negative attitudes can be reduced.

In the first section, literature on contact theory and imagined contact hypothesis were reviewed. Allport (1954) suggested prejudice could be reduced through intergroup contact under situations that include four essential conditions: equal status, common goal, intergroup cooperation, and support of authorities toward contact. Early studies in the contact hypothesis dealt with direct contact, i.e. personal interaction between members of diverse groups (see Cook, 1970; Amir, 1976). However, the recent trend in this research paradigm leans toward indirect contact, i.e., contact not directly experienced by the subject. Turner, Crisp and Lambert (2007) demonstrated that intergroup attitudes are improved through imagined contact, the episodes of which they constructed based on Allport's conditions.

In the second section, focusing on Japanese prejudice and stereotype toward foreigners (especially Chinese and Koreans), differences of cultural background were discussed. While Crisp and his cohorts claim that their imagined contact method is effective, their sampling has centered on mainly European countries, which are highly multicultural (Turner, Crisp & Lambert, 2007; Crisp & Turner, 2009). Their sampled societies allow for individuals to have regular contact between their targeted outgroup, hence they have ample prior, direct contact experience with their target. On the other hand, countries such as Japan are highly homogeneous in their ethnic composition, and people do not have outgroup contact on a daily basis. Crisp and colleagues are yet to test their method on this type of sample.

Finally, the purpose of this research is presented. The goal of this research is to examine the potential of imagined contact on Japanese participants and also test its durability. This study targets the Japanese people, and investigates whether the imagined contact method is viable in a society in which inter-ethnic contact is rare, and it focuses on attitudes toward arguably the most stigmatized group, the Koreans and Chinese.

Chapter 2

Attitude of Japanese toward Chinese and Koreans

In Chapter 2, a research question that image of Chinese and Koreans among Japanese was investigated. In study 1, participants were asked to respond to social distance, intergroup anxiety and realistic threat perceived toward Koreans and Chinese, in order to determine if indeed, they exhibit prejudice against these ethnic groups. Results showed that Japanese do indeed hold negative affect and cognitions toward both Chinese and Koreans. Intergroup anxiety and social distance were influential in forming intergroup attitudes, and toward Koreans, more so than toward Chinese, social distance had greater influence on indices of prejudice, including outgroup evaluation and acceptance. From the free response image of each outgroup, it was evident that participants held a more negative view of Koreans than Chinese.

Chapter 3

Effect of Imagined Contact Approaches on Japanese

Study 1 has revealed that Japanese prejudice toward Chinese and Koreans, especially toward latter. Turner, Crisp and Lambert (2007) has suggested that prejudice could be reduced by simply

imagining the positive intergroup interaction with an outgroup member. There are over 70 studies that provided successful result with imagined contact approaches (e.g. Crisp & Turner, 2009; Stathi et al., 2014; Miles & Crisp, 2014), but only a few studies have conducted outside of already globalized society such as Europe and the United States. Study 2 and Study 3 aims to replicate the effect of imagined contact approach on society where people have only a few opportunities to interact with outgroup member, like Japan.

Prejudice is defined as a thoughts and opinions that is not based on real experiences. Study 1 indicated that Japanese prejudice toward foreigners is more like negative intergroup attitude including social distance, intergroup anxiety and outgroup evaluation.

Past research has shown that imagined contact approach is more effective for respondents who have less direct contact experiences with outgroup members (Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016). On the other side, Husnu and Crisp (2010) have argued that respondents who have too few contacts, may not be able to clearly imagine the detail of imagined contact scenario's situation. Miles and Crisp (2014) have suggested that imagined contact approach is more effective when the specific scenario was presented. The ideal context of imagined contact is not indicated yet, especially for people who live in a relatively homogeneous society, like Japan.

Two studies were conducted in this chapter. Respondents from Japan were sampled from a crowd sourcing website and Japanese universities. In Study 2, we aim to explore whether the original imagined contact scenario gives positive influence on Japanese intergroup attitude toward Koreans. Those who imagined a positive interaction with a Korean showed less prejudice than those in the control condition, indicating that imagined contact had yielded some positive effect in reducing negative outgroup sentiments. This study revealed that imagined contact is capable to improve intergroup attitude even in countries that people have less direct contact experiences with outgroup.

After testing the applicability of the imagined contact approach, we aim to replicate its efficacy on Chinese target as outgroup in Study 3. The results demonstrated the feasibility of imagined contact in improving attitudes toward Chinese of Japanese participants. Those who imagined a positive intergroup interaction showed more favorable attitude toward the outgroup and a tendency to feel less fear toward Chinese.

Chapter 4

Durability of Imagined Contact

Study 2 and Study 3 have revealed that Japanese prejudice and intergroup attitude toward Chinese and Koreans could be improved by conducting imagined contact approach, however the results were not consistent among Chinese and Koreans. In this chapter, imagined contact scenario was revised into situation that could occur in daily life instead of traveling to abroad country (Study 2). Also, for individuals who have too few direct contact experiences, it is difficult for he/she to have clear detail image of imagined contact scenario (Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016), so we created specific intergroup interaction scenario which is more effective on reducing prejudice and improving intergroup attitude (Miles & Crisp, 2014). Imagined contact approaches created in previous studies (Crisp & Turner, 2009) was made to adapt to already globalized nations. It is necessary to create an original scenario based on Japanese life style that is suitable for Japanese cultural background.

Effect of imagined contact on various group characteristics were tested, including ethnic group, disability, age, weight, and others (Miles & Crisp, 2014). Meanwhile, there are only few studies conducted on the durability of imagined contact. Miles and Crisp (2014) suggested that

imagined contact studies lack of longitudinal studies to test its effect outside of laboratory. In this chapter, pre-post tests were conducted in four time period; before, right after, one week after, and one month after the imagined contact approach. Purpose of this chapter is to determine the effect of imagined contact approach and its durability depending on the target group (Chinese and Koreans).

Two studies were conducted in this chapter. In Study 4, we aim to examine the effect of positive intergroup interaction simulation on Japanese intergroup attitude toward Chinese. Study 4 indicated the durability of imagined contact approach on improving Japanese attitude toward Chinese. The results determined that the effect of imagined contact was confirmed right after the treatment, and with some measures, the effect proved to last a month. Overall, our studies gave evidence for positive functioning of imagined contact in a relatively ethnically homogeneous society, such as Japan, as compared to multicultural societies, in which previous studies had been conducted. Study 3 surveyed university students, whereas Study 4 sampled the general public. Ohtsuki (2007) found that youth tend to be more accepting of foreigners compared to adults and elders. It is conceivable that a negative attitude cannot be mitigated if people do not have such in the first place. Also, students may have lacked enough knowledge, and contact experience surrounding the Chinese, hence they were unable to image the intergroup interaction clearly. It is essential to have a realistic vision of the intergroup communication going on during ingroup and outgroup in the imagined contact (Husnu & Crisp, 2010). Although we based our scenario on a specific story, students may not have been able to relate well to such a story, which may have affected the durability of imagined contact as well.

In Study 5, we aim to replicate the imagined contact approach on Korean target and determine the duration of reading multiple episodes of imagined contact scenario during the mental simulation. Participants in experimental group read three imagined contact scenarios and

imagined about the situations. As a result, imagined contact approach gave positive effect on Japanese attitude toward Koreans right after the treatment, which is consistent with other studies. Participants who conducted imagined contact approach felt better about Koreans even one month after the mental simulation. Those respondents showed less fear to contribute in future interaction with Koreans and relatively higher willingness to have actual contact, in the follow up test which was conducted one week after imagined contact approach. Study 5 also showed that imagined contact has potentials to mitigate negative intergroup attitude as how it was in Study 4. Although similar results were shown between Study 4 and Study 5, different measures sustained for one week and one month after the treatment.

The results of longitudinal studies showed that imagined contact has different impacts on attitude toward Chinese (Study 4) and Koreans (Study 5). In Study 4, the longitudinal effect of imagined contact lasted for one month on social distance toward the Chinese, while in Study 5, the longest effect lasted one month, on outgroup evaluation of Koreans. One other difference was that the effect on intergroup anxiety lasted one week, for Koreans only. Of course, the methods and intensity of imagining the contact differed across these two studies, so it is difficult to determine accurately how much they can be attributed to just nationality.

Chapter 5

General Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of imagined contact on relatively homogeneous nation, like Japan and test its durability. Adopting the theoretical framework of imagined contact hypothesis, these studies contribute to the literature by showing (1) Japanese

hold some negative image toward Chinese and Koreans, (2) imagined contact has positive effect on reducing prejudice and improving intergroup attitude among Japanese, and (3) imagined contact effect does not last outside of laboratory for people who do not have daily interaction with the outgroup.

This research has a few limitations. First, online sampling may restrict the amount of control allotted toward the researcher with respect to the experimental environment, and researcher had no influence over how long they took, and how focused the participants were during imagining the given scenario. Imagined contact requires participants to concentrate on their task, since it requires “imagining” a given scenario. Another issue that may have been prevalent is whether participants were able to realistically imagine interacting with a Korean person. Husnu and Crisp (2010) suggested that participants who had less experience in contact with Muslims perhaps could not adequately image the given positive contact scenario. In our study, 85.8% of the participants answered that they do not have any opportunities to meet with Koreans in their daily lives, suggesting that participants who conducted imagined contact treatment might not have been able to image clearly enough to think of the situation as if it was his/her own experience, which may have influenced on durability of imagined contact.

In this research, the differences in intergroup attitude before and after imagined contact was of prime concern, so individual differences of prejudice level were not considered. The samples were taken as a whole, without partitioning them by certain propensities, such as the level of prior attitudes, age, occupation, and other personal traits. Also, there could be individual differences in the amount of contact experience with the outgroup members. Within sample differences, thus need to be examined in future studies.

In five experiments, this research showed effect of imagined contact on Japanese intergroup attitude toward Chinese and Koreans. Also, indicated the durability of the imagined

contact approach. In summary, imagined contact have potential to improve intergroup attitude and reduce prejudice of Japanese toward outgroups. However, its longitudinal effect stayed still inconsistent. Effect of imagined contact outside of laboratory could be easily influenced by media, outgroup targets, and/or direct contact experience. More studies are needed to sustain the effect of improved intergroup attitude toward outgroup members. For instance, using vicarious contact (Mozzariotta et al., 2011) or electronic contact (White et al., 2014) might lead to learning how to interact with outgroup in the future actual interaction situation. Imagined contact is not a one-shot session, but it is going to be a first step for having friendly relationship with outgroup members. Imagined contact could be an educational tool for a symbiotic society between Japanese and non-Japanese in the future.