

Shared Space in RE: Conflict, Community and Dialogue

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It's not only the way you tell them.... “Stories that move them” (McKeown et al 2017)

1) When does the tendency to racially self-segregate emerge?

By 4-years of age, children display racial biases (Aboud, 2003) and are more likely to interact with same-race peers.

2) Would a storybook that places value-in-diversity change children's behaviour toward racially diverse peers?

Immediately after hearing the story, children were less likely to self-segregate and sit next to same-race peers.

3) What is the longevity of the storybook effect?

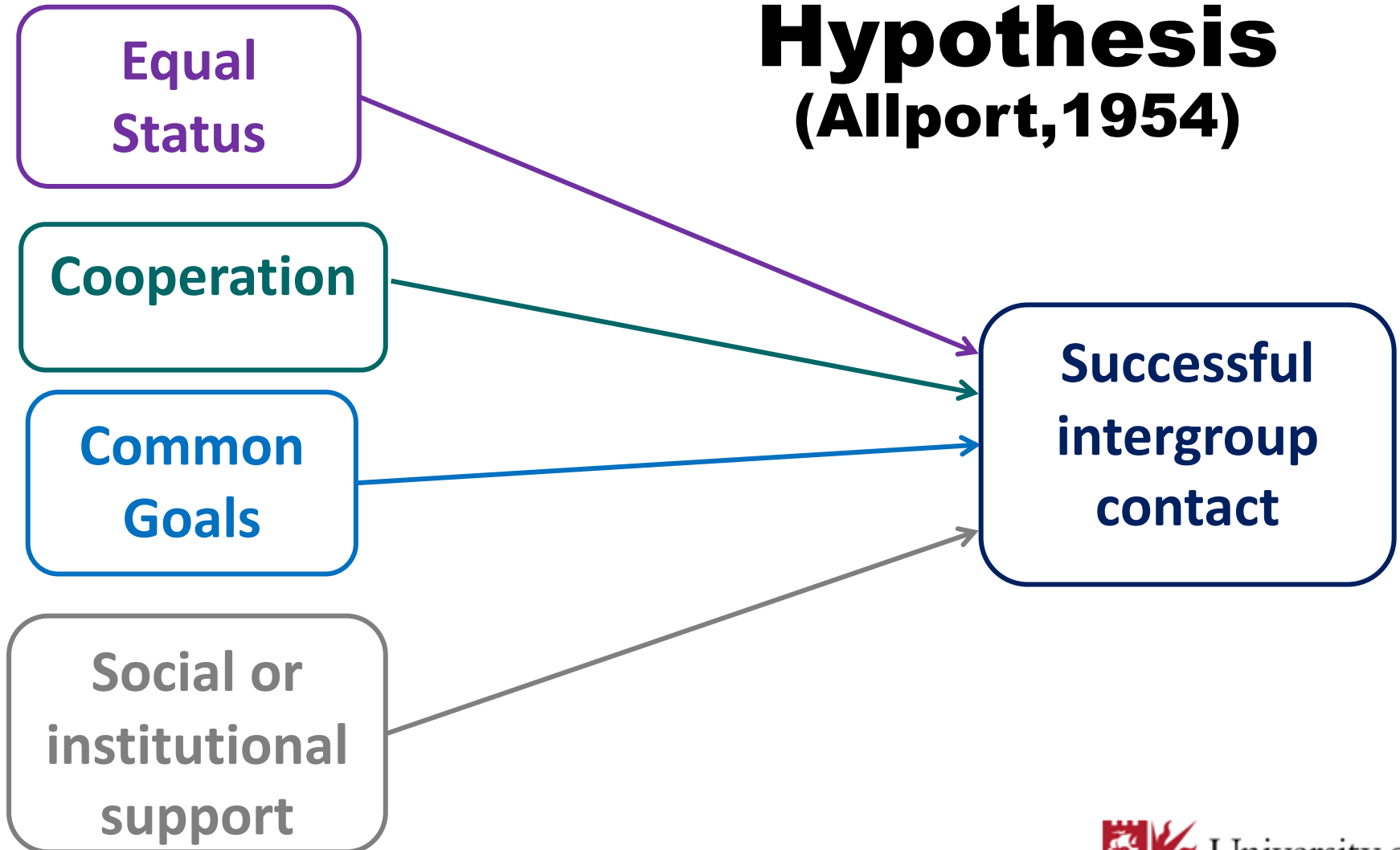
Short lived. After 48 hours, children self-segregated.

Diversity messaging needs to be reinforced regularly

Aims of this session

1. Show how contact theory can help foster good community relations through RE
2. Consider the 3 elements needed to ensure application of contact theory into practice

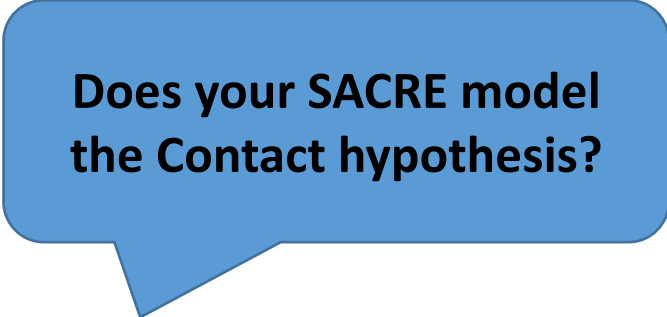
Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954)



Contact conditions to potentially reduce prejudice....

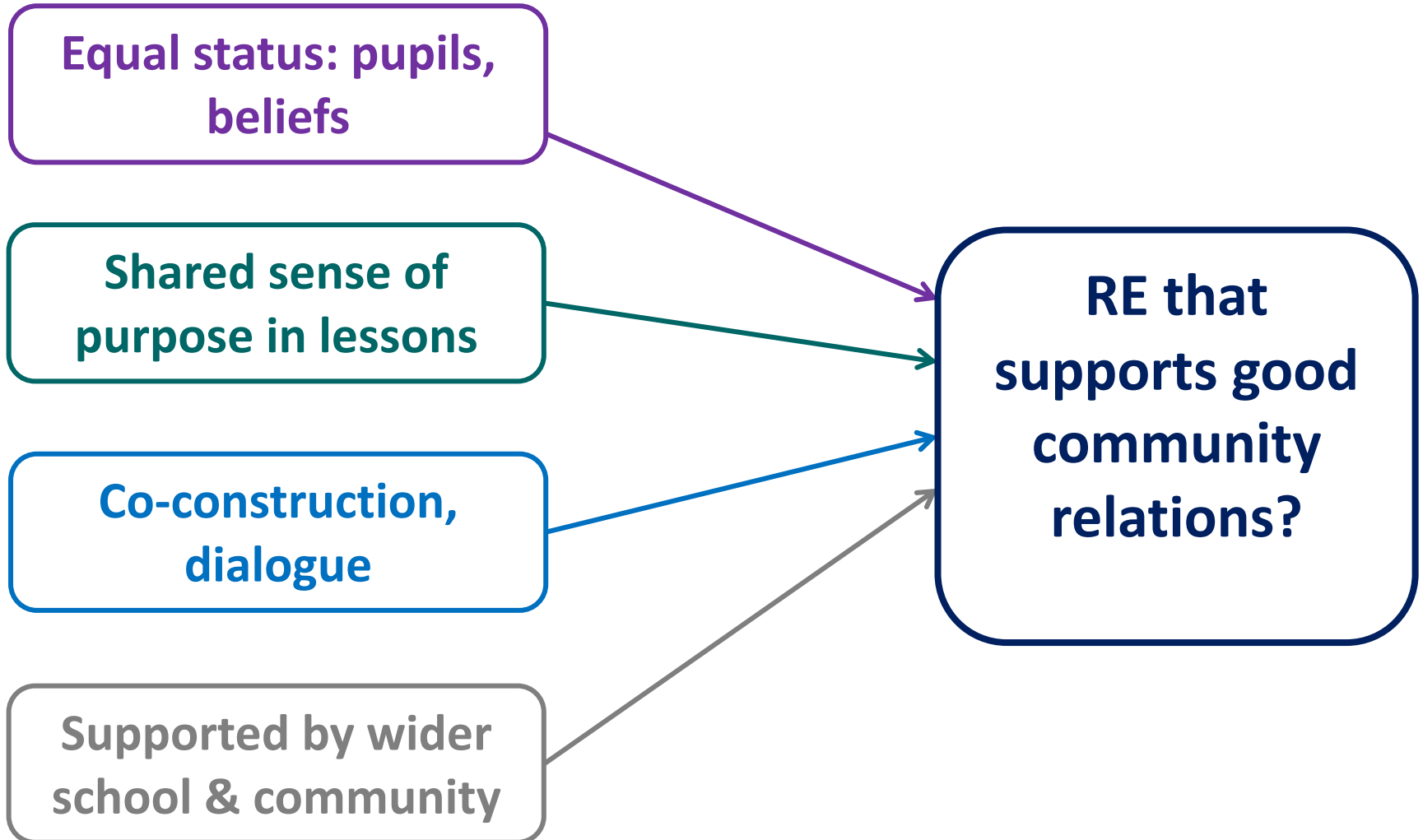
1. Members of different groups should have equal status
2. Groups should work towards shared goals
3. Tasks require genuine cooperation
4. There should be wider support for the venture, from a figure of authority as well as the wider community.

(Allport, 1954)

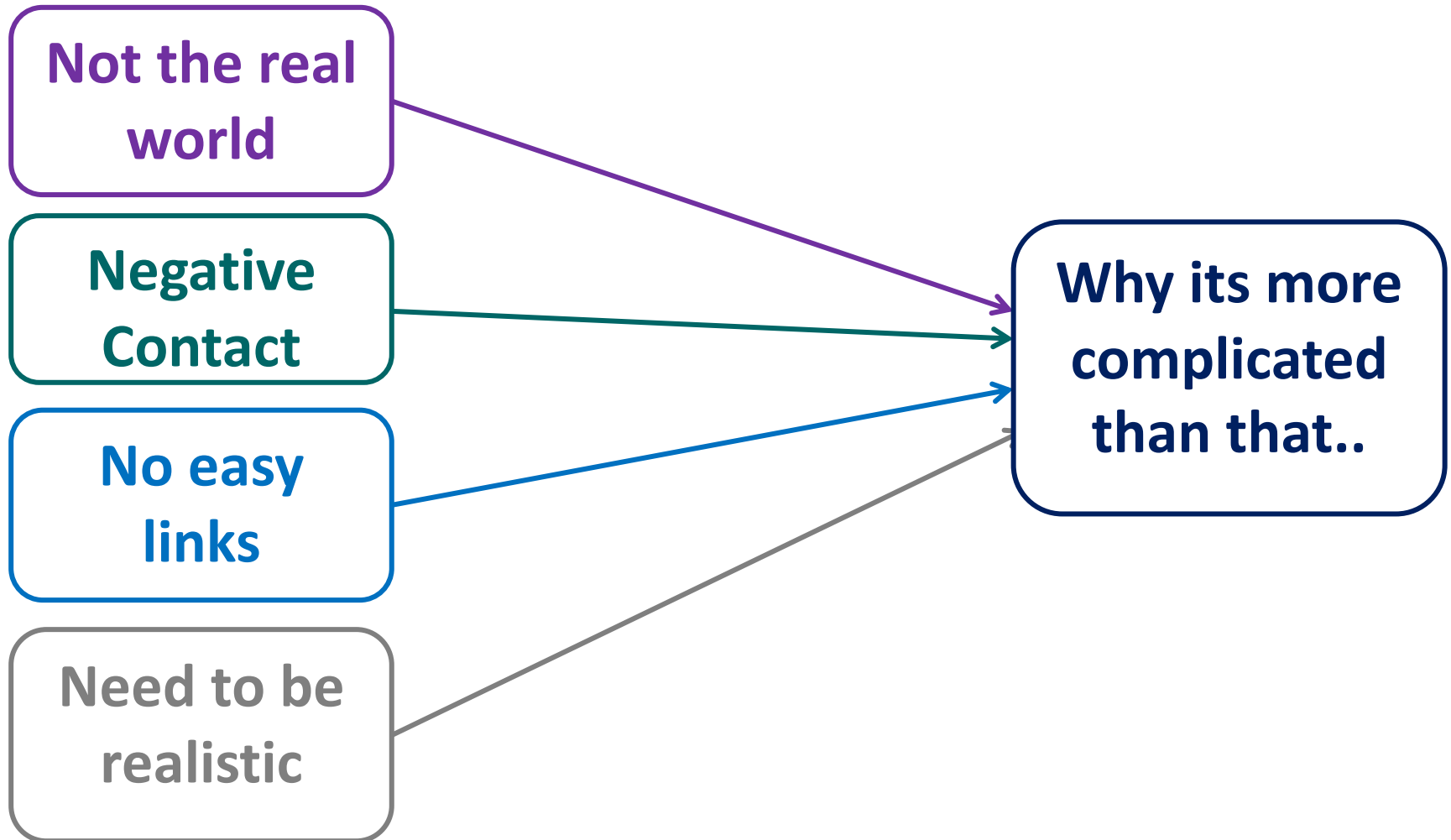


Does your SACRE model the Contact hypothesis?

Contact Factors and RE



Problems with Allport's analysis



Contact Theory and RE

**NATRE & University of Bristol
Shared Space Project**

2016-2019



The Shared Space Project

Gathered quantitative data through a survey & discussed contact theory with RE teachers

Survey findings analysed by teachers and researchers

Teachers and researchers produced a toolkit to disseminate the findings. This has been trialled in the UK and Hong Kong

Articles written by the team to reach as wide an audience as possible

From research to practice: The Teacher Survey

- Advertised through RE networks including through social media
- 95 respondents with mix of primary and secondary teachers
- Majority felt they promoted community relations through their practice
- 89% teachers felt they applied the principles of contact theory BUT the coding of responses showed only 23% were actually using these principles

Problematizing the issue:

Teachers felt they were promoting community relations, but may not actually be using the most effective ways of doing this, or may not actually be doing it at all.

Contact theory in RE: FINDINGS

Encounter

Approaches which enable pupils to engage with different outlooks and worldviews

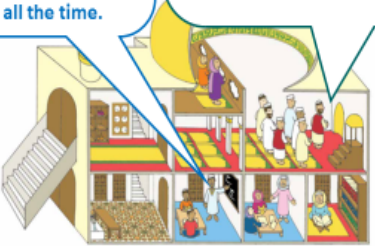
Conversation

Approaches which develop discussion and listening skills

Interaction

Approaches which exemplify contact theory

Encounter



Hello, I am Imran. At this mosque I am a hafiz. This means that I have spent many hours learning to memorise the words of Allah, the Holy Qur'an. This helps me to be closer to Allah because I have his words in my head all the time.

As-salaam aleikum! I am Wasim and I am the imam at this mosque. My job is most importantly to lead people in the five daily prayers. I stand at the front and help Muslims to submit to Allah by praying together. At Friday prayers I give a short sermon or khutba.

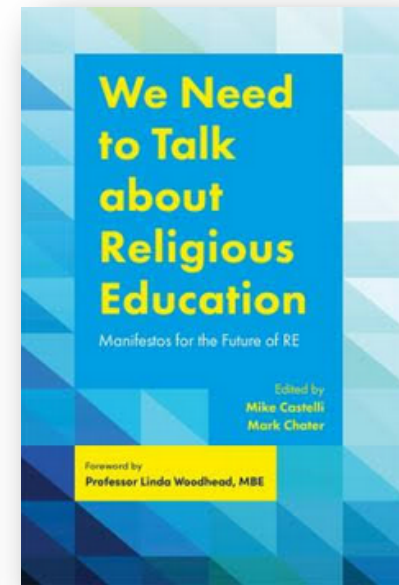
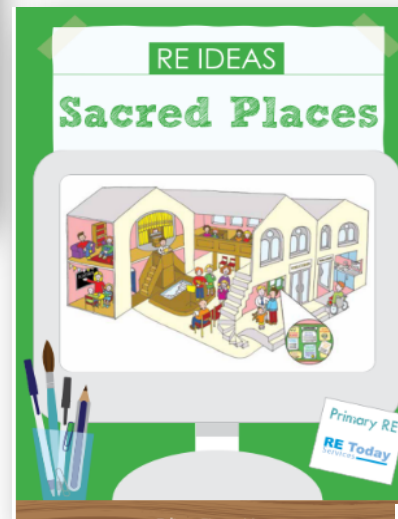
In houses [of worship] which Allah has permitted to be built so that His name may be remembered in them; there glorify Him in the mornings and the evenings. (Qur'an 24:36)

God's mosques should only be tended by one who believes in God and the Last Day, and is constant in prayer, and gives Zakat [charity], and stands in awe of none but God: for only such a person may hope to be among the rightly-guided! (Qur'an 9:18)

Wherever the hour of prayer overtakes you, you shall perform it. That place is a mosque. (Hadith)

Mary Myatt: teachers need to go beyond 'surface' understandings of a place of worship, to allow a deeper engagement with meaning, such as through an artefact which unlocks deeper meaning for worshippers. (138)

How can your SACRE support 'encounter'?



Conversation



DIALOGUE, Mike Castelli

Dialogue is a separate process to discussion and must be deliberately taught. Dialogue requires;

HUMILITY

SERIOUSNESS

HESITATION

IMAGINATION

ARTICULATION

Mike Castelli, 'Principles and Procedures for Classroom Dialogue'

A SAFE SPACE FOR UNSAFE IDEAS, Neil McKain

Why should any topic be off-limits in the classroom?

Pupils need to practice asking difficult questions and exploring difficult topics.

Allow difficult topics to be explored for pupils developing their own view and learning about the world.

Neil McKain, 'Religious Education as a Safe space for Discussing Unsafe Ideas'

**How can your SACRE support conversation?
What innovative approaches might you take?
Does your SACRE model humility in its
conversations?**

Interaction



 The Linking Network



**Corrymeel
May 2017**



What does genuine interaction look like? How can your SACRE support and nurture this through RE?



 University of BRISTOL

Contact Theory in RE: Wider Support



Little Heath School

Special Needs Secondary School



Your students will shape the future

And they will do it in a world of relentless change and diversity. Generation Global prepares your students, giving them the skills and experience they need to navigate difference in a peaceful way.

How far have we come in understanding the application of contact principles to RE?

1. Members of different groups should have equal status

Be aware that relationships of power exist, including the teacher.
Be prepared to unpick with pupils. Monitor success of measures to disrupt inequalities

2. Groups should work towards shared goals

Take time to set up a space in which all members feel that their presence matters, and the class/ schools' goals are their goals

3. Tasks require genuine cooperation

Carefully plan tasks which require genuine collaboration, monitor outcomes.

4. Wider senior and institutional support

Do not accept warmer community relations as the sole burden of RE. Demand wider support and engagement.

Further questions.....

1. Can we measure RE's impact on building community relations, or not?
2. What role might developing religious literacy have in supporting warmer community relations; factual, emotional/ social, dialogical?

References

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