

Research Report 2020

Social Integration

Exploring the 'Gap' between Dutch Students and
International Students



Colophon

Title: *Social Integration: Exploring the ‘Gap’ between Dutch Students and International Students (2020)*

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Abstract (English)

The ‘gap’ between international and Dutch students is a phenomenon recognized by many in Groningen. By means of an extensive online survey and 10 semi-structured interviews among Hanze and University of Groningen students’ social satisfaction and belonging was analyzed. International students tend to struggle with language (both in and outside the classroom), cultural differences, housing and social in- or exclusion, which, in turn, can have negative impacts on (mental) health, academic success and belonging. In the Groningen context, it was found that the Dutch language is a major indicator of social satisfaction and belonging. Not only in academic contexts such as lectures, but also extracurricular clubs, associations, student houses and workplaces discriminate based on language. This report recommends a stronger emphasis on participation and accessible information to encourage positive intercultural encounters benefitting both Dutch and international students and improving equality of opportunity for all students.

Abstract (Dutch)

De ‘kloof’ tussen internationale studenten en Nederlandse studenten is een fenomeen die door velen in Groningen wordt erkend. Door middel van een uitgebreide vragenlijst en 10 semi-gestructureerde interviews met studenten van de Hanzehogeschool en Rijksuniversiteit Groningen zijn sociale tevredenheid en het gevoel van erbij horen geanalyseerd. Internationale studenten hebben de neiging om te worstelen met taal (zowel binnen als buiten de klas), culturele verschillen, huisvesting en sociale in- en exclusie, wat weer negatieve gevolgen kan hebben op (mentale) gezondheid, academisch succes en gevoel van erbij horen. In de Groningse context blijkt dat de Nederlandse taal een grote indicator is voor sociale tevredenheid en het gevoel erbij te horen. Niet alleen in academische contexten zoals colleges, maar ook in buitenschoolse clubs, verenigingen, student huisvestingen en werkplekken wordt er gediscrimineerd op basis van taal. Dit verslag adviseert een sterkere nadruk op deelname en toegankelijke informatie om positieve interculturele ontmoetingen aan te moedigen als voordeel voor zowel Nederlandse als internationale studenten en het verbeteren van de gelijkheid van kansen voor alle studenten.

Foreword

In the past few years, the number of international students in Groningen has been increasing. As students ourselves - and as members of the Groninger Studentenbond (GSb) - we have noticed that many students are interested in or affected by the so-called 'gap' between international students and Dutch students. This is shown in the critique international students have on current housing provisions by the universities, but also in the limited interaction between the student populations notwithstanding the positive outlook of many and drive of the University of Groningen, for example, to become more inclusive.

We, as the Research Committee of the Groninger Studentenbond (GSb), wanted to investigate this phenomenon. Why are international students having difficulties with some integration aspects? Why is there still a 'gap' between Dutch students and international students? What is the influence of some factors (e.g. language) in this whole happening? These questions formed the red line in our research. Besides, the Research Committee consists of three Dutch members and two international members which gave us some perspectives of both international and Dutch students, and why it is important to raise attention to the situation in Groningen.

We want to thank all the participants, interviewees, student organizations and all the other people who helped and supported us in these couple of months with doing this research. It was helpful to get the opinions and perspectives of some students in Groningen. We hope this research will provide some insights and more understanding in the Groninger student culture.

GSb Research Team 2019/2020

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Table of Contents

Colophon	1
Abstract	2
Foreword	3
Acknowledgements	4
List of Tables and Figures	6
Introduction	7
Background	9
The Groningen Case	11
Methodology	13
Survey	13
Survey sections	14
Procedure	15
Sample demographics	15
Interviews	17
Results & Discussion	19
Survey Results	19
Satisfaction	19
Identification	21
Perceptions	21
Language	22
University	24
Qualitative Findings	24
Language	25
Student and Social Culture	27
Opportunities	30
Orientation	31
Discussion	32
Conclusion	35
Recommendations	36
Limitations and Future Research	39
References	40
Appendices	44
Appendix A: Interview consent form	44

Appendix B: Interview guide	45
Appendix C: Social Integration Groningen - GSb '19/'20 (Complete survey)	47
Appendix D: Analysis assumptions	56
Appendix E: List of participants	57

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1. <i>Overview of demographic variables in sample</i>	15
Table 2. <i>Overview of interviewees</i>	17

Introduction

The Netherlands is an increasingly popular destination for foreign students. Over 60% of all bachelors and 90% of all Master programmes are currently taught in English and the number of international students more than doubled between 2005-6 and 2018, predicted to increase annually across Western Europe (Bouma, 2016; ISO, LSvb & ESN Nederland, 2019). The higher education institutions in one of the famous student-cities, Groningen, pride themselves on being a 'home' to an ever-increasing number of both domestic and international students (University of Groningen, 2018; Hanzehogeschool 2019). Internationalization, in both a linguistic and cultural dimension, has been a *hot topic* in the Netherlands for a few years now (e.g. The Runia Affair back in 2018). Despite the attraction of 'an international, enriched atmosphere' (Rienties et al., 2012, p. 686), a discussion is raised about the position of international students who, on top of dealing with a 'culture shock' (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004), have to deal with challenges related to finding affordable housing, language barriers in Dutch-dominant associations and extracurriculars, and the perceived difficulty to reach Dutch students both in- and outside the classroom (Van Renssen, 2019; De Vries, 2019; ISO, LSvb & ESN Nederland, 2019; Chaudron & Van Staalduine, 2019). International students themselves, too, note that the gap between international students and Dutch students is often one of the most unexpected phenomena they encounter when arriving in Groningen (Embry, 2018). Thereupon, adequate social integration into the academic community has often been linked to the quality of students' learning, mental health and persistence of students in their study program.

This paper investigates to what extent international students perceive themselves, and are perceived, as socially integrated into Groningen student culture. Unlike previous studies, such as the 2019 AISS-report, focused on the international perspective only, the current investigation will also take the Dutch point of view into account. By means of a survey, both international students and Dutch students will be asked to reflect on how they view the Groningen student population with regards to social integration and contact between Dutch students and international students. Besides, international students are asked to answer questions in accordance with their own integration and their perceived perception by Dutch students. Likewise, Dutch students will be questioned on their perception of internationals' integration and the relationship between Dutch and international students. Additionally, short

semi-structured interviews will be conducted with both Dutch students and international students with a random selection of students who participated in the questionnaire or were purposefully selected. Due to its dual perspective and multi-method analysis, the study can contribute to a more holistic overview of the current situation of the 'gap' between Dutch students and international students in Groningen by delving into the factors relevant to being socially well- or maladjusted in Groningen. At the end, conclusions will be combined with recommendations to significant Dutch and non-Dutch parties, and individuals on how to deal with diversity in Groningen.

Background

The background section will cover the following subjects: Integration, Belonging and Community, and, secondly, The Groningen case.

Integration, Belonging and Community

A sense of ‘belonging’ is often cited as one of the main reasons for academic success and persistence among students (Zhou & Zhang, 2014). Hence, participation and integration on a communal, individual and structural level generally have a positive effect on social satisfaction, learning and community engagement (Tinto, 1975, 1998; Spencer-Oatey et al., 2014). In an academic (or structural) setting, belonging specifically considers students’ sense of connection with their college, degree of social support, and experience of both academic challenge and support (Osterman, 2000; Hausmann et al., 2007; Glass & Westmont, 2014). On a communal and individual level, having positive interpersonal contact with host country students and participation in community, university or association’ activities often correlates with a higher social satisfaction, better host language proficiency and higher self-esteem (Poyrazli & Damian Lopez, 2007; Rienties et al., 2012; Spencer-Oatey et al., 2014; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). One’s willingness to partake in activities in both formal, and informal settings especially are notable factors explaining perceived differences in social integration (Tinto, 1975, 1998; Rienties et al., 2012).

Internationals who are less satisfied with their own integration tend to reach out more to fellow internationals for a sense of belonging and positive esteem (Schmitt et al., 2003; Hogg et al., 2004; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Severiens & Wolff, 2008). The group ‘internationals’ can be understood as a minority group identity created out of shared experiences with linguistic or cultural ‘shocks’, discrimination and perceived exclusion from a host culture (Schmitt et al., 2003; Hogg et al., 2004). Similarly do Dutch, or host country students, ‘flock together’ in situations that are new or unfamiliar, as Prof. Timmermans of the Department of Psychology explains. Additionally, language proficiency, an important marker for social integration and comfort, can both work to facilitate and debilitate communication between international and host country students. While it can be difficult for international students to participate in host language activities and non-university life, issues also arise surrounding the level of proficiency and confidence in speaking a second language. According to Dewaele et al. (2008) and Dewaele (2009), ‘language anxiety’ can decrease

cross-cultural interaction due to insecurities of grammar, pronunciation and/or issues with nuance, humour and fluidity as students prefer interactions in their first language with similar students. Therefore, lack of confidence in language skills can deepen the division between Dutch students and international students.

The *Annual International Student Survey* (AISS) - a yearly questionnaire by ESN, LSVb and ISO which investigates internationalization and areas of improvement - found that, in 2018, 75.2% of the 1002 international respondents noted that they wanted more contact with their Dutch co-students and sometimes felt excluded (ISO, LSVb & ESN Nederland, 2019). Absent 'home' networks, e.g. high school friends and/or parents, and linguistic barriers, e.g. not being able to speak Dutch (well), can result in slower integration (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Severiens & Wolff, 2008). In Groningen, implicit customs and the Dutch reputation for being alcohol-oriented, direct and open-minded about sexual and/or romantic endeavours can be confusing (Rienties et al., 2012; Lahiri, 2020).

On top of these obstacles, people tend to have a tendency to hang out with 'similar' groups, as Prof. Timmermans of the Department of Psychology explains. That means that Dutch students would mostly connect to other Dutch students and that international students are more likely to interact with other internationals, creating so-called 'social bubbles' (Embry, 2018). Social Identity Theory (SIT) can help to explain this 'preference for similarity' (Tajfel, 1978). SIT stems from the notion that group identity - that being anything from a small band of friends to large-scale 'imagined' communities such as university students - is based on a process of self-categorization, internal and external perceptions and/or intergroup comparison which is based on a desire for self-esteem and uncertainty reduction. Groups, defined by Hogg et al. (2004) as 'collections of people sharing the same social identity' (p. 248) and 'compete with one another for evaluatively positive distinctiveness' (p. 248). In other words, individuals belonging to groups want to feel and be seen as valued members of a respected 'we' relative to other groups in a community. Belonging to a group feels nice for it gives people a sense of stability, self-conception and a set of behavioural guidelines. A perceived feeling of being well-integrated, belonging in and being socially connected to peers, i.e. the degree and quality of social integration (Severiens & Wolff, 2008), is important for cohesive group membership (Owens & Loomes, 2010). International students, often still having to get used to the new environment, its customs and communication styles, can take a bit longer to settle in and find their 'group'.

It is important to note that individuals can belong to multiple groups at the same time depending on the context (Breakwell, 1986). For example, a Dutch university student who is, at the same time, ‘Dutch’, ‘Frisian’, ‘member of Vindicat’, ‘female’, ‘leftist’ and fluidly moves between these groups to ameliorate stigmas or improve relative status in threatening or uncertain situations.

The Groningen Case

Groningen is a university town in the north of the Netherlands and has a population of over 230.000 inhabitants. Remarkable is the large portion of young people, approximately 25% of all Groningen residents (*‘stadjers’*) are students (Groningen.nl. 2020), considering that the University of Groningen (RUG) has over 140 bachelor programmes and 160 masters programmes and Hanze University of Applied Sciences (Hanze) has over 80 bachelor programmes and over 24 master programmes. Currently, 7500 students from 120 different nations study at the RUG (23,5% of the total, and, hence, higher than the Dutch average of 20,5%) (VSNU, 2020), while the Hanze is home to around 2300 internationals (8.1% of their total student count) (Hanzehogeschool, 2020; University of Groningen, 2020).

Groningen is a student city characterized by its small size, living off-campus in student houses, an active and alcohol-oriented nightlife in the city centre, large student associations and both a centre within the canals campus and a Zernike campus located at the north of the city. Groningen is also known for its self-sufficiency, being further away from the ‘Randstad’ (the urban centre of the Netherlands), and youthful vibe that stimulates cultural and social events, festivals and activities.

What makes Groningen unique is also what can make living in Groningen more complex for international students, as is previously explored (Embry, 2018; Lahiri, 2020). A pattern of social division is apparent. Not just apparent in the social groups in the classroom, where students often group together based on national backgrounds or languages, but also expands beyond the academic setting. For instance, most student associations, extracurricular committees and/or boards and the housing market have the Dutch language as a strong marker of inclusion and often even a requirement. For that reason, the University of Groningen in collaboration with *Lijst Calimero* in September 2019, tried to stimulate international students to join a committee or to do a board year despite these obstacles (De Vries, 2019). Additionally, international students in Groningen often face problems when

trying to learn Dutch due to limited available spots at the language centre and Dutch people's tendency to switch to English immediately. Also finding a place to live, and/or finding a job to pay their (often higher and without DUO's monthly loan) tuition fees are often-recurring problems (Van Renssen, 2019).

Methodology

We chose a mixed-methods approach for the current project since mixed methods are ideal for integrating detailed human responses on cultural phenomena with psychological data (Bartholomew & Brown, 2012). First of all, the survey and consecutive analysis will be discussed. Next, the methodology for the qualitative interviews are laid out in the second portion of this chapter.

Survey

To get a quantitative overview of the student population in Groningen an online survey with a total of 93 items was distributed among both Hanze and RUG students (see Appendix C). Likert-scales ranging from 1 (e.g. 'strongly disapprove') to 5 (e.g. 'strongly approve') and short drop-down menus were used in the survey. Also, it was optional to give a short explanation for some items. Lastly, reliability analysis was used to ensure the reliability of the measured items, taking Cronbach's Alpha into consideration (Goforth, 2015).

Survey sections

First, respondents were asked to answer questions about general background information such as age, years of studying, language proficiency and origins (relevant factors as is explained in, e.g., Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Zhou & Zhang, 2014).

In specific, social satisfaction and social integration played an important part in constructing the sections in the survey, such as factors influencing positive or negative experiences of internationals in a host country (e.g. Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004) and host students' impressions of their interactions with international students (e.g. Harrison & Peacock, 2010). Based on the aforementioned literature, sections 'social life', 'language', 'academic help', and 'impressions' were composed in order to organize the survey into relevant topics related to the research.

The questions used in the survey were partially inspired by the *Social Integration Questionnaire* (Rienties et al., 2012) and UKISCA's *Social Life Satisfaction* chapter (2014). Both these studies used short statements to which respondents rate their agreement on a five-point Likert-scale ranging (also used in Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Glass & Westmont, 2014), while also using some indicator variables to guide group-specific questions for

internationals or Dutch students separately. A summary of the survey that was used for this research can be seen below:

- Background questions (9 items)
 - Study, first language, region or origin, living situation
- Social life (31 items)
 - Self-definition
 - Friendships
 - Satisfaction with social life
 - Integration in social life
 - Memberships
- Language (24 items)
 - Confidence, inclusion, proficiency and use
- Academic help (5 items)
 - Satisfaction and contact
- Impressions (20 items)
 - Statements about the ‘other’ group
 - Dutch on international students
 - Internationals on Dutch students
- Background (2 items)
 - Gender
 - Age
- Final open question (1 item)¹

Additionally, a test question was included in the survey to check whether participants were still paying attention. Participants were asked to select ‘No’. Those who answered incorrectly were asked again if they wanted to recontinue the survey.

Procedure

A pilot study was shared to ensure the quality of the questions. Due to reasons of access, privacy and an unforeseen reduction of previously available channels, we were forced to use the GSB’s social media as our major distribution channel. Participation in the survey was, hence, completely voluntary. Furthermore, via a mailing list with student associations and sports clubs in Groningen, students were also approached via newsletters, association websites and fora. The participating students were able to win a bol.com gift card which is worth 20 euro each. At the end of the survey, respondents were able to freely choose whether

¹ The full survey can be found in Appendix C.

to participate in an interview to further elaborate their opinion on the topic or not. The survey was created using Qualtrics and later redirected via Google Forms after which the resulting responses were aggregated in Excel before analysis.

Sample demographics

A total number of 350 students started the survey, of which 335 students were included in the analysis. Notwithstanding the possibility of a skewed or biased sample (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013), the sample included an approximately comparable number of international ($n = 189$) and Dutch ($n = 146$) students. Additionally, the participating students studied at the University of Groningen ($n = 279$) or at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences ($n = 58$), and year of birth of the participants ranged from 1990 to 2002 ($M = 1997.56$ years, $SD = 0.13$). Lastly, the participants consisted of 81 men, 247 women, 5 identified as other, and 2 preferred not to indicate their gender. The observed distribution between men and women is a common phenomenon in survey-based research (Smith, 2008). However, the current distribution was sufficient in meeting the requirements for the chosen statistical analyses and therefore did not impede our research goals.

Table 1. *Overview of demographic variables in sample*

Demographic information (Sample: n = 335)	Descriptives used	Percentage
Gender	Male	24.2%
	Female	73.7%
	Other	1.5%
	Preferred not to say	0.6%
Institution	University of Groningen ²	82.8%

² Distribution of participants from the faculties of University of Groningen: Arts (27.6%), Spatial Sciences (5.4%), Science and Engineering (19%), Behavioural and Social Sciences (10.8%), Economics and Business (15.1%), Medical Sciences (7.2%), Law (10.4%), University College (4.3%), Philosophy (0.4%).

	Hanzehogeschool ³⁴	17.2%
Education level	Bachelor	73.3%
	Pre-Master	2.1%
	Master	20.2%
	PhD	2.4%
	Other	2.1%
Language of program	Dutch	17.8%
	English	79.8%
	Dutch and English	0.6%
	Switched	0.6%
	English and non-Dutch	0.6%
	Other	0.6%
Origin	International student ⁵	56.4%
	Dutch student ⁶	43.6%

Interviews

In total, a number of 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted (Ivey, 2019). Due to scheduling and accessibility reasons, 6 students were approached through the survey and 4 students were approached purposefully through personal contact. Despite the skewed representativity of participants (more female than male, and only students from the

³ Distribution of participants from the schools of Hanzehogeschool Groningen: Social Studies (6.9%), Minerva Art Academy (8.6%), International Business School (25.9%), Communication Media and IT (19%), Marketing Management (3.4%), Life Science and Technology (5.2%), Engineering (6.9%), Law (6.9%), Health Care Studies (10.3%), Dance Academy (1.7%), Conservatoire (3.4%), Institute of Technology (1.7%).

⁴ The Institute of Technology was an institute of Hanzehogeschool until 2019, and the Business Management School was not included in the answering options.

⁵ Origin of international students consists of: Northwestern Europe (26,6%), Eastern Europe (17,2%), Southern Europe (17,2%), Latin America (9,4%), North America (3,1%), Southeast Asia (5,7%), South Asia (4,7%), Oceania (1,5%), Middle East (5,2%), Sub-Saharan Africa (4,2%), Central Asia (0,5%), East Asia (4,2%), Caribbean (0,5%).

⁶ Origin of Dutch students consists of: Netherlands Groningen-region (37.9%), Netherlands not Groningen-region (62.1%).

University of Groningen), due to the analytic approach chosen, a close examination of few subjects is preferred over large and cluttered samples. On average, the interviews took between 10 and 40 minutes and took place in a setting of the participants' preference. All the interviews were conducted in English.

Prior to the interviews, participants were contacted through email and were requested to fill in a background information sheet which was consecutively used as a consent form (See Appendix A). During the interview, three core topics were discussed, which were partially derived from the survey items and related research: (1) social satisfaction, (2) academic help, and (3) impression of students on each other as influenced by the survey items and related research (Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Yook, 2013; Spencer-Oatey et al., 2014). However, there was space for the interviewees to raise additional issues and/or comments.

A mobile device was used to keep an audio recording of the conversation and the interviewer wrote down key themes notes manually. The audio files were transcribed to semi-verbatim and made anonymous using code names such as 'ITL#' and 'NL#' (Howitt, 2016)⁷.

Table 2. *Overview of interviewees*

Code Name	Time (in minutes)	Nationality	L1	Gender (F/M)	Time in Groningen (in years)	Faculty/School
ITL1	13	Indonesian	English	F	3	Ba Economics and Business
ITL2	40	Ukrainian	Ukrainian, Russian	F	3	Ba Science and Engineering
ITL3	12	Austrian	German	F	1.5	Ba Economics and Business
ITL4	18	English/Dutch	English, Frisian	F	1.5	Ba Arts

⁷ The anonymous transcripts of the interviews can be requested by mailing to onderzoeksbureau@groningestudentenbond.nl

ITL5	39	Russian	Russian	F	3.5	Ba Science and Engineering
ITL6	30	Romanian	Romanian	M	3	Ba Science and Engineering
NL1	21	Dutch	Dutch	M	6.5	ReMa Arts
NL2	10	Dutch	Dutch	F	1.5	Ba Arts
NL3	14	Dutch	Dutch	F	2.5	Ba Arts
NL4	13	Dutch	Dari/Farsi	F	2.5	Ba Medicine

The partially transcribed data were analysed into research-appropriate themes using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in combination with thematic content analysis (Howitt, 2016). IPA is a qualitative approach which aims to provide a detailed examination of personal lived experience (Smith & Osborn, 2015), and is, hence, a good method to discover individual opinions using an unbiased perspective while keeping literature and existing information on the topic in mind. Secondly, thematic analysis was applied to discover trends and themes across individual cases. Thematic codes were inductively interpreted and clustered in relevant themes surrounding key phenomena and theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Howitt, 2016). Quotations were grouped around each theme as evidence (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013), and were compared with the data and literature. The combination of methods formed an effective framework for discovering the main themes surrounding subjective experiences in the context of student life, cultural interactions and questions of identity.

Results & Discussion

The following section will lay out the results per method, beginning with the survey results, after which the qualitative findings are discussed. The final subsection is a discussion of the combined findings as linked to the literature.

Survey Results

We carried out a data analysis of the collected data from the questionnaire. Most of the analysis was focused on the difference between Dutch students and international students concerning the topics of satisfaction, identification, perception, language, and university. Since the five-point Likert scales have been used, the means of the analysis vary between one and five. For descriptive statistics, percentages and frequencies are mostly used.

Satisfaction

In the following t-tests ($\alpha = 0.05$), it was found that Dutch students ($n = 145$, $M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.95$) scored significantly higher on satisfaction with their social life outside of class as compared to international students ($n = 188$, $M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.08$), $t(331) = 4.19$, $p < .001$. When comparing Dutch students and international students on satisfaction with making friends it appears that Dutch students ($n = 144$, $M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.84$), $t(327) = 11.65$, $p < .001$, score significantly higher on satisfaction with making Dutch friends. In comparison, international students ($n = 189$, $M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.96$), $t(329) = -5.15$, $p < .001$, scored significantly higher on satisfaction with making international friends. Moreover, international students ($n = 186$, $M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.09$), $t(320) = -12.04$, $p < .001$, scored significantly higher on the statement 'I wish I had more Dutch friends'. Meanwhile, Dutch students ($n = 144$, $M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.13$), $t(328) = -3.33$, $p = .001$, score significantly higher on the statement 'I wish I had more international friends'. Also, a composed construct: overall social satisfaction, consisting of questions 1 till 11 and with a high Cronbach's alpha, $\alpha = 0.85$, was formed. Dutch students ($n = 146$, $M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.61$) were found to score significantly higher on the aforementioned constructs compared to international students ($n = 190$, $M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.55$), $t(334) = 2.57$, $p = .011$.

In addition, one-way ANOVA analyses, with post-hoc Tukey tests and an alpha of 0.05, were used to compare the social circles of the participants on overall social satisfaction. International students with both Dutch and international (mixed) social circles ($n = 65$, $M =$

3.53, $SD = 0.52$) scored significantly higher on overall social satisfaction compared to international students with (mostly) international social circles ($n = 114$, $M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.54$), $F(5, 330) = 3.92$, $p = .011$. Dutch students with mixed social ($n = 41$, $M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.71$) scored (almost) equally as high as international students with mixed ($n = 65$, $M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.52$) on overall social satisfaction. These two groups of students with mixed social circles scored higher, but not significantly, on overall social satisfaction compared to Dutch students with (mostly) Dutch social circles ($n = 100$, $M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.59$).

Dutch students living in a Dutch student house ($n = 68$, $M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.58$) report significantly higher on overall social satisfaction as compared to students living at home ($n = 31$, $M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.53$), $F(7, 329) = 4.32$, $p = .003$, living in a solo apartment/studio ($n = 52$, $M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.59$), $F(7, 329) = 4.32$, $p = .037$, and/or living with a partner/friend ($n = 39$, $M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.65$), $F(7, 329) = 4.32$, $p < .001$. In general, there was no significant difference in the overall social satisfaction between male ($n = 81$, $M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.64$) and female ($n = 247$, $M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.57$) students.

Students who are a member of (sports)association(s) ($n = 168$, $M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.57$) score significantly higher on overall social satisfaction as compared to students who are not members of (sports)association(s) ($n = 169$, $M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.55$), $t(335) = 5.10$, $p < .001$. The level of studying nor language of programme does not have a significant effect on social satisfaction.

Identification

The participants were again divided into two groups: Dutch students and international students (Q16). Then the two groups were compared with independent t-tests, with an alpha of 0.05, on questions about identification with other students and the student culture in Groningen. It was found that there was no significant difference between Dutch students ($n = 145$, $M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.05$) and international students ($n = 189$, $M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.03$) on the extent that they feel like they have a lot in common with other students in Groningen. By contrast, differences with regards to their identification within their own groups were found. International students ($n = 190$, $M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.05$), $t(330) = -7.51$, $p < .001$, scored significantly higher on the statement 'I feel like I have a lot in common with international students in Groningen' with Dutch students ($n = 146$, $M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.20$), $t(326) = 10.41$, $p < .001$, scoring significantly higher on the statement 'I feel like I have a lot in common with

Dutch students in Groningen'. Moreover, Dutch students ($n = 146$, $M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.98$) feel significantly more connected to students in Groningen compared to international students ($n = 189$, $M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.11$), $t(333) = 4.76$, $p < .001$.

In addition, comparisons between Dutch students and international students were made regarding identification with the Groningen student culture. Again independent t-tests were used with an alpha of 0.05. The results show that Dutch students ($n = 146$, $M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.13$) feel significantly more part of student culture in Groningen compared to international students ($n = 187$, $M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.14$), $t(331) = 2.69$, $p = .008$. It appears that international students ($n = 183$, $M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.19$) feel significantly more excluded from student culture in Groningen as compared to Dutch students ($n = 137$, $M = 1.74$, $SD = 1.02$), $t(318) = -4.44$, $p < .001$. In addition, international students ($n = 186$, $M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.18$) seem to identify significantly less with the student culture in Groningen as compared to Dutch students ($n = 145$, $M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.14$), $t(329) = 2.60$, $p = .010$. No significant difference, however, was found between international students ($n = 188$, $M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.16$) and Dutch students ($n = 146$, $M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.24$) in finding the importance of belonging to Groningen student culture.

Perceptions

Descriptive statistics were used to describe perceptions of international students on Dutch students and international students in general, and the perceptions of Dutch students on international students and Dutch students in general. Due to the use of five-point Likert scales, ranging from completely/strongly disagree to completely/strongly agree, an accumulation was done at both sides of the scale to get to the percentages mentioned in this section.

When asked about the topic of integration, the results indicated that 39.9% of the Dutch students ($n = 146$) and 38.9% of the international students ($n = 190$) (strongly) disagree that international students are integrated well into Dutch daily life, while 42% of the Dutch students ($n = 146$) and 64.7% of the international students ($n = 190$) (strongly) agree that international students are included in Groningen student life. Moreover, 52.5% of the Dutch students ($n = 146$) and 35% of the international students ($n = 190$) (strongly) disagree that international students have no difficulties in participating in Groningen student culture. Finally, the results indicated that 56% of the Dutch students ($n = 146$) and 65.1% of the

international students ($n = 190$) (strongly) agree that international students are different from Dutch students.

Looking at the social lives of students, the results indicated that 68.8% of the Dutch students ($n = 146$) and 85% of the international students ($n = 190$) (strongly) agree that international students are social and have active social lives. It should be noted with these findings, however, that 73.9% of the Dutch students ($n = 146$) (strongly) agree on the notion that international students tend to stick to other international students in social contexts. Conversely, 87.3% of the international students ($n = 190$) (strongly) agree that Dutch students tend to stick to other Dutch students in social contexts. The results also indicated that 43.5% of the international students ($n = 190$) (strongly) disagree that Dutch students treat them differently than they think other international students. Also, 39.9% of the Dutch students ($n = 146$) and 27.1% of the international students ($n = 190$) (strongly) agree that Dutch students do want to interact with international students. Dutch students seem to be perceived as much more actively social, with 90.3% of the Dutch students ($n = 146$) and 83.4% of the international students ($n = 190$) (strongly) agreeing that Dutch students are social and have active social lives.

Language

Again descriptive statistics were used to describe how comfortable and confident the participants are in Dutch or English. Moreover, the participants were asked about their opinions and proficiency with Dutch or English. Because of the use of five-point Likert scales, ranging from only English till only Dutch, and strongly disagree to strongly agree, accumulation was done at both sides of the scale to get to the percentages mentioned in this section. The participants were divided into two groups: Dutch-speaking students and non-Dutch speaking students. The results indicated that 65.8% of the Dutch speaking students ($n = 146$) tend to speak mostly or only Dutch in their daily life, while 29.5% of those students speak both Dutch and English in their daily life. In academic settings, however, 40.7% of those Dutch speaking students speak mostly or only Dutch, and 39.3% speak mostly or only English in an academic setting. Moreover, 71.9% of the Dutch speaking students tend to speak mostly or only Dutch with their friends. In contrast, 91.3% of the non-Dutch speaking students ($n = 127$) tend to speak mostly or only English in their daily life. Moreover, 99.1% of the non-Dutch speaking students ($n=117$) tend to speak mostly or only English in academic

settings, and 93% of those students ($n=115$) tend to speak mostly or only English with their friends.

The results show that 89.5% of Dutch-speaking students ($n = 143$) (strongly) agree with feeling comfortable speaking Dutch with other students, and 86.9% of Dutch-speaking students ($n = 145$) (strongly) agree with feeling comfortable speaking English with other students. In contrast, 85.6% of non-Dutch speaking students ($n = 125$) (strongly) disagree with feeling comfortable speaking Dutch with other students. But 93.9% of those non-Dutch speaking students ($n = 131$) (strongly) agree with feeling comfortable speaking English with other students. Moreover, 87.5% of the Dutch-speaking students ($n = 144$) (strongly) agree with being confident about interacting in English with international students, and 79% of those students ($n = 143$) (strongly) disagree with being insecure about language when interacting with international students. However, 45.7% of non-Dutch speaking students ($n = 127$) (strongly) agree with feeling insecure about interacting with Dutch students because of language, whereas 86.9% of those students ($n = 122$) (strongly) disagree with feeling insecure about interacting with international students because of language.

In addition, the results show that 52% of Dutch-speaking students ($n = 152$) (strongly) agree with Dutch being an important factor in being a part of Groningen student culture as compared to 61.1% of non-Dutch speaking students ($n = 131$). Also, 41.5% of non-Dutch speaking students ($n = 130$) (strongly) agree with feeling excluded from student experiences in Groningen because of their language proficiency in Dutch, and 48.9% of those students ($n = 131$) (strongly) agree with feeling that their language proficiency in Dutch affects their student experiences in Groningen. In addition, 41.7% of the international students ($n = 180$) (strongly) disagree with having sufficient opportunities to learn Dutch.

University

Again descriptive statistics were used to describe the difference between Dutch students and international students concerning university help, interaction within academic settings, and opportunities. Because of the use of five-point Likert scales, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, accumulation was done at both sides of the scale to get to the percentages mentioned in this section.

61.4% of the international students ($n = 184$) and 41% of Dutch students ($n = 144$) (strongly) disagree that the universities are helping to stimulate contact between Dutch and

international students. In addition, 50.5% of the international students ($n = 188$) and 66.2% of Dutch students ($n = 145$) (strongly) agree with being satisfied with the amount and quality of interactions with fellow students in the academic setting. Focusing on interaction within the academic settings the results show that 55.8% of the international students ($n = 190$) mostly interact with international students in the academic setting, and 31.6% of those students indicate that they mostly interact with both Dutch students and international students. These results were almost mirrored with the Dutch students, with 58.9% of Dutch students ($n = 146$) interact mostly with Dutch students in the academic setting, and 34.9% mostly interact with both international and Dutch students. Moreover, 52.4% of the international students ($n = 187$) and 62.3% of Dutch students ($n = 146$) (strongly) agree being satisfied with the opportunities to meet and interact with their professors.

Qualitative Findings

Transcriptions of the interviews were analysed, interpreted, and compared manually. The topics discussed were divided into four subtopics using: 1) Language, 2) Student and Social Culture, 3) Opportunities, and 4) Orientation. We analyse the result both on Dutch students' and international students' perspectives. Since the interviews were recorded anonymously, the quotations used in the following sections will be illustrated with the participants' code names. Open survey items (Q13e, Q25, Q41b)⁸ were used to further illustrate the discovered themes and to nuance and/or deepen the opinions provided by the interviewees.

Language

According to the respondents, language plays a significant role in making friends with people from different countries, and their comments revealed a nuanced view. Whereas most students express understanding regarding the importance of English as a *lingua franca*, most students, too, believe that being able to speak Dutch leads to inclusion in student activities, (predominantly) within the Dutch circles and easier to find a house, a job or bureaucratic information (more on this in the following sub-chapters). There seems to be a widespread contradiction between, on the one hand, English as a universal language that allows for communication between all students in Groningen, and on the other, compassion for Dutch

⁸ Q13e. (Non-member) *Why are you (currently) not a member of an association?*; Q25. *Do you face obstacles, if any, relating to your language proficiency (either English or Dutch)?*; Q41b. *Why do you think this (= a social "gap" between international and Dutch students) is the case?*

students who prefer to (and often keep) speaking their own language in social contexts notwithstanding the presence of non-Dutch speakers.

In the interviews, most Dutch students indicated that they tend to interact with other Dutch students because they can express themselves better and feel like it is easier. Especially when it comes to humour, nuance and fluency, some Dutch students say they struggle with English. ‘Sometimes I can be slightly insecure about my English proficiency, especially when talking to international students who are better at speaking English than I am’ (P75), and, ‘My English is bad, so I [would] rather be with Dutch people’ (P261). This is a common thread in second-language acquisition literature (Dewaele et al., 2008). ‘[The] Dutch tend to say that they are worried about their English language skills’, one survey respondent remarks in an open question, ‘therefore they don't really communicate with internationals, and that's what makes it so difficult to actually [become] friends with them’ (P282). A common response to *second language anxiety*, an often-encountered phenomena in cross-cultural contexts, this fear is to object to speaking the second language altogether, or avoid situations in which speaking another language is required (Dewaele et al., 2008; Deawele, 2009). NL2, a second-year Dutch Arts-student, suggested that ‘it would be easier if [international students] could speak Dutch if [they] want to make friends with Dutch people’. Internationals, on the other hand, almost universally note the effect of Dutch-only events have on them, ranging from practical matters to a sense of exclusion. Generally, students agree on the fact that knowing Dutch will make inclusion easier in Groningen as most social events of associations are Dutch-dominant. As one student points out: ‘I do not speak Dutch which impacts my social life to a degree, (...) I have problems being a part of the board of study association’ (P325).

The Dutch are understandably comfortable with speaking Dutch to each other. Most have no real issue with internationals, and are more than happy to be friends with them, as long as they can keep up with colloquial Dutch. Internationals, on the other hand, spend, on average, too little time in Groningen to be able to learn Dutch and speak it fluently. Because of this, they prefer hanging out with other internationals (P328).

An alternate view on the matter often comes from Dutch students themselves, admitting that ‘sometimes it is annoying that I have to speak English all the time at activities and at bars

even though I am Dutch and live here. Though I know internationals can't help it' (P138) Many international students express this nuanced view as well, noting that it is logical that Dutch students prefer to speak Dutch, for as long as it does not result in exclusion as is now often the case. Exclusion is often mentioned as a consequence of the language barrier. ITL2, a 20-year old Ukrainian student, explains, 'Dutch people do not understand how it feels to be excluded when you do not understand what is going on in the conversation. (...) [they] prefer to speak in their native language when they are amongst themselves'.

Learning Dutch, however, can massively improve a student's sense of belonging, as an British survey respondent noted: 'I definitely found that after I invested more time and effort into learning Dutch, my experience here did massively improve, for example, I can chat to elderly people on the bus (etc), which makes me feel a lot more connected to the city/community' (P55). Also in social situations, knowing a bit of Dutch can help someone fit in. Actually having the opportunity to speak Dutch, conversely, can be difficult. 'I felt like an outsider in a Dutch group. When I try to speak Dutch, they always talk English back' (ITL4). The latter point is reiterated often by internationals with the ambition to learn Dutch. In the Netherlands, people are so proficient in English that 'Dutch students tend to switch immediately to English without letting me fully explain myself/what I am saying. [E]ither they are just trying to be polite, but in other cases this is due to impatience. This I find really frustrating' (P292). Alternatively, some students mentioned that language is not an issue for them because of the same rationalisation, 'Dutch people speak really good English. Therefore, I do not feel the need to understand Dutch' (ITL1).

Student and Social Culture

The interviews and responses reveal that differences in culture, i.e. common traits, traditions or communication norms, have an impact on the interactions between Dutch students and international students. In general, participants acknowledge that both Dutch students and international students prefer to stick around with people who come from similar environments or share similar experiences.

Firstly, many (especially international) respondents remark on the 'open' and 'direct' character of Dutch students (ITL2). ITL2 also mentions that the Dutch tend to be more tolerant on certain topics such as LGBTQ+ themes, which is seen as a positive factor. Positive labels are also attributed to internationals, as NL4 highlights: 'international students

are in some ways easier-going because they understand more and they do not label everything'. This is not to say that internationals and Dutch students do not have different interests. A Dutch student illustrates this point, but highlights that differences do not automatically imply a lack of interaction.

Where I'd like to get some drinks, go out and dance, they'd like to smoke weed and watch a movie. The internationals that I meet always bring a different culture and with that comes different interests. But, the internationals that like the same things as me, will join me. (P150).

However, the Dutch *nuchterheid* (unpretentiousness) can also clash and form an obstacle to closer friendships between people who understand this trait and those who do not. The Dutch tendency that 'if you act normal, you're already crazy enough can form a block, because (...) Dutch people tend to prefer people that are similar to themselves and not eccentric in any way' (P2). More students experience this, and add that a bias, i.e. having preconceptions about another group or individual such as seeing someone 'as an international' (ITL4), or even a 'culture of exclusion' on the Dutch side might exist. The latter is nuanced by one student, who thinks that it is 'also worth noting that there are plenty of German people who only have German friends, or Spanish with only Spanish friends (...) [It's] not something specific to Dutch students [or] culture' (P47). The culture of exclusion is perhaps not necessarily Dutch, but can be explained by the context in which home country students find themselves.

Opportunities for interaction and existing social groups might be determinant. The majority of Dutch respondents point out that 'because everyone remains in their own group', 'you only meet international students if you want to because people in associations are mainly Dutch'. In like manner, a Swedish Economics-student remarks that 'Dutch students aren't too excited about seeking international friends since they have a committee, family, and existing network of friends. International students, therefore, don't feel exactly welcomed in a Dutch circle' (P286). ITL2 gives an example of a group of students who would get along with others but prefer to stay within their group with people of the same nationality. ITL4 also mentioned that '[she] knows a group of Dutch students who live in [a] Dutch-only building and do not have any international friends'. While Dutch students already have an existing social life in the Netherlands, most internationals come here alone and are, hence,

more open to quickly form new bonds and friendships while the Dutch think new relationships over twice because they go to their parents on weekends, see their high school friends regularly and work a lot. ‘I think it is sometimes difficult for Dutch and international students to relate to each other because of this, as they have very different lives, (...) International students are usually relying more on their friends, and have a lot more free time, because they do not have family here’ (P55). Additionally, a student mentions it is easier for internationals to mix among them because they ‘all share the experience of moving countries and getting used to life here in The Netherlands’ (P47).

The drinking culture in Groningen are also mentioned as dealbreakers for many internationals who are, either for cultural, religious or other reasons, not drinking (as much) themselves. An international student shares her experience with her student association: ‘[Dutch students] take their drinking culture very seriously and that is something that I do not like. If you are there and you do not drink, they will push you to drink or call you weak... They keep repeating it and it becomes serious. I am not a drinker so it is not easy for me to fit in’ (ITL2). Another student confirms this and remarks that the Dutch drinking culture might not be suitable for everyone: ‘I do not like the study associations here because their tradition and their behaviours are not what I am looking for. They have a lot of drinking’. Likewise, an international student who comes from a religious country stated that since she does not drink, ‘it sometimes feels like I am missing out on some part of the authentic student experience’. However, because she has a mixed friend group she started participating in her study associations’ committees and has a more active social life.

The study association was very intimidating; it was very much Dutch – there were groups of people talking amongst themselves and having inside jokes. It was very intimidating to fit in there and interfere. But there were a few really nice Dutch students that I bonded with and that was quite nice. (...) I’ve noticed in other groups that there are groups of just Dutch [students] that don’t seem to let internationals in. (ITL5).

On the other hand, many respondents do not mention the drinking culture at all or are completely unbothered, ‘[Dutch students] drink a lot! They like drinking games and doing stupid stuff, I think it’s very funny’, (ITL4). Also, ITL2 explains that after some Dutch

committee members started to introduce them to the drinking culture, suddenly a lot of internationals ‘think it’s fun’.

The association culture in Groningen is also noted as something that contrasts international and Dutch students and can even work to exacerbate differences. ‘I had international friends in my first year’, a Dutch Master-student explains, ‘but [I] lost contact when I became a member of the student association. According to my international friends, I was becoming more Dutch’. (P315). Many students explain that especially time, language, feeling like they are not a part of the culture are reasons for deciding against memberships. There seems to be a general view that student associations are for Dutch students where the dominant (or only) language is Dutch. ‘Most Dutch students in Groningen are a member of a study/student association, while internationals tend to organise home events with other internationals or even with people from their own native culture’ (P2).

The fact that people tend to remain in the community with similar people, especially with people who have the same nationality, makes it difficult for either Dutch students or international students to meet people outside of their circle. Opportunities for interaction and introduction to specific cultural activities to improve understanding seem to be defining factors in whether or not internationals feel comfortable in Dutch settings.

Opportunities

Both Dutch and international respondents have expressed that international students do not have the same opportunities as Dutch students in terms of employment possibilities, house-hunting, academic help and social activities. Across the participants in both the interviews and the survey, language is a big reason for this rift.

Even within the academic context, discrimination based on language is common as ITL2 explains: ‘[t]here was a Career Event in our Faculty. It was quite big, but they decided to hold their meetings in Dutch and they are not willing to change it. There is really no need for everyone there to be Dutch but they said that’s how they do things now’. With regard to academic help, international respondents claimed that it is unfair when Dutch students get help in their native language even when the courses are supposed to be taught in English. ITL2 enumerated:

During a tutorial, one of the students asked a question in Dutch. The teaching assistant responded in Dutch. It is a bit unfair because the rest of us did not know what he was asking. It would be beneficial for other students as well if he responded in English.

By the same token, a pilot participant recalled, ‘in my psychology courses, the teacher focuses a lot on Dutch students. For example, he translated some words in Dutch in our exam! I think that is not fair for English-speaking students, what the teacher did was giving Dutch students an advantage’.

Finding housing is another setting where Dutch students tend to get the upper hand. ITL4 points out that because of her nationality she could not even send a message to Dutch students or landlords because they were ‘Dutch only’ or indicated they had a ‘no internationals’ policy. On the other hand, Dutch (but also some international) students find it understandable that some Dutch students want to live in a ‘Dutch only’ house. NL2 explains, ‘I already speak English the whole day at school, I would like to speak Dutch when I am home. It makes me feel more comfortable’. Henceforth, the housing situation is according to many students clearly a factor that cools relations between Dutch and international students. ‘It immediately sends a message of separation’, one student remarks (P53). ‘If we do not allow international students as roommates, we already have a wedge between us’ (P106).

International respondents indicate that joining sports, study or student associations can be difficult too because of the language barrier. A Dutch respondent agreed:

I have heard in a meeting that one association does not accept international students because they do not pay their fee. However, they sent emails to international students in Dutch. I think it is ridiculous. The unwillingness to translate documents may be the reason why some associations reject international students. (NL1).

Correspondingly, an international interviewee who is a board member of a student association revealed that ‘a lot of formal documentation [are] not translated’, (ITL2) which caused their international members a lot of trouble while dealing with administrative work. She added, ‘even though some associations are trying to be more internationalised, I do not think the mentality of their members is ready for it’. Even if international students decide to join an association, language can be a sore spot. ‘In my sports association, everyone is Dutch so they first explain the exercises in Dutch and if they remember that I'm there, they will later

translate it to me. Sometimes I've even felt like a burden, something which I shouldn't feel' (P311). Nonetheless, it should be noted that certain associations reject international students for reasons of safety. 'Diving Club, namely G.B.D Calamari, rejects international students from joining because one needs a certificate for diving and the diving exam is in Dutch' (NL1).

Some students remark that they have issues finding a job. Only low-paying jobs are for English-speakers, if they are available at all. However, most students do see that speaking Dutch is a requirement for non-academic or service-oriented work.

Orientation

Multiple interviewees noticed that international students and Dutch students have a different orientation in balancing their study and social life. 'Very often Dutch students only want to finish their study and find a job', a Dutch interviewee states, 'they do not care if they really learned something. I think international students have a more academic mindset. They really care about what they learned'. This is a perspective that is shared by many students, and can be partially explained by the 'social structure', as one student puts it:

Most Dutch students can loan from the government, have free transportation, and go to [and/or] live with their parents, while internationals do not have such opportunities (and have to pay way more tuition) and therefore have very different lives and worries. (P2).

International respondents themselves also observe that they prioritize their study more than Dutch students. 'I came here to study so school is always a priority for me. Most of the Dutch students I have met have the idea of: Oh, a 6 is just fine' (ITL1). ITL3 adds to this, 'I feel like international students are mainly here for the quality of education, whereas Dutch students are here for partying. All of my Dutch friends are here for the nightlife'. In the same fashion, ITL5 asserts that she came to Groningen to study. She suggested that the difference in tuition fee might be the reason why Dutch students and international students have different orientations: 'Tuition fees for non-EU students are so high. I do not want to have a study delay'.

The focus on 'partying' among Dutch students, both an assumption on the side of internationals and a recurring introspection among the Dutch, is also part of a Dutch culture

that values extracurricular activities increasingly more than high grades. One student names this ‘broad development’, such as ‘expanding their social circles and gaining rich experiences in committees, jobs, hobbies’ (P165). This, according to her, results in Dutch people finding their first group of friends not in class, but at their extracurriculars. Student associations, but also committees, jobs and voluntary work require active participation and take up a lot of free time. According to one student, the perspective that this is important next to your studies is ‘not necessarily share[d]’ by all international students (P165).

Discussion

The results can be summarised around the precept that international students and Dutch students live, perceive of and have other opinions on the topic of social integration, satisfaction and, hence, experience social life differently in Groningen. Dutch students, especially, score significantly higher on social satisfaction as compared to internationals. In relation, this pattern can be found in the sense of belonging; language; social circles and the social preferences of students.

International students report feeling more excluded and different from Dutch students can have a significant impact on social satisfaction, sense of belonging and self-esteem (Glass & Westmont, 2014). It is interesting to see that especially internationals themselves rate their ‘difference’ higher as compared to Dutch students (also found in Beekhoven, 2002), whereas this is not reflected in the extent to which both groups (strongly) agree that international students have active social lives or whether they have difficulties participating in Groningen social life. This is relevant for the university context, for literature shows the importance of feeling included and participating in social contexts for academic performance, mental and emotional health and higher graduation figures (Severiens & Wolff, 2008). From the interviews and survey, international students report feeling most excluded in settings where Dutch is the main language of communication, e.g. associations, some social events and groups of Dutch-speaking students, and in situations where cultural values clash (Zhang & Zhou, 2014), e.g. alcohol-related activities or being ‘direct’. Having positive scores in these contexts is linked to better mental health, reduced stress and increased academic performance (*Ibid.*; Rienties et al., 2012).

Language is seen as a big factor for feeling at home and being included in Groningen student life. Both Dutch students and international students rate knowing Dutch as important

(also found in Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Spencer-Oatey et al., 2014). The difference between Dutch students and international students is also very clear on this topic, with 71.9% of Dutch students speaking mostly or only Dutch with their friends as compared to 91.3% of international students speaking mostly or only English with their friends. Being comfortable in a language, a theme that comes back often in both the interviews, open survey questions and the literature, is an important marker of both integration and self-esteem as well (Dewaele et al., 2008; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). It is interesting to note that despite most interviewees and open survey question respondents commented on the ‘insecurity’ of (especially Dutch) students in speaking a second language, the data does not necessarily support this claim. Nearly 80% of Dutch students (strongly) disagree on the statement that they feel insecure when speaking in English and 93.9% of internationals say they are comfortable speaking in English. 45.7% of non-Dutch natives, however, report they feel insecure about interacting with Dutch students because of language and nearly 50% said that their language proficiency affects their student experience in Groningen, wishing for more opportunities to learn Dutch and more interaction with Dutch students.

Overall, Dutch students are seen as having a more active and social life as compared to international students (over 80% of students (strongly) agree), which is higher than the 68.8% (of Dutch respondents) and 85% (of internationals) (strongly) agreeing that international students have active social lives. Notable factors in having significantly higher overall scores are related to association memberships (as compared to not being a member) and also to living in a Dutch students house (as compared to living at home, living with a partner/friend or living alone, also found in: Rienties et al., 2012, p. 687). This is also reflected in the interviews, which note the importance and desire to be a member and participate in social activities, and literature highlighting the benefits of social interaction with host, i.e. Dutch students in this context, students for increased social satisfaction (*Ibid.*). Despite the positive impacts early-on interaction with host country students (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2019), currently university activities, events and a large number of student (sport) associations hinder international students from participating and interacting with Dutch students. A main factor in this is language, but also preconceptions about ‘fitting in’ play a role in this. Dutch students also report having better relations with their professors as compared to international students, with internationals also noting that over 40% (strongly) disagrees with the statement that the university does enough to encourage interaction between

students. Under 20% of students think internationals can easily make Dutch friends compared to 50% of students (strongly) agreeing that the Dutch easily make international friends. International students who do participate in activities, have memberships or report having a job/interaction with students outside of academic settings report that their social satisfaction has gone up (Osterman, 2000). Students have mixed opinions about the role the Hanze and RUG have in a social setting. International students, especially, (strongly) disagree that universities are stimulating cross-cultural interaction at the moment. However, the interviews revealed that not everyone views it as the educational institutions' responsibility to solve this issue, while others strongly feel like the university is not doing enough when it comes to overall participation, in-class translations and (bureaucratic) involvement of non-Dutch speakers. Increased attention to events at the beginning of the academic year do help, students explain, but some say it is still insufficient.

More than half of the students mostly interact with their 'own' group in both social and academic settings, a finding reflected in the data, but also in the interviews, open survey questions and literature on group formation. As Osterman (2000), too, describes: '[a] community exists when its members experience a sense of belonging or interpersonal connectedness' (p. 324). The qualitative comments on this topic reflect precisely this idea. Students tend to stick to their own group because of shared experiences and feeling accepted (Embry, 2018). Both Dutch students and international students state that they feel less included in the respective other social circles and most prefer to hang out with compatriot friends because it is 'easier'. International students note the negative consequences that result from this, including difficulties finding housing, feeling excluded from certain activities and events, problems with employment, and even discrimination by non-students in daily life. Having mixed social circles has a positive effect on social satisfaction, our data shows, while literature also notes that having mixed friendships and/or a high sense of belonging are positive for cross-cultural interactions and are beneficial for academic performance (Severiens & Wolff, 2008; Spencer-Oatey et al., 2014). The perceptions of differing desires to integrate, differences in social participation, and, both formal and informal interaction with others all influence the perception of social satisfaction (Tinto, 1975; Rienties et al., 2012). Understanding perceptions and identification with certain social groups (and not with others) can strongly influence the behaviour and attitudes of individuals (Tinto, 1975; Kelly, 1993).

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the actual differences, international students in Groningen are seen as different from Dutch students. We found that language is often the biggest marker of difference according to students in Groningen, while other factors can contribute to the ‘gap’ as well. Many students remark that the ‘gap’ between Dutch students and non-Dutch students does exist. Many name the university, but also student clubs/associations and the Dutch ‘culture of exclusion’, as one interviewee coined, as most influential in driving this division. The Dutch language acts as both a marker of (Dutch) group identity, e.g. within Dutch groups and communities, and as a barrier for outsiders’ participation. Language seems to have ramifications in academic life, i.e. events, bureaucracy and communication with staff, social, i.e. (sport) clubs and extracurriculars being in Dutch only, and community, i.e. in supermarkets, shops and work contexts.

To a lesser extent, different priorities and financial situations are mentioned, too, as factors contributing to the ‘gap’. This refers to the advantage Dutch students have as compared to international students because they can travel to their *thuishuis* (‘parental home’), receive national loans and have access to their pre-university friendship networks. Especially the existing networks Dutch students already have, in addition to their ability to participate fully in Groningen outside of the student context, gives less of an incentive to make ‘new’ friends. On the other hand, international students often arrive without knowing anyone and connect more quickly with other students with similar experiences and attitudes. It is worth noting that, despite living, working and often participating in different circles, the majority of students do not purposely avoid the other group. A lack of opportunities for participation, information and spaces for informal interaction (e.g. housing, work or extracurriculars/events) are attributed to this contradiction.

All these factors contribute to a difference in (self-accredited) perceptions on social belonging. Where do students feel like they can join in, and where do they feel most comfortable? Both international students and Dutch students explain that they feel like making friends with either Dutch or international students is harder than making compatriot or fellow non-Dutch friends. Internationals also rate themselves as being less integrated and ‘different’ from Dutch students, more so than Dutch students rate international students as ‘different’. Surprisingly, perhaps, not many students blamed the other group (or their own)

for acting on these perceived differences. Many were retrospective and did not see the phenomenon as an issue, except for instances where it results in discriminatory experiences when finding a place to live, a job, or when attempting to join Dutch associations and/or participate in (non-university) events.

This study, once again (see, e.g., previous GSb study on Housing), stresses the importance of housing. Additionally, this study highlights the relevance of analysing the (social) environment in which students find themselves. The increasing interaction between local students and international students could be a rewarding cultural experience for both local and international students, teachers and staff. It is hoped that findings from this study can be used to assist academic administrators and faculty staff to better understand the differences between international students and Dutch students. In the following chapter we will lay out some recommendations derived from this study.

Recommendations

The relevance of this project for the University of Groningen and Hanze University of Applied Sciences to understand this dynamic lies in the effects belonging and perceptions of international students have on (mental) health, quality of intercultural encounters, academic performance, the stay-rate after finishing a study programme and the overall student experience of many. We recommend the higher education institutions and student (sport) associations in Groningen take a closer look at practical opportunities for reducing the effects the language barrier has on participation and cross-cultural interaction.

According to the findings, it is important for international students to be informed of the services that are available to them because language, cultural difference and academic pressure often isolate them from the Dutch community. The international participants of this study emphasised the need to increase the amount of Dutch language courses due to high demand. It is suggested to spread the time slots of available classes not only in the evening but also during daytime. It is also recommended to more closely scrutinize the use of Dutch in international classrooms. Ensuring that examples and translations benefit all students is beneficial for creating equity in examinations and sustaining an inclusive environment where every student can participate and contact all teachers and other students. Translating official documents, promoting more actively the available services and options for extracurricular activities and opening up (more) events for internationals is recommended for faculty staff

and associations. While this is already on its way, some international students feel that this can still be improved in the future and should be done early in the academic year.

Secondly, international students report wanting to participate and/or join extracurricular clubs, but often not being able to do so. Associations and clubs, next to academic extracurriculars, should take steps to further encourage the involvement of international students. One of the driving factors behind this shortfall of international student involvement within associations is the limited availability of resources in English or the lack thereof. In turn, this leads to a common perception that these associations are only for Dutch students or in some cases, hostile towards international membership. As such, associations should make these resources much more readily available in order to foster greater international involvement. Students emphasize that they understand the preference for Dutch and associations do not have to translate everything. However, many commented on the ‘Dutch only’ policy some events and/or clubs use and describe it as ‘alienating’. A welcoming atmosphere is facilitated, partially, by providing accessible information in a language students understand. Additionally, translated documents can help international students in carrying out administrative tasks as active members or employees.

A further recommendation is the role the educational institutions could have in promoting cross-cultural interactions upon arrival. Literature points to the importance of early-on interactions with host country students (Spencer-Oatey, *et al.*, 2019) and the positive impacts of intercultural communication and friendships on the sustained academic performance and experience of students. As remarked by an interviewee, the RUG’s current model in study programs is unable to provide any of these tangible benefits, with programs lacking activities that are otherwise commonplace in institutions abroad such as an orientation week. On the other hand, existing events organized by third-party organizations such as ESN (and KEI) week have shown to be a great way to start interactions between both parties. We found that these events are a great opportunity for meeting students and could offer opportunities for more intercultural interaction by way of ‘buddy programs’, i.e. making it easier for international students to meet and understand Dutch culture, and also promoting ESN-leadership among Dutch students, i.e. actively stimulating Dutch students to work alongside international students too. Many internationalisation policies tend to target international students only. With this study we hope to shed some light on the experiences and opportunities Dutch students provide in this issue.

Thirdly, housing remains a big issue and plausible obstacle to mixed social circles as is found in our study - reflecting literature and previous research. Groningen, like most other Dutch university cities, does not have on-campus housing facilities unlike many other countries. We recommend taking another look at this phenomenon and advise to look at the consequences of this policy on the social starting points for students. Campus housing could foster a more equal playing field for first-year students and could offer solutions to the existing issues surrounding finding housing, Dutch-only policies, lack of intercultural interactions and social circles, and, too, loneliness and problems with belonging among internationals. Our study found that students living in mixed houses reported higher averages on social satisfaction scales. We recommend a reassessment of the current situation and encourage staff to provide more information on finding housing in Groningen for international students prior to arrival including an explanation of the *hospiti* culture.

The points can be summarized as follows:

- Promote participation in introduction programmes among Dutch students
- Inform international students prior to arrival about the Dutch housing culture
- Provide more Dutch classes with more diverse schedules throughout the day
- Make resources, especially emails, official documents and services, available in both English and Dutch

We provide this advice to both the RUG, Hanze and Groningen associations and clubs. We believe that the recommendations provided in this report can contribute to the goal of inclusivity, diversity and a progressive academic community.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations in this study relate to both the acquisition of data and the quantitative analysis that ensued. While conducting analysis, slight concerns arose about the comparability and duality of some questions which were rooted in the style and dissemination methods used.

The sample might not be fully representative of the Groningen student population despite its relatively large size. Thus, this study made no attempt to generalise the results to the entire population of students in Groningen. Online surveys generally tend to attract more female responses, which is what we found also. The use of the English language during the whole study may have caused difficulties with interpretation for some second-language participants. Moreover, some statements in the survey can be suggestive, nudging participants

into giving socially desirable and prescribed answers. The length of the survey - taking up to 20 minutes - is a further limitation that might discourage respondents from starting or completing it (well). Due to time constraints, this study did not further report other variables, such as motivation, personality and attitude, towards living and studying in the Netherlands and personal social activities. Therefore, further studies should consider looking at other variables closely and include a larger sample size. Also, further research on this topic can be done in other universities in the Netherlands to compare the findings. Looking more closely at 'motivation to integrate' and multicultural classrooms can be an interesting take.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview consent form

Thank you for participating in our interview!

We would like to know a few things about you before the interview. This information would allow us to understand the answers given during the interview in a better way. It would be really nice if you could fill this out!

Nationality: _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Number of year(s) in
Groningen: _____

Faculty/School: _____

Study Program _____

Languages I can speak
(comfortably): _____

My first language(s): _____

I, hereby, agree that the Groninger Studentenbond (GSb) can use the information recorded and written in this document for the purpose of their current research by means of quotes and inferences. The information will be anonymized using coded aliases.

Date

Signature:

Appendix B: Interview guide

General questions

1. Where do you come from?
2. How many years have you been in Groningen?
3. (optional:) years of study (how long studying in Groningen?)
4. Age
5. Do you study at Hanze or RUG?
6. Which faculty are you studying?
7. What language is your degree program in?
8. What language can you speak/what is your first language?
9. What does your living situation look like?

Questions specifically for our research

1. Social satisfaction

- What does your social circle look like? (mainly dutch or international or mix)
 - If Dutch: would you like to have more international friends?
 - If international: would you like to have more Dutch friends?
- Are you satisfied with your social life outside of class?
 - What kind of activities do you usually do?
- Are you a member of any study associations?
 - Yes: which one(s)? Do you feel there are more Dutch/international students in your association?
 - No: why not? Would you like to join one?

Questions about: identifying with student culture (What is SC?), do you feel you have things in common with other students (what is 'common' for students here?)

2. Language(s)

- What language (s) do you speak in your daily life (with friends)?
 - Academic setting (school/faculty)
- Do you think that being able to speak Dutch is important to be a part of Groningen student culture?
- Do you face obstacles related to your language proficiency (Dutch or English)?

3. Academic Help

- Can you speak Dutch? (Proficiency?)
 - Yes:
 - Do you feel comfortable speaking Dutch with Dutch students?
 - NO:
 - Do you feel excluded from experiences because you cannot speak Dutch?
- Did you know free courses are given by the language centre?
- Are you satisfied with the amount of opportunities to learn Dutch?
- What else do you think the university should provide?
- Do you feel the university stimulates contact between students Dutch and international students?
 - How?

4. Impressions of students on each other

- Do you feel international students are different from Dutch students?
 - Why? In what perspective?
- Do you feel it is easy to make friends with international students?
 - Why not?
- Do you feel it is easy to make friends with Dutch students?
 - Why not?
- Do you feel international students want to interact with Dutch students?
- Do you feel Dutch students want to interact with international students?
- Do you feel international students tend to stick with other international students in social contexts/ activities?
- (Pilot:) Do you feel Dutch students treat you differently from other students?

Question: Dutch daily life (What is it? Cycle to school? Eat Dutch food?)

- Do you feel there is a gap between international students and Dutch students?
- Why?

After interview

Ask for feedback: what do you think about the length (too long/short?) and the relevance (too personal/not applicable to topic?) of the questions?

Appendix C: Social Integration Groningen - GSb '19/'20 (Complete survey)

Dear student,

On behalf of the Groningen Student Union (GSb), we are conducting a study on the topic of Groningen student culture, perceptions and social inclusion.

In this study, we are curious on how you perceive yourself to be integrated within Groningen student culture and, very importantly, how that perception is perceived by others. To do this, we have constructed a survey that will take about 15 minutes of your time. Try to answer the questions as truthfully where you can. With the information collected in this survey we aim to clarify the mysteries surrounding the social divisions and groups within Groningen as a student city.

Data collected from this survey will be processed anonymously and confidentially. Information provided will not be used for any other purposes other than this study. You can choose to quit the questionnaire at any given time if you wish to do so. At the end of the survey, you will find an email address where you can leave feedback or questions. You can also choose to enter your email in order to receive updates and the option to take part in a follow up interview regarding this topic.

By participating you have the chance to win one of the €20 Bol.com gift cards!

If everything is clear, you can click on the arrow to start the survey.

Background Questions

In the instance you answer 'Not a student' the survey will immediately submit your response.

This survey is only aimed at students currently studying in Groningen.

(Y1) I am a ...

- Hanze Student
- RUG Student
- Exchange student RUG
- Exchange student Hanze
- Not a student

(Y2) Hanze University of Applied Sciences School

- Academy Minerva, School for Fine Art and Design
- Academy for Pop Culture
- Hanze institute of Technology (HIT)
- International Business School Groningen
- North Netherlands Dance Academy
- Prince Claus Conservatoire
- School of Architecture, Built Environment and Civil Engineering
- School of Communication, Media and IT (SCMI)

- School of Education
- School of Facility Management Groningen
- School of Engineering
- School of Health Care Studies
- School of Law Groningen
- Institute of Life Science and Technology
- School of Financial and Economic Management
- School of Nursing
- School of Marketing Management
- School of Sport Studies
- School of Social Studies

(Y3) University of Groningen Faculty (RUG)

- Faculty of Economics and Business
- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies
- Faculty of Philosophy
- Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences
- Faculty of Medical Sciences
- Faculty of Science and Engineering
- Faculty of Spatial Sciences
- University College Groningen
- Campus Fryslân

(Y4) What year did you start studying in Groningen?

- <2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018
- 2019

(Y5) My degree programme is (predominantly) taught in:

- English
- Dutch
- Other

(Y6) I am in my:

- Bachelors
- Masters
- Exchange period
- Other

(Y7) My first language is (tick up to three boxes):

- Dutch
- Frisian
- German
- English
- French
- Spanish
- Greek
- Russian
- Mandarin (Chinese)
- Arabic
- Other

(Y8) I spent most of my time growing up in ...

- The Netherlands (Groningen-region)
- The Netherlands (not-Groningen)
- Dutch Antilles
- Northwestern Europe
- Eastern Europe
- Southern Europe
- The Middle East (Northern Africa and Gulf Region)
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- North-America (Canada, U.S.A, excluding Mexico)
- Caribbean
- Latin America
- East Asia (e.g. China, Japan, South-Korea)
- South Asia (e.g. India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka)
- Central Asia (e.g. Kazakhstan, Russia, Mongolia)
- Southeast Asia (e.g. Indonesia, The Philippines, Vietnam)
- Oceania (e.g. Australia, Polynesian Islands, New Zealand)

(Y9) Living situation:

- Living at home (with parents/carers)
- Solo apartment/Studio
- Living with a partner
- Student house (3> People, internationals only)
- Student house (3>People, Dutch only)
- Student house (3> People, mixed)
- Student housing/flat
- Other

Social Satisfaction

The following questions will be about your degree of social satisfaction, integration and your life in Groningen in general. All questions are designed for you to answer in a personal way, meaning there are no correct or wrong answers. All answers will be collected anonymously and can not be traced back to specific contact details.

(Y10) I would describe myself as...:

- A Dutch student with a (mostly) Dutch social circle.
- A Dutch student with a Dutch and international social circle.
- A Dutch student with a (mostly) international social circle.
- An international student with a (mostly) Dutch social circle.
- An international student with a Dutch and international social circle.
- An international student with a (mostly) international social circle.

(Y11) Most of my friends in Groningen are:

- Housemates
- Study friends
- Fellow association and/or club members
- Other

The following questions contain statements with a slider to ascertain to what extent you agree or disagree. (5-point Likert-scale, Completely disagree - Completely agree):

(Q1a) I am satisfied with my social life outside of class.

(Q1b) I am satisfied with making Dutch friends.

(Q1c) I am satisfied with making international friends.

(Q1d) I am satisfied with making friends from my own country/region.

(Q2a) I wish I had more friends who speak the same language as me.

(Q2b) I wish I had more Dutch friends.

(Q2c) I wish I had more international friends.

Integration in Social Life

The following statements will look at your opinions on your (and in general) social life in Groningen as a student city. (5-point Likert scales, Completely disagree - Completely agree):

- (Q3a) I feel connected to students in Groningen.
- (Q3b) I feel connected to Dutch students in Groningen.
- (Q3c) I feel connected to international students in Groningen.
- (Q4a) I identify with the student culture in Groningen.
 - (*With 'the student culture' we refer to what you feel is the 'normal' way of doing things here as a student. This is a subjective feeling or idea.)
- (Q4b) I identify with the Dutch student culture in Groningen.
- (Q4c) I identify with the international student culture in Groningen.
- (Q5a) I feel like I have a lot in common with other students in Groningen.
- (Q5b) I feel like I have a lot in common with Dutch students in Groningen.
- (Q5c) I feel like I have a lot in common with international students in Groningen.

- (Q6) I share values with other students in Groningen.
- (Q7) I share experiences with other students in Groningen.
- (Q8) Belonging in the Groningen student culture is important to me.
- (Q9) I feel like I am a part of the student culture in Groningen.
- (Q10) I go out for drinks, parties or to bars with other students in Groningen.
- (Q11) I hang out with other students outside of academic settings.
- (Q12) I feel like I am excluded from student culture in Groningen.

Student Associations and/or Clubs

The following sections will ask you some questions about your activity and links to student associations and/or clubs in Groningen.

(Y13) Are you a member of a/ multiple student (sport)associations?

- Yes
- No

(If yes:) Student associations and/or Clubs (2)

(Q13a) What associations are you a member of? (Short-answer text box)

(Q13b) I go to social activities organized by my associations. (5-point Likert-scale, Never - Always)

(Q13c) How would you describe the demographic of your association/club?

1. Mostly Dutch students
2. Mixed international/Dutch students
3. Mostly international students

(If no:) No membership(s)

(Q13d) I would like to be a member of an association and/or club in Groningen:

- Yes
- No

(Q13e) Why are you (currently) not a member of an association?

- Linguistic issues
- I do not feel comfortable
- I do not feel a part of this culture
- I have no time
- Other

Languages

In this section, questions will be asked about your language proficiency and the importance of language in your daily (social) life in Groningen.

(Y14) Are you a native/fully proficient Dutch speaker?

- Yes

- No

Language Dutch students

In this section, questions will be asked about your language proficiency and the importance of language in your daily (social) life in Groningen.

Statements with 5-point Likert scales (Only English - Only Dutch):

- (Q14a) In my daily life, I tend to speak...
- (Q14b) In an academic setting, I tend to speak...
- (Q14c) With my friends, I tend to speak...

Statements with 5-point Likert scales (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree):

- (Q15a) I feel comfortable speaking Dutch with other students.
- (Q15b) I feel comfortable speaking English with other students.
- (Q16a) I am confident about interacting in English with international students.
- (Q15b) Language is something I am insecure about when interacting with internationals.
- (Q17) I think that Dutch is an important factor in being a part of Groningen student culture.

Language international students

In this section, questions will be asked about your language proficiency and the importance of language in your daily (social) life in Groningen.

(Q18) How proficient are you in Dutch? (Level in CEFR description) (5-point Likert-scale, Not proficient - C1 or above (fluent))

Statements with 5-point Likert scales (Only English - Only Dutch):

- (Q19a) In my daily life, I tend to speak...
- (Q19b) In an academic setting, I tend to speak...
- (Q19c) With my friends, I tend to speak...

Statements with 5-point Likert scales (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree):

- (Q20a) I feel comfortable speaking Dutch with other students.
- (Q20b) I feel comfortable speaking English with other students.
- (Q21a) I think that Dutch is an important factor in being a part of Groningen student culture.
- (Q22b) I am excluded from student experiences in Groningen because of my language proficiency in Dutch.
- (Q23c) My language proficiency in Dutch does not affect my student experiences in Groningen.
- (Q24a) I am often insecure about interacting with Dutch students because of language.

- (Q24b) I am often insecure about interacting with international students because of language.

Languages (2)

In this section, questions will be asked about your language proficiency and the importance of language in your daily (social) life in Groningen.

(Y15) My current living situation is:

- Dutch-only
- International-only
- Mixed
- N/A

(Q25) Do you face obstacles, if any, relating to your language proficiency (either English or Dutch)? (Long-answer text box)

(Check-question) *It is important that you pay attention to this study. Please select 'No'.*

- Yes
- No

(If 'yes' is selected You have selected the wrong option for the previous question.

If you want to continue with the survey, choose 'Yes'.

- Yes
- No

Academic help

These questions are meant to capture your thoughts about the amount and quality of supportive services that the University provides you to help you settle in your school activities.

Statements with 5-point Likert scales (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree):

- (Q26) I am satisfied with the amount of and quality of the opportunities to learn Dutch.
- (Q27) The university stimulates contact between Dutch and international students.
- (Q28a) I am satisfied with the amount and quality of interactions I have with fellow students in an academic setting.

(Q28b) Most of the students I interact with in academic settings are:

- Dutch
- International
- Equally Dutch and International

(Q29) I am satisfied with the opportunities to meet and interact with my professors. (5-point Likert-scale, Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)

Dutch and International students' impression on each other

The following questions will be about the perceptions that both international and Dutch students have about each other concerning social life, interactions between international and Dutch students, and student life in Groningen in general. These questions aim to capture your own thoughts about these topics, therefore there are no correct or wrong answers.

(Y16) Are you a Dutch or international student?

- Dutch
- International

Dutch students' impressions

The following questions will be about the perceptions that both international and Dutch students have about each other concerning social life, interactions between international and Dutch students, and student life in Groningen in general. These questions aim to capture your own thoughts about these topics, therefore there are no correct or wrong answers.

Statements with 5-point Likert scales (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree):

- (Q30a) International students are integrated well in Dutch daily life.
- (Q31a) International students are social and have active social lives.
- (Q32a) Dutch students are social and have active social lives.
- (Q33a) International students are included in Groningen student life.
- (Q34a) International students easily make friends with Dutch students.
- (Q35a) International students have no difficulties participating in Groningen student culture.
- (Q36a) International students are different from Dutch students.
- (Q37a) Dutch students do not want to interact with international students.
- (Q38) International students tend to stick to other international students in social contexts.

International student' impressions

The following questions will be about the perceptions that both international and Dutch students have about each other concerning social life, interactions between international and Dutch students, and student life in Groningen in general. These questions aim to capture your own thoughts about these topics, therefore there are no correct or wrong answers.

Statements with 5-point Likert scales (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree):

- (Q30b) International students integrate well in Dutch daily life.
- (Q31b) International students are social and have active social lives.
- (Q32b) Dutch students are social and have active social lives.
- (Q33b) International students are included in Groningen student life.
- (Q34b) International students easily make friends with Dutch students.
- (Q35b) International students have no difficulties participating in Groningen student culture.

- (Q36b) International students are different from Dutch students.
- (Q37b) Dutch students do not want to interact with international students.
- (Q39) Dutch students treat me differently than other international students.
- (Q40) Dutch students tend to stick to other Dutch students in social contexts.

Final questions

(Y17) What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other

(Y18) What year were you born?

- 1990
- 1991
- 1992
- 1993
- 1994
- 1995
- 1996
- 1997
- 1998
- 1999
- 2000
- 2001
- 2002
- 2003 onwards

(Q41a) Do you feel like there is a gap between international and Dutch students?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

(Q41b) Why do you think this is the case? (Long-answer text box)

End of survey

Reading this message means you have completed our survey, and that we would like to thank you for your participation. We are very grateful you have taken the time to complete the survey! Again, we would like to point out that your input remains totally anonymous and the information provided will not be used for any purpose other than this research. Your answers are truly valuable as they will contribute to the quality of the analysis.

In particular, it will help us to complete our research and to gain a comprehensive view on the gap between international students and Dutch students. The results may be interesting for students in Groningen. As soon as we have finalised our study, it will be published and free

to access. In the meantime: if you would like to stay updated, have any recommendations and/or questions feel free to contact us at onderzoeksbureau@groningerstudentenbond.nl.

Thank you!

Research Committee Groninger Studentenbond (GSb)

i) Do you have any comments or feedback on either the survey itself, your own answers or a question for us? (Long-answer text box)

ii) Do you want to participate to win one of the Bol.com giftcards? If yes, please write down your (valid) email address in the 'Other...' space. *The email address will be kept private and deleted after selection of the gift card winners.

- Yes, my email address is:
- No, I do not want to participate.

iii) Do you want to elaborate your views and opinion on this subject? If you are interested, please write down your (valid) email address in the 'Other...' space, so that we, the Research Committee, can invite you for an interview. *The email address will be kept private and deleted after the interviews.

- Yes, my email address is:
- No, I do not want to participate.

Appendix D: Analysis assumptions

Independency

This assumption assumes random observations and independence between samples. Meaning observations should not have influence on another (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012).

Normality

This assumption assumes that the dependent variable follows the typically “bell-shaped” distribution, or a so-called normal distribution, in each group. In other words, it assumes that the residuals are normally distributed around the mean (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012).

Homoscedasticity

This assumption, also called homogeneity of variances, assumes equal variances of the distributions in each group (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012).

Appendix E: List of participants

The following list is a compilation of the information linked to the participants cited in this paper:

P75	F, Dutch, RUG (2019), living at home and mixed social circle
P261	F, Dutch, RUG (2019), living at home and Dutch circle
P282	F, Lithuanian, RUG (2018), international student house and mixed social circle
P325	F, Eastern Europe, RUG (2016), mixed student house and and mixed social circle
P328	M, Eastern Europe, RUG (2016), mixed student house and international social circle
P138	F, Dutch, RUG (2019), living at home and Dutch social circle
P55	F, Northwestern Europe, RUG (2018), student housing/flat and international social circle
P292	F, Northwestern Europe, RUG (2018), student housing/flat and mixed social circle
P150	F, Dutch, RUG (2018), Dutch student house and mixed social circle
P2	M, Dutch/Arabic, RUG (2016), Dutch student house and Dutch social circle
P47	F, Northwestern Europe, RUG (2018), mixed house and mixed social circle
P286	F, RUG (2017), Northwestern Europe, Dutch student house and mixed social circle
P315	F, Dutch, RUG (2016), Dutch student house and Dutch social circle
P53	F, Eastern Europe, RUG (2018), international student house and international social circle
P106	M, Dutch Antilles/Dutch, RUG (2014), solo apartment/studio and Dutch social circle
P311	M, Southern Europe, RUG (2017), solo apartment/studio and international social circle
P165	F, Dutch, RUG (2014), Dutch student house and Dutch social circle