

Summary

This report is about relations between students of different ethnic background in secondary education. In the Netherlands, in policy discourse as well as in the media, the call for education as an instrument for socio-cultural integration is growing ever louder. School is increasingly considered as a place where young people from indigenous and immigrant families have the opportunity to meet each other, and should be able to develop a realistic image about each other's collective categories. The question is to what degree and how schools facilitate their students to get to know each other across group boundaries, to engage in activities together, and to make friendships. Does it suffice to muster students from different ethnic background, to make sure that schools have an appropriate ethnic mix, or is more needed?

The contact hypothesis, as developed especially by social psychologists in the second half of the 20th century, formulates a number of conditions under which existing mutual prejudice can be reduced when different, even opposing (ethnic) groups are brought together. The founder of the conditioned contact hypothesis is the social psychologist Gordon Allport. Allport was cautiously optimistic about the beneficial influence of intergroup contact; he was, however, quite outspoken about casual contact. Casual contact, in his view, always leads to stereotyping and increase of prejudice. Over the past fifty years, social psychologists have done extensively research on the influence of contact on intergroup opinions. This has led to extensions and reformulations of the hypothesis.

Allport developed the contact hypothesis in his book *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954). He distinguished several kinds of social contact. The most important are *casual contacts*, *acquaintance* and *contact in pursuit of common objectives*. Casual contacts between ethnic groups do not reduce prejudice; Allport thought it more plausible that through casual contact existing prejudice would increase. Allport juxtaposed acquaintance to casual contact. From the contemporary literature Allport concluded that through true or sustained acquaintance mutual prejudice is reduced.

The conditions that constitute part of the contact hypothesis as it has evolved over the past fifty years are generally known as 'Allport's conditions'. Throughout the relevant chapter (1979 [1954]: 261-282) the conditions are treated implicitly; there is no question of a

methodical review of them. The brief closing paragraph is broadly viewed as a summary of the four conditions that are imperative for the hypothesis to hold true: equal status, common goals, institutional and normative support, and the awareness of an overarching identity – Allport speaks of a common humanity. In the social-psychological literature about contact theory the necessity of this set of conditions for social contact to lead to friendship and a reduction of mutual prejudice is still undisputed - at least, until recently (see below).

The contact hypothesis presupposes that these conditions can be implemented in the micro context of contact between individuals. When the conditions are in force ‘given a population of ordinary people, with a normal degree of prejudice’ (1979 [1954]: 281), interethnic contact leads to sustained, mutually appreciated relations and even to relations of friendship, and to a reduction of prejudice on both sides. In isolation, each condition is necessary but not sufficient for the hypothesis to hold good.

The first condition is ‘equal status between groups’. Status here is not taken in the broad, societal sense, but signifies the position of an individual in the local field of interaction, e.g. the position of each pupil in the classroom where the teacher treats his pupils in an equal manner.

The second condition is ‘institutional support’, or ‘support of institutional authorities’. By this is meant that sustained contact and equal status can be encouraged and maintained by support of the authorities, including measures to uphold the relevant norms through special educational programs, and introduction of special teaching practices that make students work together in the classroom. A strong relation with the first condition is implicated; equal status in the contact situation is in fact ‘a conditioned condition’ only to be realized through at least a certain degree of institutional support.

The third condition is ‘cooperation toward a common goal’. Social contact leads to sustained, positively valued contact and reduction of prejudice when groups cooperate to attain a joint objective and all involved realize that their shared interest is at stake. Sometimes, the importance of mutual interdependence is underlined. When people see that they have to rely on each other because of functionally complementary roles acted out in a team effort, this can boost a positive attitude toward each other. Here as well, in practice, a strong mutual relation with the conditions of equal status and institutional support can be presupposed.

The fourth condition concerns the realization of a shared, overarching identity incorporating (but not necessarily making redundant) the collective identities of the groups in contact – the feeling to belong to a common humanity. This can, for instance, be brought closer by courses and training sessions in which universally felt values are highlighted.

This study comprises an inventory and analysis of scientific texts. The texts concern the reporting of empirical research of interethnic contacts between students in secondary education, research implicitly or explicitly departing from the paradigm of the contact hypothesis. The selected texts in this study are screened for (partial) answers to the following questions:

1 To what degree and under which circumstances do interethnic mixing and proximity in school lead to friendly interethnic contact in and outside school, and participation in each other's peer groups? To what degree and under which circumstances does an ethnically mixed school setting lead to mutual avoidance and/or conflict?

2 To what degree and under which circumstances do interethnic mixing and proximity in school influence mutual outgroup presentations?

Criteria for selection of the texts comprised: articles in scientific journals, books from academic publishers, PhD dissertations and working papers published on academic websites. Firstly, a search via Internet was done. The query terms were chosen with our decision in mind to restrict the review to studies on interethnic contacts between students in secondary education that departed from the perspective of contact theory, explicitly or otherwise. In this way, we found the recent meta-study of Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp (2006). In this study, a large number of publications of quantitative empirical research on the contact hypothesis are brought together. The publications are categorized according to a number of characteristics, among others age group of the respondents (e.g. adolescents), kind of intergroup contact (e.g. ethnic groups) and field of interaction (e.g. education). With the help of the basic references in the meta-study, a sustained effort was undertaken to find the publications on interethnic contact between adolescents in schools. We found the large majority of them. The studies from Pettigrew & Tropp (2006) form also the majority of the studies reviewed in chapter 3 of this report. Besides, we found a number of publications that fit our criteria that have not been included in the meta-study of Pettigrew & Tropp.

The meta-study reviews more than 500 studies, which together comprise more than 250,000 respondents in some forty countries. It concerns in all cases research in which intergroup contact was the independent variable, or one of the independent variables, for explaining prejudice. (Quasi-) experiments as well as field studies in which contact and prejudice were

measured and statistically correlated were taken into account. On the basis of the statistical meta-analysis, Pettigrew & Tropp conclude that more contact is related to less prejudice in a statistically significant way. The authors underline that this is already the case in absence of the well-known conditions of the contact hypothesis. The most conspicuous result, emphasized by the authors, is thus that Allport's conditions are not essential for the reduction of prejudice. A simple increase in contact is sufficient, although prevailing conditions do further improve relations and further reduce prejudice. Allport's postulate that in absence of the conditions more contact leads to more problems is dismissed, without, for that matter, establishing this explicitly. Allport's conditions facilitate the process in the direction of sustained contact and mutual understanding, but are not an indispensable precondition.

In this report 26 studies are reviewed, of which 18 are part of Pettigrew & Tropp (2006), covering the large majority of researches on interethnic relations among adolescents in education in this meta-study. In chapter 3 we examine these publications systematically on the conditions that are taken into account, the question central in the field study, the research population, the research methods and the results. For each study we record if it contributes to an answer to the first and/or the second research question of this report, and what this contribution is. The field studies are categorized in a table by a number of central criteria. The table can be found in the beginning of chapter 4, and is in English.

Six field studies focus on the influence of opportunity for interethnic contact in school on the frequency of informal interaction and the development of friendly relations between students of different interethnic background. For these studies we have verified if they contribute to an answer to the first research question. About the appreciation, the quality, the intensity or the duration of interethnic relations between students we remain in the dark. Together, these six studies do not indicate clearly in which direction we could find an answer to the first research question. Four studies report a statistically significant, positive correlation between working together toward a common goal and friendly contacts, over, but not beyond the duration of the cooperation. Two of these studies can claim a causal direction in this relationship, to the effect that cooperation toward a common goal influences interethnic contacts positively for the duration of the experiment. In the other two an indication for the causal direction of the correlation is lacking.

The other twenty field studies did not look at the development of interethnic contacts, but concentrated directly on the question under which contact conditions in the school situation students changed their opinion of ethnic outgroup members in and outside school.

These studies have been consulted for an answer to the second research question. The results are not univocal, precluding a clear answer to the second research question. Nine studies assessed a lack of effect or a negative effect for the relation between contact situation and prejudice reduction. In four studies a positive correlation was found for one of the categories of students in combination with an absence or a negative effect for the other category. In seven studies a positive effect was assessed for at least one of the categories. In twelve studies of this group a reduction or relative absence of prejudice was measured for those in a relative positive contact situation, without at least one of Allport's conditions having been taken into consideration. In the other eight studies in this group one or several conditions are taken into account; the condition of cooperation towards a common goal is in all these cases considered. In four studies no effect was assessed between this condition and prejudice reduction. The other four do measure a positive effect; two of these lack the research design to be able to assess a causal direction in the relationship.

To sum up, the following can be said about the reviewed studies:

- 1) A number of studies report a positive effect of educational methods in which students from different ethnic groups develop activities together and bear a collective responsibility for the results. Cooperation in mutual interdependence toward a common goal is an appealing idea. The research on the positive effects of this condition here reviewed is in our opinion not convincing, especially because a longitudinal perspective is lacking and the influence of other social relationships and activities in which adolescents are engaged, also outside the school, is kept from view;
- 2) In total, eleven studies report a positive effect for the complete population in the contact setting on which data were gathered. Eight studies assess the absence of effect or a negative effect for the complete research population;
- 3) Most studies cannot assess the causal direction of the assessed correlation. Of the eleven studies that report a positive effect for all categories that were included in the survey, only two can make a claim to having assessed a causal direction.
- 4) In only half of the studies are one or more of Allport's conditions involved in the analysis;
- 5) A review of the experiments among the studies makes one realize that the reported positive results cannot, or perhaps only to unrealistically high expense, be attained in the day-to-day situation in or outside school;

- 6) Not one of the studies provides convincing evidence, or manages otherwise to make plausible, that the assessed positive results take root even in the near future;
- 7) Most authors make clear in their texts that factors outside and beyond the school play an essential role in the development of interethnic relations in the school.

The chief conclusion of Pettigrew & Tropp's (2006) statistical analysis of secondary sources – contact leads to a reduction of prejudice, also when none of Allport's conditions is in force – cannot be confirmed by this review of a small segment of those sources.

The central recommendation with which Pettigrew & Tropp conclude their article is based on their chief conclusion. They suggest that, from now on, we take leave of our focus on the classical conditions, and concentrate on the negative factors impeding the desired effects of interethnic contact. This proposal comes out of the blue because, in the meta-study, negative factors are not considered. This report makes however clear that these negative factors exist; almost all the authors refer to them, and the range of identified or surmised impediments is extensive. These impediments are related to (lack of) skills, socio-economic position, preceding experiences and experiences outside the school context. It is of the utmost importance to study these impediments; however, the question is if contact theory, even in its trimmed-down form as suggested by Pettigrew & Tropp, offers the most suitable framework.

To be able to assess and understand the effect of intergroup contact on the development of friendly relations, mutual understanding and representation across group boundaries among students in the school context, we argue in this report for an approach that takes a broader view of interaction, one that transcends the locus of the school and the dimensions of cognitive and affective identification. Allport's central conditions (c.f. 'equal status', 'normative support') can only become effective and remain in force if processes are taken into account (some curbed, others triggered) playing in and across all discerned dimensions – those of cognitive and affective identification, of social status, of institutionalization, and of acculturation – while simultaneously being directed by the impact from societal macro forces upon the micro level. Because of this, the results of (quasi-) experimental research on the level of individual interaction that does not take these processes into account will delude policy makers with false perspectives that in practice will prove to be unattainable.

Pettigrew & Tropp suggest that research be done according to more detailed multilevel models that alongside individual parameters comprise structural and normative ones as well (2006: 768). Other scholars, mostly outside or at the margins of the immediate circle of

contact theoreticians, call for qualitative, ethnographic and longitudinal methods, which are better able to uncover the dynamics of complex multi-dimensional processes and their influence on mere contact between adolescents of different ethnic background (Bramel 2004; Connolly 2000; Dixon et al. 2005; Forbes 2004). This report confirms and endorses these suggestions.