

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

### Intergroup contact

Direct intergroup contact refers to face-to-face interactions between members of two groups, in this case host-society children and refugee children. Many psychological and other studies have shown that direct positive contact helps reduce prejudice and improves attitudes towards members of out-groups that we come into contact with.

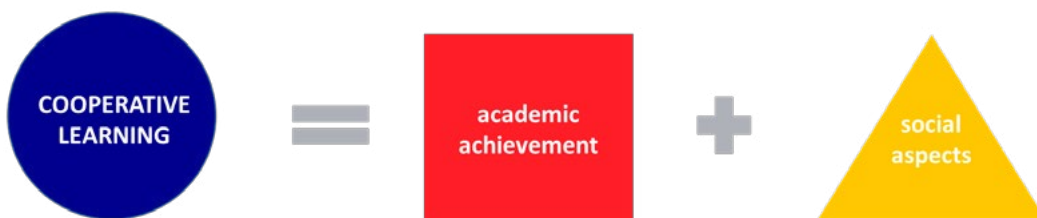
The **intergroup contact hypothesis** was formulated as early as 1954 by prominent American psychologist Gordon Allport. According to him, certain basic conditions should be met to increase contact between members of different groups and improve poor relations between groups. These basic conditions are:

1. sense of equal status between groups
2. common higher goals
3. sense of interdependence between groups (the possibility of cooperation)
4. institutional support for intergroup contact.

To describe these conditions in more detail, we will focus on contexts where they can be realized. This primarily refers to the school, or more specifically the classroom which provides a context where these conditions can be satisfied. One of the best-documented approaches in applying intergroup contact in schools is the cooperative learning intervention, and the most frequent form of cooperative learning is the so-called jigsaw classroom. This is a method where members of different (racial, ethnic or other) groups work together on a clearly structured task under teacher supervision (Cameron and Abbott, 2017). After focusing on the jigsaw classroom as a method of direct contact, we will turn to imagined contact, another method which may be used to improve attitudes towards out-group members, particularly when direct contact between groups is impossible (for example, because the groups live separately).

## Cooperative learning as a method

Cooperative learning consists of group activities for mutual learning and instruction, such as peer tutoring, group research, the idea storm and the jigsaw classroom – where the teacher creates conditions of positive interdependence or cooperation between group members (Johnson and Johnson, 2015). Cooperative learning normally takes place in smaller groups (two to five students), where all group members can communicate face-to-face. In addition to boosting academic achievement (mastering the curriculum and the content of the activity), cooperative learning as a learning and instruction method contributes to acquiring different social skills that ultimately lead to an improvement in the relations between members of different groups. Cooper and Slavin (2004) consider cooperative learning to be a collaborative activity where learning is dependent on the structured exchange of information between group members, where each student is accountable for his/her own learning and contributes to the learning of other group members. The teacher plays a key role in structuring group work in a way that maximizes social and cognitive learning outcomes, and recommendations on how to structure the task are based on clear theoretical underpinnings (Buchs and Butera, 2015).



The classroom activity or the entire lesson is organized according to the principles of cooperative learning, and satisfies all of Allport's conditions:

1. equal status – all participants are students
2. common goal – all group members are there to learn something or to successfully complete a task

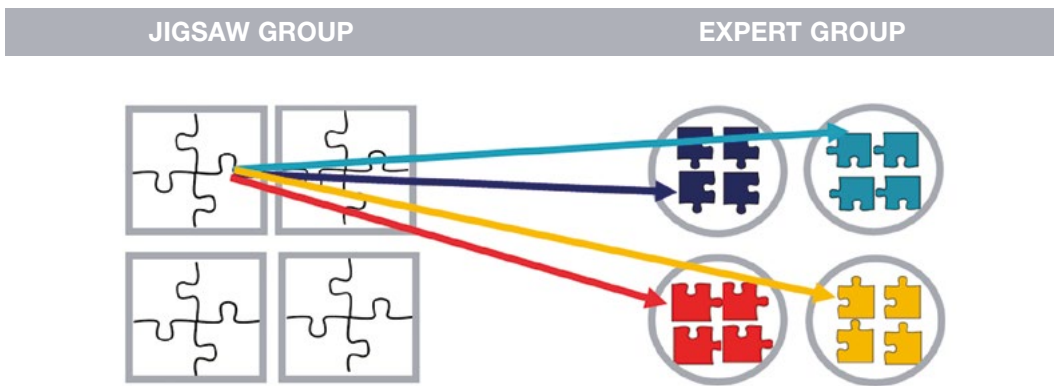
3. cooperative environment – students have to collaborate to achieve the goal, learn the content or successfully complete the task
4. institutional support – the teacher as a representative of the school as an institution supports intergroup contact and collaboration between students, and thus sends a clear and unambiguous message that such behavior is expected and desirable.

In cooperative learning, as the term suggests, the focus is on cooperation. Thus, it is important to exclude any elements of competition, and cooperation implies that all group members are required to contribute, i.e., that successful task completion depends on each group member because each of them has a unique, indispensable role without which it is impossible to fully complete the task.

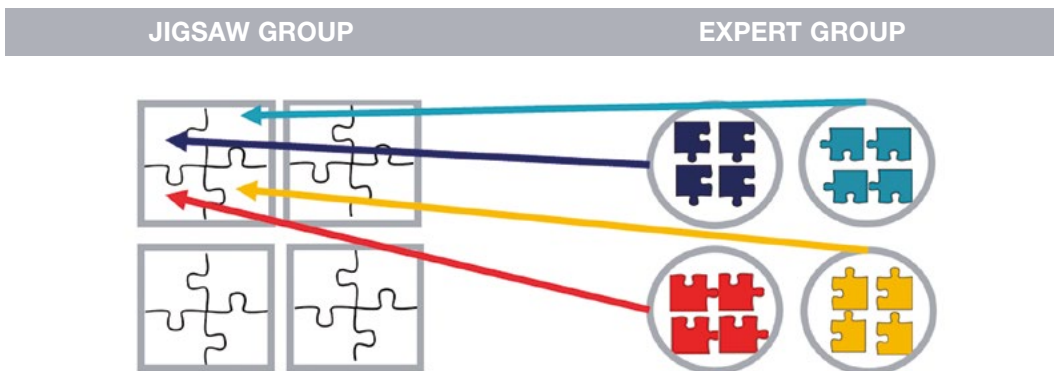
The jigsaw classroom is a method of cooperative learning which has proved successful and is based on the conditions of positive intergroup contact. The jigsaw classroom method employs two key notions: (a) **the jigsaw group** – a group where students learn the entire lesson or jointly complete the entire task, optimally composed of four to five students, and (b) **the expert group** – a group where children learn or practice a specific segment of a task that they become “experts” in (which is where the group gets its name), with optimally four to five students. In the ideal case, the expert group consists of as many students as there are jigsaw groups, because each jigsaw group sends one of its members into an expert group.

The jigsaw classroom consists of several steps:

1. The teacher divides the students into jigsaw groups and introduces the topic and the content to be learned in that lesson. It is important to explain to the students at the outset that they will later teach each other what they have learned, which is why they should make sure to learn their part well.
2. The content of the lesson should be divided into several segments, and each segment is studied separately by an “expert group”.
3. The expert group consists of students from different jigsaw groups: each student from a jigsaw group becomes a member of an expert group (all segments of the content should be covered in the jigsaw group, i.e., each jigsaw group member should go to each of the expert groups).

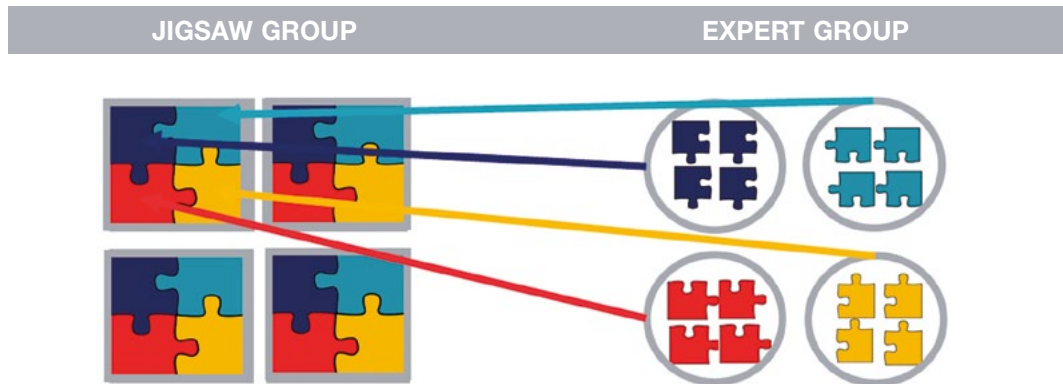


4. In the expert group students from various jigsaw groups work together on a specific task, that they will later on teach other members of their jigsaw group. Once the students have mastered their task or skill in the expert group, they return to the jigsaw group that they were assigned to at the beginning of the lesson. Now the jigsaw group includes “experts” trained in a specific part of the task. The teacher supervises the work of each group.



5. The jigsaw group is where the “jigsaw classroom” happens, because each student shares with the others what they have learned in their expert group, and in this way they complement each other in completing the entire task and realizing their common goal – mastering the content or skill. This aim cannot be achieved without the contribution of each group member, and students in each group are simultaneously teachers (they teach others in their expert area) and students (they learn from other students, experts in other segments).

6. After their mutual learning and teaching, the jigsaw group should demonstrate what they have learned. This may involve, for instance, taking a short quiz or doing a group performance of a joint activity. In this part, it is of crucial importance that all the elements from all the expert groups should be represented, so as to emphasize once again the significance of each jigsaw group member for the successful completion of the task.



7. The final element of the jigsaw classroom is raising awareness of joint achievement. This can be promoted by simple techniques, for example by group members congratulating each other or giving each other high fives.

What follows is an illustration of how this would work using an invented example of a lesson dealing with the Croatian mountain of Velebit. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher divides the students into jigsaw groups, with as many groups as there are parts into which the lesson has been divided by the teacher. The teacher then explains to the students that these are the groups where the students will work together on a task, and that they will teach each other parts of the content of the lesson. Each member of a jigsaw group is assigned one segment (a more specific topic) of the lesson on Velebit, and then members from different jigsaw groups who have been assigned the same content work together in new expert groups. In this way, each student from a jigsaw group becomes an expert in one of the more specific topics. The topics for this lesson are: 1. Velebit's most famous peaks and parts of Velebit, 2. Velebit's bodies of water, 3. Velebit's national and nature parks, 4. Velebit's plant and animal life, 5. Velebit's cultural heritage. These topics also determine what each expert group consisting of students from each jigsaw group will study and discuss with other

members of their expert group. In their expert group, they decide how to best present their segment of the topic to other members of their jigsaw groups once they return to them. Upon returning to their jigsaw groups, each group has one expert in each part of the lesson (parts 1 through 5), and this is how joint knowledge about Velebit is put together. Each member of the jigsaw group instructs other members on their topic, and learns about the other topics from his/her peers. Afterwards, members of the jigsaw group may take a short quiz on what they have learned or make a poster together. The lesson should end with an activity raising awareness of joint achievement and of the fact that each group member was essential to successful learning and completing the quiz or task, which should be symbolically celebrated by group members congratulating each other or using a group congratulatory gesture.

## Imagined contact as a method

Direct contact with members of the out-group makes cooperative learning possible, and is an effective way to develop and improve intergroup attitudes and behaviors. Still, the method imposes some limitations: it is difficult or impossible to use when the two groups are physically separated because there are simply no opportunities or not enough opportunities for direct contact (e.g., children do not attend the same class or school, do not meet during extracurricular activities or do not even live in the same town, region, state, etc.). Besides, when two different groups meet for the first time, their meeting may be afflicted by insecurity, mistrust and suspicion, which can decrease the likelihood of children striking a conversation or socializing. This is why studies have investigated whether people can be prepared for intergroup contact. In other words, researchers wanted to find out whether it was possible to encourage members of one group to take the first step, to approach the others that they see as “strangers”, thus creating an opportunity for themselves and the others to get to know one another. In an effort to overcome the limitations of direct contact, as well as to prepare individuals for intergroup contact, methods based on indirect contact have been developed. These methods **do not** involve face-to-face interaction.

One such method is imagined contact, i.e., imagining meeting and socializing with members of an out-group. According to the imagined contact hypothesis, put forward by social psychologists Richard J. Crisp and Rhiannon Turner

(2009), even imagining a pleasant, positive interaction with a person belonging to a different out-group can lead to improving intergroup attitudes and relations. The simplicity and convenience of such a method inspired numerous studies about its efficacy, and the results suggest that imagined contact may in fact lead to more positive intergroup attitudes, to increasing understanding and empathy towards members of the out-group and to a greater desire for future contact (Miles and Crisp, 2014). Although imagined contact was mostly studied with adults, its effect was larger when implemented with children (Miles and Crisp, 2014). Positive effects are evident in children of all ages, from kindergarten (Birtel et al., 2019) to secondary school (Turner et al., 2013). Given its effects and ease of implementation (it does not require any special materials, and children play an active role, which facilitates learning), the method of imagined contact can be useful in prevention and intervention programs in schools.

In classroom instruction, the imagined contact method is a four-step process. Firstly, students need to be informed about their task, as well as who they will be imagining. Secondly, the teacher should outline a scenario describing how contact with a refugee child began, and children then continue to imagine the contact on their own. Importantly, children should imagine a *pleasant* (and not unpleasant) *interaction* (i.e., a conversation or socializing) with a *member of the target out-group* (with a refugee child, and not a friend from their class). The third and fourth step additionally reinforce and deepen imagining positive contact with a refugee child. In the third step, children participate in some form of individual reinforcement of the effect of imagined contact, for instance by drawing what they imagined, by describing the imagined scenario in their own words or by drawing a comic. The last step is a whole group class discussion, also aimed at reinforcing the effect of imagined contact. In this step, students may volunteer to retell to the class what they have imagined, or can show their drawing and explain what it shows.



1. Introduction and definition of the out-group



2. Imagining



3. Individual reinforcement



4. Group reinforcement

When it comes to the integration of refugee children into Croatian elementary schools, the imagined contact method is primarily suggested as a way to prepare the class for the arrival of a new refugee student and is to be implemented before the child arrives in his/her new class. Imagined contact enables students to become familiar with and understand the notion of refugee children, to prepare host-society students for later direct contact; to stimulate them to be more open to initiating contact and to making new friendships.