Stimulating Intergroup Contact at School:

Exploring the vision of teachers and students

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Abstract

A qualitative research was conducted to explore the vision of the individuals directly involved for practices that can stimulate intergroup contact at school. This was studied through interviews with teachers (6) and focus groups (3) with students, at two different MBO schools in the county Utrecht, the Netherlands. Results showed that there is little contact between social groups at school. Existing contact was solely task-oriented or need-oriented. Explored practices as transcending projects, peer tutoring, and activities (e.g. excursions, introduction days and sports) seem promising for stimulating intergroup contact. Prior to implementing these practices, student motivation to engage in intergroup contact should be increased. This could be done by, for instance, dialogue or imagined contact. Overall, the vision of teachers and students proved to be in line with current literature on intergroup contact. Future research should focus on specific contexts, since schools have different compositions and different experiences with intergroup contact. This can be done by consulting teachers and students, before implementing practices in school. This will increase participant motivation, and lead to more sustainable and effective practices of intergroup contact at school.

Key words: Intergroup contact, Intergroup attitude, Prejudice, Social groups, School

Samenvatting

Een kwalitatief onderzoek was uitgevoerd met als doel het verkennen van de visie van direct betrokkenen op het stimuleren van intergroup contact op school. Dit is onderzocht door interviews met docenten (6) en focusgroepen (3) met studenten, op twee verschillende MBO scholen in de provincie Utrecht. Resultaten laten zien dat er weinig contact is tussen sociale groepen op school. Huidig contact was taak- of behoeftegericht. Practices als overstijgende projecten, peer-bijles en activiteiten (e.g. excursies, introductie dagen en sport) lijken veelbelovend voor het stimuleren van intergroup contact. Voorafgaand aan de implementatie is van belang de motivatie van studenten, voor het aangaan van intergroup contact, te verhogen. Dit kan bijvoorbeeld middels dialoog of imaginatief contact. In het algemeen blijkt de visie van docenten en studenten in lijn met huidige literatuur over intergroup contact. Toekomstig onderzoek moet focussen op specifieke contexten, omdat scholen verschillende samenstellingen en ervaringen met intergroup contact hebben. Dit is mogelijk door, voorafgaand aan het invoeren van practices op school, docenten en studenten te raadplegen. Dit zal leiden tot een verhoogde motivatie onder participanten en daarbij tot meer duurzame en effectieve practices voor het stimuleren van intergroup contact op school.

Key words: Intergroup contact, Intergroup houding, Vooroordelen, Sociale groepen, School

Stimulating Intergroup Contact at School:

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Intergroup phenomena like social discrimination, prejudice and hostility still constitute problems and challenges in today's diverse and global society. The age of new communication, high mobility, and economic globalization has led to an increasing encounter between diverse cultures, ethnic groups, and socials groups in most westerns societies (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999); and schools are often a representation of this diversity (Dessel, 2010). This creates both opportunities and challenges for schools regarding how different social groups can live together and maintain positive interpersonal relationships. Children and adolescents nowadays spend up to 40 hours a week in school (Dessel, 2010). This is usually more than the amount of time actively spend at home. Therefore, school often functions as a primary socializing force (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). This emphasizes the responsibility of schools, to prepare students for life in a diverse society.

As a socializing force, schools are involved in teaching about differences and contesting prejudice and discrimination (Dessel, 2010), accordingly citizenship education is often integrated in the curriculum (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Boerwinkel, Veugelers & Waarlo, 2010). However, teachers report to feel overwhelmed and unprepared to work with the diverse group of students represented in their classrooms (Dessel, 2010). Besides, to function as a socializing force, the school climate should be experienced as a safe and accepting one (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli & Pickeral, 2009; Loukas, 2007). Sadly, reality shows that students often do not experience school as a welcoming or safe place (Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Graham & Juvonen, 2002).

One of the issues that might contribute to this sense of unsafety in schools, but also in the larger society, is prejudice. Prejudices are negative attitudes directed towards a group, or towards an individual because he or she is member of that group (Simpson & Yinger, 2013). Students' perceptions of peer prejudice have shown to negatively impact the school climate (Dessel, 2010). For instance, prejudice contributes to problematic intergroup relations in school, contributes to school harassment and bullying (Mckown, 2005), is associated with students' feelings of alienation in school (Benner, Crosnoe & Eccles, 2015), and negatively impacts students' academic achievements (Dessel, 2010).

Social group formation is a normal phenomenon, and occurs due to people categorizing other people together, even if they actually have little similarities or interaction (Simpson & Yinger, 2013). Social categorization of people depends on certain features

(Leonardelli & Toh, 2015). These can be frequently used features such as gender, race and age (Kinzler, Schutts & Corell, 2010). Other features can be, but are not limited to, physical features (Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt & Spears, 2001), behavioural features (e.g. hobbies), attitudinal/ideological features (e.g. politics or religion) (Heit & Nicholson, 2010), spatial features (e.g. living in the same village) (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012), or vocal features (e.g. language or accents) (Maass, Arcuri & Suitner, 2014; Rakić, Steffens & Mummendey, 2011).

Targeting peer prejudice in schools is of importance for the school climate and the social education of students. There are practices targeting peer prejudice and intergroup conflict in the school setting, such as cooperative learning (Bowen, 2000; Van Ryzin & Roseth, 2018) and multicultural education (Banks, 2005; Stephan & Vogt, 2004). Unfortunately, research regarding these programmes is limited in some areas. For instance, much research was experimental (Paluck & Green, 2009), few programmes used follow-up measures (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014), and some used non-representative samples (Hewstone et al., 2014). Besides, the existing literature on intergroup contact programmes in schools is mainly focused on implementing programmes from theory, and studying the relation to prejudice. The experiences and needs of teachers and students in their specific context are not included, leading to interventions not necessarily influencing intergroup contact or attitude. The present study opts for a bottom-up approach by including views of the teachers and students of how to increase intergroup contact in order to work towards the best suitable and sustainable anti-prejudice, or pro-diversity practice for schools.

Theoretical Framework

The Intergroup Contact Theory from Allport (1954) is often the basis of anti-prejudice programmes (Felten & Taouanza, 2018). The theory explains the idea that knowledge about other groups, on its own, is not enough to break down prejudice and stereotypes. People have to get to know each other in order to positively affect attitudes about other groups (Amichai-Hamburger & MecKenna, 2006; Felten & Taouanza, 2018). According to Allport (1954) positive experience of intergroup contact can lead to an attitude change on two levels. First on target-specific level; initial prejudiced assumptions about the other are replaced with more positive assumptions about the individual. Followed by extended level; the new positive assumptions about the individual extend to the group the individual belongs to. However, to generate positive effects, Allport (1954) stated that intergroup contact had to meet four key

conditions: Equal status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and the support of authorities.

The first condition states that it is important that both groups expect and perceive equal status in the situation (Cohen & Lotan, 1995). In the school setting this could mean that all involved persons are students. Second, the intergroup contact requires a common goal. In other words, the contact should include an active and goal-oriented effort (Pettigrew, 1998). Third, there should be intergroup cooperation and no intergroup competition in the intergroup contact (Bettencourt et al., 1992). There is plausible evidence for the effectiveness of intergroup cooperation in the school setting (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997; Berger, Benatov, Abu-Raiya & Tadmor, 2016; Slavin, 1980;). For instance, study among college students showed that besides increasing academic achievement, cooperative learning increases positive interaction between students (Bowen, 2000). Last, authority support establishes norms of acceptance. Thereby authority support, like teachers and school policy, leads to more acceptance of intergroup contact and more positive effects (Pettigrew, 1998; Yefanova, Montgomery, Woodruff, Johnstone & Kappler, 2017).

Over the years the Intergroup Contact Theory has received considerable support. However, more and more essential conditions were found, such as voluntary contact, a prosperous economy, and not too negative initial views of one another (Pettigrew, 1998). This growing list made the Intergroup Contact Theory less practicable, since meeting all these conditions excludes most contact situations. The meta-analysis of Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) shows that it is not necessary for all these conditions to be met, in order to generate positive effects of intergroup contact. The conditions should be considered as facilitating, rather than necessary. Many factors are not in themselves essential, but relate to the processes by which contact changes attitudes and behaviour (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998; Wright, Brody & Aron, 1996). Especially studies in the school setting report positive effects, even if the contact lacks the key conditions (Pettigrew, 1998), therefore the present study focuses on facilitating the processes of change instead.

Pettigrew (1998) introduced four essential interrelated processes that operate through contact and mediate the attitude change: learning about the outgroup, changing behaviour, generating affective ties, and ingroup reappraisal. First, learning about the outgroup. This is the only process Allport (1954) included in his original hypothesis. Learning about the outgroup should include learning about how different and similar people from different groups actually are (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000), and has potential in the school setting. For example, a study among college students showed

that attending extracurricular race-related programming on campus led to positive changes in racial attitudes (McClelland & Linnander, 2006). Another example is the study of a multicultural guidance programme; an in-class cooperative learning programme, where fourth grade students took part in a 10-week programme of 40 minutes per week. The programme consisted out of activities exploring cultural and racial diversity, and led to significant improvement of social cooperation skills (Salzman and D′Andrea, 2001). Although attitude change was not included in the study, the authors perceive social cooperation skills as essential intercultural skills. Besides, learning about the outgroup is often integrated in classroom programmes, in the form of discussions, but programme effectiveness is often not documented (Paluck, 2006).

The second process, generating affective ties, is even more important than knowledge (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Affective factors, such as anxiety reduction and empathy, are essential in intergroup contact, since they can mediate intergroup attitudes (Cameron, Rutland, Hossain & Petley, 2011; Felten & Taouanza, 2018; Fiske, Cuddy, Flick, & Xu, 2002; Mackie, Devos & Smith, 2000). For example, cross-group friendships are negatively associated with prejudice, via the mediation of affective empathy (Swart, Hewstone, Christ & Voci, 2011). This process can be found in different cooperative learning programmes, because of the emphasis on positive personal interaction and development of cross-group friendship (Cameron & Turner, 2016). An example is the Jigsaw technique. Study shows a positive effect on intergroup contact. However, no significant differences in attitude were found (Santos Rego & Meledo, 2005). This was attributed by the authors to the short intervention period. Techniques as reciprocal teaching and peer tutoring, where students help each other study in small groups; create the opportunity to learn with, and from people of different social groups. These techniques show modest, and mostly short-term effects on attitude. However, students who were involved in peer-tutoring in school, do seem likely to seek intergroup relationships later in life (Hawley, 2007).

Third, changing behaviour; engaging in new situations requires new behaviour and changes expectations. If the new situations include the acceptance of people from other groups, it can lead to attitude change (Pettigrew, 1998). Repeated, affective, and direct contact can lead to an incorporation of the outgroup into the self-concept, which can lead to more positive attitudes on intergroup level (Eller & Abrams, 2004). For instance, bilingual education programmes. These programmes attempt to change attitudes by repeated, direct intergroup contact, and simultaneously attempt to increase students' knowledge of a second culture and language; while increasing their perception of similarity and reducing inter-group

anxiety (Aboud & Levy, 2000). For example, the American two-way amigos programme, where Hispanic and Anglophone students followed classes together. The classes were half-day in Spanish, and half-day in English. The programme showed that children had made multiple cross-group friendships, and half of the children afterwards, felt as positive toward the other group, as toward their own (Lambert & Cazabon, 1994).

Fourth, Ingroup Reappraisal. Intergroup contact can teach how norms and customs are not universal, and can thereby lead to appraisal of other groups (Pettigrew, 1998). This process connects to the idea behind extended intergroup contact. This idea is that having knowledge of, or even observing, a positive relationship between an ingroup member and the outgroup, can influence ideas on norms and possible behaviour (Dovidio, Love, Schelhaas & Hewstone, 2017). Extended intergroup contact creates more sense of inclusiveness (Gómez, Tropp & Fernandez, 2011; Turner, Hewstone, Voci & Vonofakou, 2008), and shows to be an effective way to promote positive relations between groups (Paluck, 2009). Extended contact could be an addition in the school setting, since it can have a cumulative effect, together with direct contact, on intergroup attitude. An example of an extended intergroup contact practice in the school setting is the story-telling technique (Liebkind & McAllister, 1999). Stories can, for instance, revolve around friendships between adolescents and immigrants, and be followed by classroom discussions on the benefits of such friendships. Multiple studies built on this practice and found positive effects on intergroup attitude (Aronson et al., 2016; Cameron et al., 2011; Cameron, Rutland, Brown, & Douch, 2006).

Nonetheless, prior to actual interaction with the outgroup, it is important that intent to engage in intergroup contact is established among the students. For example, imagined intergroup contact is an effective practice to promote interest and intention to interact with other social groups (Crisp, Stathi, Turner & Husnu, 2009). The idea behind imagined intergroup contact is that imagining contact triggers similar emotional and motivational responses as real contact (Dadds, Bovbjerg, Redd & Cutmore, 1997). Multiple studies found that imagining positive interaction with a different social group, such as an elderly person or gay man, leads to more positive attitudes and less stereotyping (Turner, Crisp & Lambert, 2007). As might expected, actual contact is more effective than imagined contact, but imagined contact can reduce fears and negative expectations and thereby raise the likelihood of future actual contact (Crisp, Stathi, Turner & Husnu, 2009), besides it can easily be integrated in the school curriculum since it only consists out of a short and simple task. Furthermore, study shows that teachers serve an important role in providing knowledge on the

importance of intergroup contact, and subsequently in stimulating these intergroup interactions (Yefanova et al., 2017).

The Present Study

The present study took place on two Intermediate Vocational Education schools (MBO) in the Dutch county Utrecht. This context was important for this study, since negative feelings towards other groups in the Netherlands have only risen over the last decade (Coenders, Lubbers, Scheepers & Verkuyten, 2008). In Utrecht, MBO schools create the setting where students often experience an increasing level of intergroup contact for the first time. This is because schools and housing are segregated in Utrecht (Ladd, Fiske & Ruijs, 2009). The school segregation is higher in primary schools and high schools, because of the residential segregation and the divide in public schools, religious schools and schools following different philosophies (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2018). This makes MBO schools the place where different social groups finally come together.

The goal of the present study is exploring the vision of the individuals directly involved, for practices that can stimulate intergroup contact at school. The research question is: *How can Intermediate Vocational Education (MBO) schools in Utrecht adequately stimulate intergroup contact between students at school?* To answer the research question, multiple questions were formulated:

1. What social groups do teachers and students identify at school?
2. How do teachers and students currently experience intergroup contact between students at school?
3. What practices do teachers and students believe to be successful?
4. What are obstructing factors according to students and teachers?

Method

The present study had an explorative and qualitative design in order to gain an understanding of the experience and opinions of students and teachers on intergroup contact, and to help develop ideas for future quantitative research. Intern validity was assured through data triangulation by including the perspective of both teachers and students. The qualitative research methods used in the study were focus groups with students, and semi-structured interviews with teachers.

Participants

Two MBO schools in the county of Utrecht participated in the study, one in the city Utrecht (School A) and one in Amersfoort (School B). In total, six teachers were interviewed. The ages ranged from 25 to 54. Of the teachers, four were mentor of one of the participating classes. The other two teachers worked at the specific study of the students. A more detailed overview of participant characteristics is presented in Table 1.

A total of 46 students participated in the focus groups. All students were between the ages of 16 and 22. In total, 32 students were male and 19 were female. As seen in Table 1, the male/female division was different within the classes. An estimated 35% of the students had a non-western migration background. To prevent the feeling of social categorization, these characteristics were not specifically asked. Since this could possibly affect the discussion on the topic of intergroup contact.

Table 1
Participant Characteristics

	Student Focus Groups			Teachers			
	Label[a]	Student count	Male/Female	Label[b]	Male/Female	Cultural background	Years in Education
School A							
	SA.1	15	15/0	TA.1	M	Non-Dutch	3
	SA.2	15	12/3	TA.2	M	Dutch	2
				TA.3	F	Dutch	1
School B							
	SB.1	16	11/5	TB.1	F	Dutch	10
				TB.2	M	Dutch	1
				TB.3	M	Non-Dutch	18
Total		46	19/32	6	4/2		

Note. [a] Student group labels are constructed by S for students, followed by the A or B from the school, and a group number. [b] Teacher labels are constructed by T for teachers, followed by the A or B from the school, and a teacher number.

Instruments and Procedure

In order to generate a diverse group of participants, two schools and two different study fields were included. The fields were: economics and welfare studies. The schools that participated in the research were approached by email. Teachers interested in participation were visited at school by the first author to explain the purpose and content of the study, and to arrange the interviews and focus groups. The interviews and focus groups both had the

same goals. First, identifying social groups at school. Second, creating an overview on the experience of intergroup contact at school. And last, brainstorm on potential practices to stimulate intergroup contact at school.

The interviews with the teachers took place at school and had a duration of 30-40 minutes. The interviews were recorded, with permission, for later transcription. The form of the interviews was semi-structured. Prior to the interviews, questions were formulated to make sure each teacher was asked about the same topics (see Appendix A). The semi-structured form created the possibility to change the order, and to ask more in-depth questions depending on the answers of the teacher. Different themes were discussed in the interviews. First, the concept social groups and their perception of different social groups at school. Second, the quantity and quality of contact between these groups and their opinion on the importance of this contact. Last, potential ideas regarding stimulation of this contact at school.

The focus groups had the form of a workshop. The focus groups were held in a classroom at school, and had a duration of 75-90 minutes. Within the workshop the students got familiar with the subject social groups, and were stimulated to actively work on the theme, by discussing in small groups and making word webs. The participation in the focus group was obligated since it took place during school time. The focus groups consisted out of school classes with 15-16 students. The first two focus groups were led by two moderators and one observer was present to make notes during the sessions. The third focus group was led by one moderator and one observer. At least one moderator and the observer were the same in all sessions. The sessions were recorded, in case parts of the notes were incomplete or unclear.

The focus groups all had the same basic structure (see Appendix B). Namely, an introduction and energizer, three main targets and an end phase. The introduction of the subject was combined with an energizer, where student had to guess who the moderators were, and what groups they were part of. The three following main targets were: identifying social groups in school, discussing the experience and opinions on contact between these groups at school. The end phase was a brainstorm on ideas to stimulate intergroup contact at school. The main targets asked the students to actively work on the subject, by making a word web. The end phase had the form of a classroom discussion.

Data Analysis

The data from the interviews and the focus groups together formed the input of the study. All data was analysed together through content analysis. To organize and descriptively present the data, the textual data was coded and analysed with QSR NVivo 12 for windows

software. A second independent researcher has coded one interview and one focus group to increase the inter-rater reliability. In order to code the data, five steps were followed (Bazeley, 2013). First, topical codes were created relating to the research questions. Second, an open coding strategy was used (Charmaz, 2003). Third, the codes were sorted into categories and subcategories. Fourth, meta codes were created for overarching ideas or broader themes within the data. Last, the codes and their data were reviewed by the first author.

Results

This section describes the results from the data gathered in this study. The section is structured using the sub questions of the present study. Quotations are translated from Dutch to English by means of a line-by-line translation, to provide an exact and accurate translation of the original statement. To clarify who the quotation is from, these are signed using the labels from Table 1.

Social Groups Identified at School

The teachers and students identified multiple social groups based on 18 different categories. These categories are presented in Table 2. The teachers identified 13 categories, whereas students identified 16 categories. The teacher and students agreed on 11 out of 18 categories. The six most mentioned categories were mentioned by teachers from both schools and at least one student group.

The most mentioned category was origin. The participants made a total of 16 references regarding origin. A distinction is made between Dutch/Non-Dutch and Origin/Culture, since participants were specific in their statements. In the first category, groups were described as completely Dutch, or completely not Dutch. In the second category, statements specified that people from the same origin or culture clustered together, such as Turkish or Moroccan students. All student groups, but only two out of six teachers specified subgroups based on specific origin or culture.

The other most mentioned category was motivation. Four teachers and all student groups identified groups based on motivation. Together they made 12 references regarding this category. Different words were coded under this category. For example: hard working/not hard working, diligent students/not diligent students, and serious students/people that don't care.

The three student groups identified 15 different social groups in the category interests. Examples are "*gangsters*", "*athletes*" and "*hypebeasts*" (i.e. students that only wear designer

brands). Only two teachers identified a group in the interests category, namely: "*Fashion*" and "*Games*".

Table 2

Identified Social Groups at School by Teacher and Student Groups per School

Social group categories	School A		School B		Total (9)
	Teacher Interviews (3)	Student groups (2)	Teacher Interviews (3)	Student groups (1)	
Dutch/Non-Dutch	3	2	2	0	7
Motivation	2	2	2	1	7
Interests	1	2	1	1	5
Origin or Culture	1	2	1	1	5
Extravert/Introvert	2	0	1	1	4
Male/Female	1	1	2	0	4
Smokers	0	1	1	1	3
Weed smokers	0	2	0	1	3
Teachers	2	1	0	1	2
Arrogant people	0	1	0	1	2
School class	1	0	0	1	2
HBO/MBO[a]	1	1	0	0	2
Residence[b]	0	1	0	1	2
Religion	0	0	1	1	2
Study year	1	0	0	0	1
Couples	0	1	0	0	1
Former Havo - students[c]	0	0	1	0	1
Outsiders	0	1	0	0	1

Note. [a] HBO is a form of higher vocational education, that was housed in the same building as MBO in school A. [b] Place of residence of the students. [c] Students that followed a higher study level before entering the MBO study.

Experiences of Intergroup Contact at School

Contact. All teachers stated there is no or little contact between groups, except from arranged contact in the classroom. Both student groups SA.1 and SA.2 stated there is no contact between the groups. Students in group SB.1 stated there was contact between the groups. Examples of this contact were: In the hallways, at toilets, projects, internships, electives, and introduction days. In the interview with teacher TB.1 , a statement was made regarding this contact:

They don't mix, no. Sometimes they say at the toilets or the canteen or something. But when I ask them if they speak to each other. They say, yes if I accidentally touch them or something, I will say sorry. So yes, it is really just with each other, it is such a big

building with 2000 students. Yeah, you don't really feel safe if you're not with your own

group. (TB.1, on contact between social groups at school)

The arranged contact has different forms. At school B there are internships where there is contact between students, electives where students from different studies meet, and projects where you cannot choose your partners. School A also has a project where you work together with students from different studies. The teachers from school B have different opinions on the level of sufficiency of this contact. Teacher TB.1 stated that she is content with the contact between the students, and does not feel the need to stimulate this more. The two other teachers mentioned that they would like to see the contact increased. At school A, teacher TA.3 stated to not see the need of stimulating this contact. The teacher stated, "if you give them tools, it will become a very forces affair". The other two teachers mentioned they would like to stimulate this contact. In total four out of six teachers stated they would like to see the intergroup contact increased.

All teachers describe the current contact as "task-oriented". Two teachers from school B also stated that the contact is "need-oriented". Students have contact if they need something from each other. Student group SA.2 mentioned that there is some contact, but brief and only when necessary.

Teachers TA.2 and TB.3 both mentioned friction between groups. According to teacher TB.3 this is caused because the groups know a significant different culture, with different norms and customs. He explained: "Yeah, behaviour that is indirectly or directly related to culture. That evokes resistance. Mostly how are you going to behave in the classroom, towards students; what can you say and what not, that evokes resistance." Teacher TA.2 elaborated that friction arises because significant different people are forced to work together in big groups. Student group SA.1 stated that there are irritations and discussions between social groups, and even prejudice and racism at school. One student explained by saying: "There are different views and opinions in school. So, there will always be a difference between people."

Importance of Intergroup Contact. All teachers and most students endorse the importance of intergroup contact. In student group SA.2, some students expressed that they did not see contact between groups as necessary or beneficial. One student explained: "I don't see why I should have contact with other people than my group. I choose the right people around me, so I don't need other people". The teachers and students together referred to 19 reasons intergroup contact is important. These are grouped together in six categories: learning

from one another, career perspective, anti-stigma or prejudice, social Climate, and diverse society.

In total four out of six teachers and two student groups stated that intergroup contact was important since students can learn from each other. In total 11 references related to this category. Students explained that "you can learn from each other. In worldviews and ideas" (SB.1). Teacher TA.1 stated that "by bringing stuff together and and and by bringing parties together, you can learn from each other. For example, MBO has certain skills and HBO [Higher Vocational Education] has certain skills."

All three teachers and the student group from school B named career perspective as a reason of importance. In total 7 references related to this category. For example, network and diverse colleagues and clients. Two student groups (SA.1 and SB.1) and one teacher (TA.1) endorse the importance of intergroup contact in the light of anti-stigma or anti-prejudice. Two teachers (TA.2 and TB.2) and one student group (SA.1) said intergroup contact would be beneficial to the social climate in school. Teacher TA.2 highlighted it as the most important reason behind intergroup contact. Lastly, the diverse society and anti-conflict were also mentioned as reasons why intergroup contact is important, respectively by two teachers (TA.1 and TB.3), and one student group (SA.1).

Intergroup Contact Practices

The participants mentioned practices currently implemented in school that they think are successful for intergroup contact, and new practices they would like to see implemented. Practices discussed were projects, activities, dialogue, electives, learning about other people's world, base year, break at the same time, and peer tutoring. To structure this information as clearly as possible, every subheading starts with existing practices, followed by ideas for successful practices.

Projects. Both schools currently have projects where students encounter different people. Teachers from school A mentioned two projects. One pilot project where HBO students help MBO students with studying. Another project is Entrepreneurship, where students from different studies work together on a group project. The student groups also mentioned these projects as intergroup contact. Teacher TA.1 from the pilot project was positive on the results of this project. The students were initially negative about the idea of working with HBO students. After the project was running for a while, the students were positive about the project and were talking and greeting the HBO students in the hallways. The opinions on the Entrepreneurship project were diverse. Teacher TA.1 was positive

regarding the contact that this project generates. Teacher TA.2 does not consider the project to be successful. The teacher explains:

> Sometimes you see that connections grow, but it mostly yields friction. Because one works hard, the other does nothing. It is the same in the classroom of course, but I notice that in projects it is more extreme. And people cannot identify with the other because they are from another study of course. (TA.2, on friction between students from different studies in projects)

However, the teacher sees potential in the project. According to the teacher, it could be more successful if the design was different. The groups should be kept smaller, and there should be more focus on the relationships between the students at the start of the project. All teacher from school B mentioned Peer Project, where third-year students help first-year students with their projects. Two teachers were satisfied with this project, however one of them stated more contact moments are desirable. Teacher TB.3 thinks a project like this does not add to intergroup contact, since it does not affect the way the students think.

Teachers and student groups from both schools came with ideas for projects that can be classified as transcending projects. For example, projects where teachers have guest lectures at different studies. According to teachers from school A, this could create a safer climate in school, since students get familiar with different teachers, and thereby could also improve academic performance. Also, different teachers are part of different social groups and thereby broaden the intergroup contact for the students. Teacher TA.1 suggests that not only teachers are able to give guest lectures to other studies, but the students are able to transfer knowledge about their specialism too.

> I would love to give a guest lecture for some specific depth. But even better, my students would be able to give a presentation to these HBO students, because my students are the ones that have to execute in the future. (TA.1 on transcending projects for intergroup contact)

Student group SB.1 stated that they would like more projects with different classes from the same sector and exchange research results with other classes.

Activities. The references to activities are classified in five themes: excursions, introductions days, school parties, sports and student associations. Student groups SA.1 and

SB.1, and teacher TA.2 mentioned excursions. The teacher mentioned existing excursions that create quality contact between students.

> We have an excursion in the third year. Two studies go together on the trip. That went well. There was, at the end, a lot of contact and that stayed during the rest of the schoolyear. The trip was in fall, and the contact stayed until the graduation. The contact was however, really informal and not task-oriented at all. But I don't think it has to be. (TA.2, on excursions for intergroup contact)

Teacher TA.2 stated that he thinks excursions, or multiple day trips create opportunities to learn from each other and teach to work together. Student groups SA.1 and SB.1 also mentioned school trips.

Student groups SA.1 and SB.1 both mentioned introduction days. Introduction days are currently implemented in school B, and SB.1 considers it to be a success for intergroup contact. School A does not organise introduction days yet, but SA.1 sees potential for intergroup contact. Both student groups also mentioned school parties as an activity to increase intergroup contact. However, students in SB.1 added that they would probably not go if it was organized. Teacher TA.2 mentioned an attempt to organize a school party. It was cancelled due to the low number of tickets sold. The teacher sees potential if the organization and promotion would be executed better. Teacher TB.3 calls school parties reasonable but doubts the effect on intergroup contact. He explains: "It is not changing behaviour, but changing the mindset where living together begins."

Another activity is sports. Teacher TA.1 and TB.2, and student groups SA.1 and SB.1 mentioned the potential of sport activities for intergroup contact. Teacher TB.2 and SB.1 both referred to sport days with multiple classes or years. Teacher TA.1 and SA.1 referred to sport activities with the class. The teacher organises a weekly fitness hour with the class at a fitness centre. He values the contact between the students in a different context. Lastly, SA.2 mentioned student associations as possibility to increase intergroup contact. Student associations could organize more student activities. However, multiple students stated that they do not really care for being part of a student association.

Dialogue. Two teachers from school A, and one teacher from school B mentioned the importance of intergroup dialogue. Two teachers (TA.1 and TB.3) stated to actively work on intergroup dialogue. Together they referred 13 times to the use of dialogue.

What it is about, is that they learn and realize that their dreams and wishes are allowed to be there. But they must take into account that there are also other people. And you can do two things. You can get allergies for them, or you can get to know yourself through other people. So, not changing behaviour, but learning to think. (TB.3, on intergroup dialogue)

Both teachers stated that personal attention is an important factor in this process. Students' opinions and thoughts are allowed to be there. But there will be a conversation about it. Teacher TA.1 stated that students are still developing who they are, where they belong and in what social group they fit. The teacher added: "We should consider and talk about these things."

Electives. School B currently has sector wide electives. Teacher TB.1 and student group SB.1 mentioned these electives as intergroup contact moments. Both referred to these electives as positive and useful. Students in SA.1 stated that they would like to switch classes occasionally, to have the opportunity to meet and work with other people. Electives fit this desire.

Learning about other people's worlds. Both schools currently have activities relating to learning about other people's worlds. For example, teacher TA.1 started an activity for the course Intercultural Sensitivity, where students visit an asylum seekers' centre. According to the teacher you could see a change; by seeing and meeting these people they were able to adjust their prejudices. At school B, teacher TB.1 arranged different guest speakers, for example a transwoman. This teacher also mentioned a programme called "Lifelines". Where students and teachers tell about significant moments in their lives, to get to know each other at the beginning of the first school year. This is part of the curriculum, however the teacher added that the success depends on the teachers' efforts. If teachers are afraid to open up themselves, the students will not do this either.

Teacher TA.1 endorsed the importance of learning about other cultures. An idea could be to offer different culturally specific meals in the canteen. It could function as an opening to have a conversation and come closer together.

Teach about the cultures when offering the meals, for example with posters or something. Moroccan dishes, Turkish dishes, whatever dishes. Tell stories with it. I

am a proponent of positive confirmation of your true self, culture or any other social

group. (TA.1 on teaching about cultures in the canteen)

Base year. One teacher from school A was a proponent of creating a base year. A first-year where studies are not yet separated. The whole sector would have the same base year, with the same courses and some electives. According to the teacher this would lead to less dropping out and more contact between different people.

 If you're really into the economics and I happen to sit next to you in class, since we have a course together. Even though I want to go to Tourism in my next year, we would still come into contact. (TA.3 on a base year for intergroup contact)

Break at the same time. Both schools currently do not have a break at a fixed time. According to teacher TA.2 and student group SB.1 this could stimulate contact between groups. Teacher TB.1 questioned if this would actually lead to more intergroup contact.

Peer tutoring. One teacher from school B thought of setting up peer tutoring as a possibility to meet other students. People that struggle with certain courses could seek for help with students that perform well on these courses. This could be designed as an internship to create more internship placements, more contact and help for students that need it.

Obstructing Factors

The interviews with the teachers and the student groups together brought forward seven possible obstacles in stimulating intergroup contact at school. As seen in Table 3, teacher motivation and student motivation are important factors in the stimulation of contact according to the teachers. Teacher TA.2 mentioned a connection between the two: "if teachers feel like, oh this is obligated for everyone; so half of the students are going to bail. Yes, then teachers are not really excited about arranging all this either". Student group SA.1 and teacher TA.2 mentioned money regarding excursions, since not all students are able to afford a contribution. More practical obstacles were scheduling, physical space and time; relating to the number of teachers available, the classrooms available and the extra required time teacher currently do not have.

Table 3

Potential Obstacles According to Teachers and Students

Obstacles	School A		School B		Total (9)
	Teacher Interviews (3)	Student Groups (2)	Teacher Interviews (3)	Student Groups (1)	
Motivation Teacher	3	0	2	0	5
Motivation Student	1	1	1	0	3
Scheduling	2	0	1	0	3
Physical Space	1	0	1	0	2
Money	1	1	0	0	2
Time	2	0	0	0	2
Open mind teacher	1	0	0	0	1

Discussion

The goal of the present study is exploring the vision of the individuals directly involved, for practices that can stimulate intergroup contact at school. This was studied through interviews with teachers and focus groups with students, at two different MBO schools in the county Utrecht. The results show that there is little intergroup contact at school, and intergroup phenomena, such as friction and irritations, are present. Explored practices as transcending projects, peer tutoring, and activities, such as excursions, introduction days and sports, seem promising. However, consulting teachers and students seems to be the first step in adequately stimulating intergroup contact at school.

Social Groups at School

The results show that students and teachers from both schools identify social groups based on the same categories. However, there are a few exceptions. Students not only identified more categories, but also more specific groups than teachers. Two noticeable differences are origin and interests. Students identified the category of being either Dutch or not Dutch, however all student groups specified this by mentioning subgroups based on specific origins or cultures. In contrast, only two out of six teachers specified this distinction. Furthermore, students identified noticeably more groups in category interests than teachers. A possible explanation could be that teachers look at students in helicopter view, where they

notice groups but not specific subgroups. Whereas students are part of the whole, which could lead to perceiving more types of social groups, and a more detailed perception of those. A study on peer victimization and school climate also highlights the discrepancy between students and teachers in the perception of the school (Bradshaw, Sawyer & O'Brennan, 2007). This underlines the importance of consulting both teachers and students before designing and implementing new practices.

All identified categories fit traits of social categorization mentioned by Leonardelli & Toh (2015): gender, race and age, attitudinal/ideological features (e.g. religion), spatial features (e.g. residence), and behavioural features (e.g. motivation or smoking habits). The groups based on interests partly fitted in behavioural features (e.g. athletes), and partly in physical features (e.g. fashion). These results indicate that social categorization, and therefore social group formation, takes place at both schools, and intergroup phenomena are likely to be present.

Intergroup Contact at School

Unfortunately, all teachers, and all but one student group, stated there is no or little contact between social groups. One student focus group stated there was contact between different social groups. Interestingly, their teacher made a contradictory statement on this matter. The teacher stated that the students talked about the level of contact where you apologise for accidentally touching someone, and not real contact. This argument suggests that the contact the students mentioned remains superficial. Relatedly, the teachers described current contact between groups as task-oriented or need-oriented. The contact seems to lack affective factors, such as empathy and anxiety reduction, previous studies conclude to be essential in intergroup contact (Felten & Taouanza, 2018; Fiske, Cuddy, Flick & Xu, 2002; Mackie, Devos & Smith, 2000; Pettigrew, 1998). This indicates that task-oriented or need-oriented contact is not sufficient to positively affect intergroup attitude.

Looking at the literature, social segregation seems frequent in school settings in diverse societies, and cross-group friendships are relatively uncommon (Aboud & Sankar, 2007; McDonald et al., 2013; Wilson, Rodkin & Ryan, 2014). Students, despite opportunities for contact, tend to persistently self-segregate in the school setting (Leszczensky & Pink, 2015; McKeown, Stringer & Cairns, 2015). A possible explanation, that could also be the case in the present study, is that same-group friendships are formed because of similarity in activity preferences (Aboud & Mendeson, 1996). Shared interests are essential in the initial selection of friends, since enjoying the same activities means enjoying time together, and

subsequently spending more time together (McGlothlin, Killen & Edmonds, 2005). If students assume other groups have different interests, this can potentially limit cross-group friendships, and thereby intergroup contact (Turner & Cameron, 2016). Another explanation could be that students do not sufficiently understand the importance of intergroup contact. In the present study a couple of students stated not to understand the importance of intergroup contact, this could be related to not engaging in intergroup contact. Not to mention the importance of understanding the importance of intergroup contact in order to affect intergroup attitude (Van Dick et al., 2004). This underlines the important role of teachers in providing knowledge on the importance of intergroup contact, preceding stimulating this contact (Yefanova et al., 2017).

Fortunately, most students and all teachers recognized the importance of intergroup contact. Teachers elaborated more on the importance of contact, but the students mentioned the same overarching themes. The perceived importance of intergroup contact to combat stigma and prejudice is in line with the original hypothesis of Allport (1954), and acknowledges the basis of multiple anti-prejudice programmes (Felten & Taouanza, 2018). The perceived influence on the social climate in school is confirmed in the study of Dessel (2010). The accordance with previous evidence on intergroup contact, indicates that teachers and most students have a fairly crystallized idea on the importance and effects of intergroup contact.

Promising Practices

Teachers and students mentioned practices that can potentially stimulate intergroup contact, that are either currently implemented or they would like to see implemented. Currently implemented transcending projects, electives, introduction days, and internships were mentioned by both teachers and students. Excursions were also mentioned by both students and teachers, even though not currently implemented. These practices seem promising, since both teachers and students see the benefit for intergroup contact. Besides, the mentioned idea of peer tutoring is proven to be an effective practice (Hawley, 2007).

Furthermore, the central role of teachers in supporting intergroup interaction was prominent in interviews with teachers. The dialogue teachers spoke about was an example of teachers guiding the conversation and dialogue between themselves and students, but also between students. The projects were also structured by teachers placing students in groups, so they would meet other people than they usually meet. This indicates that teachers are aware of

the central role they have in the stimulation of intergroup contact as substantiated in the study of Yefanova et al. (2017).

Even though Allport's (1954) key conditions of intergroup contact have been proven not to be essential in the school setting (Pettigrew, 1998), most discussed practices still meet at least two of these conditions. The transcending projects meet all four key conditions; equal status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and authority support. Whereas practices such as activities, electives, learning about other people's worlds, base year, break at the same time, and peer tutoring, meet at least two conditions, namely: authority support and equal status within the situation. The practice dialogue does not meet the equal status condition, since the dialogue is partly between the teacher and students, but meets the condition of authority support.

In most of the discussed practices the interrelated processes of Pettigrew (1998); learning about the outgroup, changing behaviour, generating affective ties and ingroup reappraisal, can be recognized. First, learning about the outgroup. The practice where a teacher invited guest speakers to teach about different worldviews shows this process. However, study shows that is not learning about the outgroup per se, but learning about similarities and differences between groups in general that is effective (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Wolsko, Park, Judd & Wittenbrink, 2000). The practice 'Lifelines' seems to meet this condition, since it puts more emphasis on similarities and differences. Lifelines is the practice where students and teachers, at the start of the first year, tell about significant moments in their lives. The goal of this practice is getting to know each other, and hereby also includes the process of generating affective ties.

Second, changing behaviour. This process can be found in all discussed projects, electives, and activities like sports. The projects create situations that include the acceptance of people from other groups. According to Pettigrew (1998), this may lead to a positive attitude change towards other groups. The projects also include repeated and direct contact (Eller & Abrahams), however lacks the essential affective factors (Fiske, Cuddy, Flick & Xu, 2002). The adjustments proposed by a teacher, of keeping the groups small and more focus on the relationship between students at the start of the project, could create opportunity for affective ties. If the focus on the relationship between students includes learning about each other, this would also include the process of learning about the outgroup (Pettigrew, 1998). These proposed adjustments show that teachers are aware of the importance of focussing on meaningful contact between students for successful intergroup contact.

Third, generating affective ties. This process was lacking in most currently implemented practices. However, present in the explored practices grouped under activities, and in the projects, considering the adjustment in group size and with more focus on student relationships. In discussed activities as excursions, introductions, parties and sports, there is a focus on positive contact and cross-group friendships. However, the practices are not study-related. Since multiple previous studies have shown that quality of contact is essential (Eller & Abrams, 2004; Schwartz & Simmons, 2001; Stephan Diaz-Loving & Duran, 2000), and considering the socializing responsibility of schools, the question is if the contact should be study related per se.

Last, ingroup reappraisal. This process can be found within all discussed practices, since intergroup contact in general leads to gaining an understanding of norms and customs different than your own. The project where a teacher took the students to an asylum seekers' centre shows a more prominent example of ingroup reappraisal. This project shows students how norms and customs are not universal. According to the teacher, the project enabled students to adjust their prejudices. This may not target the intergroup contact between students at school directly, but contact with other social groups and adjusted prejudices could potentially indirectly influence intergroup contact at school.

Strengths and Limitations

The present study had some limitations. First, the study had a small sample size. However, the purpose of the study was not to generalize, and similarities in the results of both schools do point towards a promising direction for practice. Second, there was no specific focus on negative intergroup phenomena in the exploration of practices, since this motive was not mentioned to the participants. This was to prevent response bias or a negative tone. This can potentially have led to a broader focus than initially intended. Third, the student groups were susceptible for social pressure. It was noticeable that when extravert students spoke up with a merely negative opinion, other students were not eager to contribute in the conversation. This could have been reduced by more focus on creating a safe zone at the start of the focus group. The study also had strengths, for instance, the study included two different schools from two different study fields, in different cities in the county Utrecht. This established some external validity, so even though not generalizable, the results can be used to make informed decisions. Furthermore, internal validity was assured through data triangulation by including the perspectives of both teachers and students from diverse

backgrounds, and thereby different social groups. This was also important in minimizing social and cultural bias**.**

Practical Implications

Present study shows that teachers and students have a crystallized idea of the current state of intergroup contact at school, and of the promising practices of stimulating this contact at their own school. Different practices that are already implemented in the schools, seem beneficial to intergroup contact, even if they originally were not designed for this objective. Besides, the practices opted by teachers and student are in line with current knowledge on intergroup contact. This shows that adequately stimulating intergroup contact at school starts with consulting the teachers and students on intergroup practices. This creates a better match with current practices and the situation per school, and thereby works towards a more sustainable and effective practice.

The study offers possible implications for practice. Different practices explored in this study, are in line with current literature on intergroup contact and supported by teachers and students, and are therefore considered to be promising. First, transcending projects, where students work together with students from either different studies, different study years or different study levels. Within these projects, the group size should be kept small, and there should be put more emphasis on positive personal interaction and the development of cross-group friendship, like in existing cooperative learning programmes (Cameron & Turner, 2016). Second, activities, such as excursions, introductions days and sports, where there is opportunity for quality contact between students that do not usually interact. Last, there is peer tutoring, that is a proven effective practice. For the schools that took part in this study, these implications mainly consist out of small adjustments in currently implemented practices.

However, since the contact between social groups is minimal at the moment**,** the first step is educating students on the importance of intergroup contact. Teachers play a central role in teaching the importance of this contact, prior to students engaging in intergroup contact. The dialogue approach mentioned by teachers, and imagined contact exercises can be used to reduce fears and negative expectations, and make aware of benefits and importance of contact, thereby raising the likelihood of future contact (Crisp, Stathi, Turner & Husnu, 2009). Being aware of the benefits and importance of intergroup contact, can also increase students' motivation to positively interact with other social groups.

Yet, there are also obstructing factors to consider, such as money and time. Students are not always in the position to contribute themselves (e.g. excursions). To make sure

students, or whole social groups, are not excluded, alternative funding options should be explored before implementation. Furthermore, teachers have limited hours. Considering the current workload of teachers, other constructions should be explored. For example, excursions, introductions days and internships can be led by either specific teachers or extern organizations focused on diversity promotion.

Future Research

The present study indicates that the people directly involved can have a valuable voice in future research on intergroup contact practices at school. Future research should focus on implementing effective practices in the school setting, but it is highly recommended to involve the teachers and students, since every school has a different composition, and different experiences with intergroup contact. The teachers and students are aware of the status quo and suitable approaches in their specific context. Effective practices can potentially be adjusted in consultation with teachers and students. This could also help overcoming obstacles as motivation, since involvement tends to increase participant motivation (Moritsugu, Vera, Wong & Duffy, 2015).

Final Conclusion

Inevitable**,** the present study highlights the importance of including the people directly involved in designing and implementing practices. The vision of the teachers and students proved to be of significant value in the exploration of promising practices of stimulating intergroup contact in the school setting. Hopefully this conclusion functions as an incentive for future research to involve the people themselves. In the end, they are the ones that have to make it work.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured Interview Teachers

Introduction

- Confidential
- Permission to record the interview?
- No wrong answers

1. Are you familiar with the concept of Social Groups?
   a. How would you explain social groups?
   b. In what kind of social group would you place yourself?
   c. How do you feel about social group formation?

Social Groups at School

2. What social groups do you see at school?
   a. How do you feel about this group formation?
   b. How would you describe the interaction between groups?
      i. What kind of contact do you see?
   c. What do you think about the quantity of the contact?
   d. What do you think about the quality of the contact?
3. What social groups do you see in your class?
   a. How do you feel about this?
   b. How would you describe the interaction between these groups?
      i. What kind of contact do you see?
   c. What do you think about the quantity of the contact?
   d. What do you think about the quality of the contact?

Importance of Intergroup Contact

4. Why do you think intergroup contact at school is important?
   a. Could you elaborate?

Improving Intergroup Contact at School

5. How can the contact between social groups at school be improved?
   a. How can school stimulate or facilitate this?
   b. What do you believe to be challenges doing this?
   c. What could be your role as a teacher?

Appendix B

Workshop Structure Student Focus Groups

Necessities:
- Paper A3 format
- Markers
- Laptop

Duration: 1 – 1,5 hr

Main objective: How can we stimulate contact between social groups at school?

1. **Energizers**
   o Introduction: let students guess who the moderators are, what kind of lifestyle they have, and to what kind of groups they belong.
   o Link to social groups: group formation is normal, we tend to like people that are more like us. The same interests etc.

2. **Identifying social groups at school**
   o Method: Wordwebs. Students form small groups and make a wordweb in of social groups they recognize at school.
   o Afterwards students present the wordweb, and classroom discussion.

3. **Current contact between social groups at school**
   o Method: wordwebs. Students remain in small groups and make a new wordweb on when and how contact that is currently present between groups.
   o Students present the wordweb and through classroom discussion discuss further.

4. **The importance of contact between social groups**
   o Classroom discussion on importance of contact between social groups.

5. **How can we enforce more contact between social groups at school?**
   o Classroom discussion on how to stimulate this contact.
      i. What are the students' needs?
      ii. How can this be established?
      iii. What can be your own role?