Children's cross-ethnic friendships: Antecedents and consequences

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A little boy in the South was playing

with the child of the washerwoman.

Everything was going smoothly until a

neighbor White child called over the fence,

"Look out, you'll catch it." "Catch what?"

asked the first White child.

"Catch the black. You'll get colored, too."

(Allport, 1954, p. 306)

Children's and adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships

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School environments in many countries of the Western world are changing dramatically due to an increase in ethnic[1] diversity fuelled by migration. This increase in ethnic diversity opens up the opportunity for children to form friendships across ethnic lines. These types of friendships are desirable for at least two reasons. First, Gordon Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis stated that intergroup contact could reduce prejudice if it entailed four conditions: equal status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and authority support. Pettigrew (1998) proposed that cross-ethnic friendships would be a

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[1] We use the term ethnic and ethnicity rather than race or racial throughout this chapter. Ethnicity is a "social group a person belongs to, and either identifies with or is identified with by others, as a result of a mix of cultural and other factors including language, diet, religion, ancestry, and physical features traditionally associated with race" (Bhopal, 2004, p. 443). We acknowledge that race is more commonly used in North America where ethnic differences have historically been based mainly on skin colour. We use ethnic/ethnicity as synonyms for racial/race.

particularly effective form of contact compared to less intimate contact because it is likely to fulfill all of Allport's (1954) conditions. Comprehensive meta-analytic evidence indeed shows that cross-ethnic friendships are one of the most powerful means to improve intergroup attitudes among children (Tropp & Prenovost, 2008). Second, cross-ethnic friendships provide other valuable benefits because they are associated with social competence (Lease & Blake, 2005), and improved academic performance among minority students (Hallinan & Williams, 1990).

Yet, research shows that compared to same-ethnic friendships, cross-ethnic friendships are less common (Kao & Joyner, 2004), less stable (Schneider, Dixon, & Udvari, 2007), and decline with age (Aboud, Mendelson, & Purdy, 2003). It is therefore important to understand which factors contribute to the formation of cross-ethnic friendships and their stability, and which social-developmental changes are associated with having cross-ethnic friendships. In this chapter, we present an overview of how research from social developmental psychology and sociology has contributed to our knowledge about cross-ethnic friendships. We begin by describing the history of research on cross-ethnic friendships, then review current findings on antecedents and consequences, and conclude by providing suggestions for future research.

History of research on children's and adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships

Allport (1954) reviews research from the first half of the 20th century on sociometric studies of relations between children of different ethnicities in classrooms and the role of ethnicity and social class in friendship relations. These studies ultimately were part of the literature that served as the basis of Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis predicting contact between different groups to reduce intergroup prejudice, which has become one of the most researched topics in the field of social psychology until present (cf. Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Research on antecedents and consequences of cross-ethnic

friendship proliferated after the decision of the United States Supreme Court, in 1954, that segregation in public schools based on ethnicity was unconstitutional (*Brown vs. Board of Education*). Four years after this decision Allport noted that, 'If, therefore, gradualism is permitted, it would seem wiser to start the process of integrating with elementary schools rather than with high schools'. The desegregation in schools led to a first wave of studies looking at its effects on intergroup relations.

Preference for same- over cross-ethnic friendships

Initial studies on the consequences of school desegregation on formation of intergroup friendships yielded sobering results (cf. Johnson & Johnson, 1982; Schofield, 1989, 1995). For example, Stephan and Rosenfield (1978) conducted a study to examine the effects of school desegregation on intergroup relations, which showed that relatively few cross-ethnic friendships emerged in desegregated schools. A consistent finding was that children showed a bias towards selecting children of the same ethnic background as friends. Aboud (1988) reviewed studies showing that in desegregated schools same-ethnic interactions and ratings of liking by children exceeded cross-ethnic ones among both minority (Black) and majority (White) children. In sum, these earlier studies on cross-group friendship suggest that there is a consistent bias in favor of same- over cross-ethnic friendships.

Development of antibias programs

In order to promote positive intergroup relations in schools, antibias programs have been developed based on the notion that peer influence leads to conforming behavior and is a valuable source of influence on the development of ethnic evaluations (Aboud & Fenwick, 1999; Berndt, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998). Cooperative learning methods like the Jigsaw Method (Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes, & Snapp, 1978), in which students work in small groups to acquire new material, have been applied and tested in the school context to promote peer interaction and cooperation and ultimately to improve intergroup relations in ethnically

heterogeneous classrooms (cf. Sharan, 1980). However, early criticism of these methods was that effects of positive relationships during these interactions did not generalize to other ethnic group members not involved in the setting (Amir, 1976). In addition, as noted earlier, direct cross-ethnic friendships remained rare. The focus of research on school desegregation was primarily on the effects of contact within the classroom, and interventions to promote interaction. One of the main results was that contact is necessary but not sufficient to promote cross-ethnic friendships. Thus, this research was limited in that it concentrated exclusively on structural conditions like contact opportunity and ethnic similarity.

Contemporary research on children's and adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships

After the first wave of studies on the effects of desegregation, interest in the subject seemed to have waned by the 1990s. Yet, somewhat of a renaissance in research on cross-ethnic friendships, particularly in social developmental psychology, set in after the publication of Aboud et al.'s (2003) seminal paper, one of the first to study mutual friendship relations longitudinally. Importantly, recent research has adopted a developmental intergroup perspective that shares the social psychological focus on the group and group membership (Killen, Richardson, & Kelly, 2010). In this section, we review recent research on the antecedents of cross-ethnic friendships, on friendship stability and quality, as well as on their consequences.

Antecedents of cross-ethnic friendships

A number of structural, intergroup, and family factors influence the formation of cross-ethnic friendships. In the following sections, we will discuss each factor and its relationship to cross-ethnic friendships in turn, starting with structural factors.

Proximity. Proximity, also sometimes referred to as propinquity, merely describes that opportunity for contact between different ethnic groups must exist for cross-ethnic friendships to occur. Yet, the relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and frequency of

cross-ethnic friendships is not linear. Same-ethnic preference actually increases with growing

ethnic heterogeneity and only decreases where there is no longer an ethnic majority (Moody,

2001). A recent study sheds light on another effect of proximity that depends on the

availability of other-ethnicity peers in a friendship network ("network propinquity"; Mouw &

Entwisle, 2006). Echols and Graham (2013) showed that the availability of cross-ethnic peers

in early adolescents' social networks was an important predictor of whether they had cross-

ethnic friends themselves. Thus, network propinquity may serve as a descriptive norm

signalling that it is acceptable to have outgroup friends because other friends already have

these types of friendships. These results indicate that the relationship between proximity and

cross-ethnic friendships is complex and that it is fruitful to consider proximity from the

perspective of actors in a social network and not just at the classroom level. In addition,

proximity can depend on institutional practices, such as academic tracking, where students

are separated into different classes based on academic ability. Tracking can lead to uneven

distribution of students from different ethnic groups and thus limits the ability of children

from different ethnic groups to come into close contact (Hamm, Brown, & Heck, 2005;

Moody, 2001).

Homophily. Contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than between

dissimilar people (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Yet, similarity based on

ethnicity is not the only dimension that matters for children's friendship choices. Shared

interests also matter (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996). In a series of studies, McGlothlin, Killen

and colleagues had children weigh ethnic similarity compared to similarity in activity

interests when judging friendship potential (Margie, Killen, Sinno, & McGlothlin, 2005;

McGlothlin & Killen, 2005; McGlothlin, Killen, & Edmonds, 2005). Their findings indicated

that children in ethnically heterogeneous schools focused more on shared activity interests

than on ethnicity when asked to judge whether two children from different ethnicities could

be friends. This implies that in the absence of information on activity interests children may initially base their friendship decisions on salient physical attributes such as ethnicity. However, when children also know more about the activity interests of their peers, this knowledge may become more important for their friendship decisions. Indirect support for this account comes from a longitudinal study showing that children entering secondary schools initially showed a marked preference for same- over cross-ethnic friendships, which decreased over the year as children supposedly became more acquainted (Jugert, Noack, & Rutland, 2011).

Reciprocity. We like those that like us in return. Previous research suggests that ethnic minority children nominate equal numbers of same- and cross-ethnic friends in elementary school but that their nominations of cross-ethnic friends are less likely to be reciprocated by their ethnic majority peers (Graham & Cohen, 1997; Hallinan & Teixeira, 1987; Hallinan & Williams, 1987; Leman & Lam, 2008). Yet, after elementary school, ethnic minority children are less likely to nominate ethnic majority children as friends, possibly because of a lack of reciprocation. Unfortunately, many studies in the field have exclusively relied on one-way nominations of different-ethnicity peers as a measure of cross-ethnic friendships. This is problematic given that one-way friend nominations do not necessarily demonstrate either a relationship or actual contact (Aboud et al., 2003). Unidirectional friendships differ qualitatively from reciprocated friendships (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995) and cross-ethnic friendships are determined by different factors depending on whether they are unidirectional or reciprocal (Echols & Graham, 2013). Thus, future research should distinguish between these two types of friendship more clearly. Failure to do so may hinder progress in the field because essentially different constructs are treated, as they were the same. Thus, divergent findings between different studies may also stem from this indiscriminate treatment of unidirectional and reciprocated friendships.

Status. When making decisions about friendships high social status is a valued dimension for children and adolescents (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006). Social status can stem from various sources, one of which is academic achievement. Hamm et al. (2005) found that White American adolescents with a high grade point average were *less* likely to nominate cross-ethnic peers as friends, while ethnic minority students who did well in school were *more* likely to nominate cross-ethnic friends. Because of the correlated nature of academic achievement and ethnic minority status, these results imply that adolescents may select friends based on academic achievement rather than ethnicity alone. Social status in the classroom can also derive from socio-behavioural characteristics. Children with high peer status who are popular among their peers are also more likely to have cross-ethnic friends (Kawabata & Crick, 2008; Lease & Blake, 2005), possibly because they can afford to cross ethnic boundaries due to their leadership position. Status can also depend on the ethnic makeup of the classroom. Ethnic minority groups typically possess lower status in society than the ethnic majority group and children are well aware of these status differences (Kiesner, Maass, Cadinu, & Vallese, 2003). Yet, when ethnic minority groups form a majority in the classroom, their social status within that classroom increases (Jackson, Barth, Powell, & Lochman, 2006).

Intergroup factors. Beyond structural factors reviewed above individual attitudes and perceptions at the intergroup level are also relevant in predicting who is going to have cross-ethnic friendships. In Berry's (1990) two-dimensional acculturation framework the dimension of *outgroup orientation* reflects one's willingness for developing relationships with other ethnic groups. Titzmann and colleagues (2007) found that Russian Jewish adolescent immigrants in Israel and ethnic German adolescent immigrants in Germany who were high in outgroup orientation also showed less preference for same over cross-ethnic friends. More recently, Jugert et al. (2011) found outgroup orientation to be only predictive of German but

not Turkish children's preference for same- over cross-ethnic friendships. In addition, biculturalism (i.e., being high in ethnic and national identity), another acculturation strategy, may be particularly relevant in explaining ethnic minority members propensity for cross-ethnic friendships. Thus, in one study bicultural identification was related to less preference for same- over cross-ethnic friendships longitudinally among south-Asian English children (Rutland et al., 2012).

Intergroup attitudes are also important as children who show a strong attitudinal preference for their own ethnic group are unlikely to select members of other ethnic groups as friends. Consequently, Aboud et al. (2003) found that White American children high in prejudice were more likely to exclude cross-ethnic peers. The effect of intergroup attitudes on the propensity to have cross-ethnic friendships was also confirmed longitudinally with children (Jugert et al., 2011), and adolescents (Binder et al., 2009). As children move from middle into late childhood inclusion in peer groups becomes increasingly important to them (Horn, 2006) and so they become more sensitive towards which types of behaviour are sanctioned by their peers (Abrams, Rutland, & Cameron, 2003). Qualitative evidence suggests that negative ingroup *peer norms* prohibiting cross-ethnic mixing hinders cross-ethnic friendships (Aboud & Sankar, 2007). Quantitative evidence confirmed that initial peer norms and perceived changes thereof were important predictors of preference for same- over cross-ethnic friendships longitudinally (Jugert et al., 2011). Finally, it may be important to closely examine the extent to which Allport 's (1954) optimal contact conditions (equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and authority support) are actually established in the classroom. Findings by Jugert et al. (2011) showed that *perceived contact conditions* were only predictive of German but not Turkish children's ethnic friendship preferences, suggesting that it is problematic to assume that contact conditions have a uniform effect on all children's friendship choices (Molina & Wittig, 2006).

Parental attitudes and support. Surprisingly little research has focused on the role of parents in influencing their child's decision-making about cross-ethnic friendships. In one of the first studies on this subject Edmonds and Killen (2009) examined parental influence from the perspective of adolescents. They found that perceived parental ethnic attitudes had an impact on whether adolescents would bring different ethnicity friends and in particular cross-ethnic dates home. More recently, Munniksma and colleagues (2012) expanded on this study by investigating the underlying reasons why some parents object to their children having close friends from another ethnic group. In their study on Turkish-Dutch and Dutch parents they found that family reputation vulnerability and religiosity play a role in parental acceptance of their children's interethnic peer relations and this was particularly immanent among Turkish-Dutch parents. Two recent studies further illustrate the role parents have on managing their children's friendships with other ethnic groups. Both studies are based on the concept of intergenerational closure (Coleman, 1990). Put simply, intergenerational closure exists when the parents of children who are friends are friends themselves. Windzio (2012) showed that parents of cross-ethnic friendship dyads are unlikely to be acquainted and that this lack of intergenerational closure is strongly related to less mutual invitations to birthday parties among 10-year-olds. Hunter and colleagues (2012) using qualitative interviews of Black and White mothers elucidated some of the barriers to intergenerational closure. These barriers included not only structural ones such as residential segregation but also reflected differences in social class or religion and the social distance that comes with it. Overall, these findings indicate that it is important to consider the role parents have on their children's decision-making regarding cross-ethnic friendships, in particular outside the classroom.

In sum, the frequency of cross-ethnic friendships is determined by multiple factors on the structural, intergroup, and family level. Yet, the frequency of cross-ethnic friendships does not tell us anything about their longevity. Friendship stability is an important index of

the depth of a friendship. Long-lasting friendships are more likely to provide benefits such as companionship, intimacy, and support. Moreover, differential stability of same- and cross-ethnic friendships likely contributes to the relative infrequency of cross-ethnic friendships. Thus, in the following section, we will review the small literature on the stability of cross-ethnic friendships.

Stability and quality of cross-ethnic friendships

Consistent findings in the literature show that cross-ethnic friendships are less stable than same-ethnic friendships (Aboud et al., 2003; Hallinan & Williams, 1987; Jugert, Noack, & Rutland, 2013; Lee, Howes, & Chamberlain, 2007; Schneider et al., 2007). However, a recent study by McDonald and colleagues (2013) suggests that ethnic similarity may not affect friendship stability when accounting for friends' similarity in socio-behavioral characteristics. These authors found that it is more important whether friends are similar in terms of peer reputation and aggressiveness than whether they share the same ethnicity in predicting friendship stability and quality. Similarly, Jugert et al. (2013) found that when cross-ethnic friends were similar with regard to empathy their friendship was less likely to dissolve than when they were dissimilar. Further, Kawabata and Crick (2011) showed that leadership skills increased the stability of cross-ethnic friendships. Thus, the results of these studies point to the importance of studying friends' similarity in socio-behavioural characteristics and peer reputation that go beyond similarity in ethnicity. Some scholars have suggested that differences in friendship quality could explain the relatively low stability of cross-ethnic friendships (Aboud et al., 2003). However, others (Schneider et al., 2007) found no differences in friendship quality between same- and cross-ethnic friendships. Overall, the literature on stability and quality of cross-ethnic friendships is very slim, probably due to the necessity of longitudinal data. More research is needed to fully understand the factors contributing to friendship stability among cross-ethnic friendship dyads.

Consequences of cross-ethnic friendships

Positive consequences of cross-ethnic friendships. Research shows that cross-ethnic friendships influence the development of many social and emotional qualities like *solving conflicts* (McGill, Way, & Hughes, 2012; Nelson & Aboud, 1985) and positively influences *self-esteem* and *socio-emotional support* (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; McGill et al., 2012). Kawabata and Crick (2008) investigated how cross-ethnic friendship contributes to *social adjustment*. They hypothesized that cross-group friendships contribute in unique ways to social adjustment as they help to reduce social bias, associated negative emotions, and promote adjustment to other ethnicities. Their results showed that children who had more cross-ethnic friendships were viewed by teachers to be more ethnically inclusive and to have more leadership skills. Further studies suggest that cross-ethnic friendships provide unique psychosocial benefits as they are associated with social competence (Lease & Blake, 2005), and less victimization by peers (Kawabata & Crick, 2011).

The best documented consequences of cross-ethnic friendship are related to *intergroup attitudes*. As reviewed in the beginning of this chapter, over the past 60 years a great amount of research has focused on the question how peer relations influence prejudice. For example, studies in the 1980s and 90s have shown that children with cross-ethnic friends in early grades are more likely than those without to have outgroup friends in adolescence and adulthood (Ellison & Powers, 1994; Patchen, 1982). Overall, there is robust evidence for causal relationship of cross-ethnic friendships improving intergroup attitudes (Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011; Feddes, Noack, & Rutland, 2009). In a longitudinal study, Feddes and colleagues (2009) measured associations between friendship and out-group attitudes between 7-to-11 year old German children (high status group) and German-Turkish (low status migrant group) in three ethnically heterogeneous primary schools at the beginning and end of the school year. The results showed that having an out-group friend at the

beginning of the school year was positively associated with more positive attitudes toward the out-group at the end of the school year. Importantly, positive attitudes toward the outgroup at the beginning of the school year were not associated with having more outgroup friends at the end of the school year. A recent meta-analysis by Davies et al. (2011) supports these results. The meta-analysis included 17 studies with children and 30 studies with adolescents. Like in the studies discussed above, in both samples having a direct friend in the out-group was moderately related to less prejudice (correlations between friendship and prejudice were -.20 among children and -.23 among adolescents). Overall, these results support the friendship hypothesis of Pettigrew (1998) that direct friendship results in more positive attitudes toward the out-group.

Mediators of the relationship between cross-ethnic friendships and intergroup attitudes. In the past two decades, research on consequences of cross-group friendship focused on the underlying processes determining changes in attitudes: *Why* does friendship result in improved attitudes towards other groups? There now exist a rich body of research that identifies mediators in the friendship-attitude relationship. Feddes and colleagues (2009) investigated the possible role of *peer group norms*. They asked the German and German-Turkish children whether they thought other ingroup and outgroup children thought it would be okay to have outgroup friends or not. It was found that having cross-ethnic friends at the beginning of the school year positively influenced children's perceptions of whether other children thought it normal to have an out-group friend at the end of the school year. Having a cross-ethnic friend, therefore, resulted in more positive perceived norms about cross-group friendship which, in turn, positively influenced these children's attitudes towards the other group. In other words, peer group norms about cross-ethnic friendship mediated the positive association between cross-ethnic friendship and more positive out-group attitudes.

Other studies by Cameron and colleagues (Cameron, Rutland, & Brown, 2007; Cameron, Rutland, Hossain, & Petley, 2011) have shown that extended friendship (i.e., knowledge about cross-ethnic friendship) also results in more positive social norms that, in turn, positively influence intergroup attitudes. Other studies on mediators of the friendship-attitudes association have also found that cross-ethnic friendship results in *spontaneous identification with out-group children* (Cameron et al., 2006), *greater empathy* and *trust* towards the out-group (Swart, Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, in press). In three studies, Turner, Hewstone, and Voci (2007) could show that both direct and extended cross-ethnic friendship resulted in *reduced intergroup anxiety* towards the out-group.

Moderators of friendship effects. One important question in investigating consequences of cross-ethnic friendship on intergroup attitudes is under which conditions it is most effective. A recent review of 32 studies on interventions aimed at reducing prejudice and enhancing inclusion has shown moderate positive effects of interventions based on peer relations (Aboud et al., 2012). One of the proposed key moderators was difference in *social status* of ethnic groups. For ethnic majority members interventions were found to be more effective in reducing prejudice than for ethnic minority members. In the contact literature this phenomenon has also been reported. For example, Tropp and colleagues found that mere contact influences outgroup prejudice and inclusion differently depending on group status (cf. Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005; Tropp & Prenovost, 2008). That is, minority groups showed a weaker relationship between intergroup contact and a reduction of prejudice than majority groups which, according to Tropp and Pettigrew could not be explained by the quality of intergroup contact. Indeed, in regard to intergroup friendship Feddes and colleagues (2009) replicated this showing that positive effects of intergroup friendship on the development of children's intergroup attitudes were only found among the majority high status (German), but

not minority low status (German-Turkish) children. These results suggest that cross-ethnic friendships are particularly important depending on group status.

One possible explanation for this phenomenon as suggested by Tropp and Pettigrew (2005) is that ethnic majority members are more concerned about appearing prejudiced in intergroup settings than minority settings. In contrast, minority group members' concern is mainly being the target of prejudice. Nevertheless, the minority/majority asymmetry in contact effects remains to be further empirically investigated.

A recent study by McGill and colleagues (2012) also showed differences in consequences of cross-ethnic versus same-ethnic friendships depending on the ethnic group. In their study they investigated patterns of same- and cross-ethnic best friendships among adolescents. In accordance with previous studies they found most youth to have only same-ethnic best friends in middle school. Generally, their findings showed that same-ethnic friendship was related to more social well-being for Black and Asian American youth, but not for White and Latino youth. As an explanation, the authors concluded that the ethnic context in the schools may be particularly hostile for Black and Asian American students. Same-ethnic friendships may therefore be particularly important for these youth.

Negative consequences of cross-ethnic friendships. Titzmann (2012) showed that cross-ethnic friendships can create stressful family dynamics that reduce adolescents' well-being. This is because the parents of adolescent immigrants are often less well socio-culturally adapted than their children, leading to the adoption of adult family roles by providing emotional support for their parents among their children. McGill, and colleagues (2012) found that Black and Asian American adolescents with only cross-ethnic best friends reported lower emotional well-being than those with only same-ethnic best friends. Recent findings from social psychology also suggest that sustained intergroup contact can have negative effects at the group level for adult minority members as it lowers their support for

social change, equality and justice (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2007). In addition, research by Castelli, De Amicis, and Sherman (2007) has shown that ethnic majority children between four and seven years old evaluate in-group children more positively when they played only with other in-group members. This implies that the choice of having positive relations only with other ingroup members or outgroup members has consequences for how a child is viewed by other ingroup members. Castelli and colleagues called this the "Loyal Member Effect". Thus, future research should investigate carefully possible negative effects of cross-ethnic friendships at the individual and group level. Cross-ethnic friendships might come at a cost if these are the only kind of friendships that children have or if parents or peers do not approve of intergroup contact.

Summary

In this chapter, we reviewed the literature on children's and adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships, focusing on antecedents and consequences thereof. The likelihood of cross-ethnic friendships depends on structural, intergroup, and family factors. With regard to structure, the availability of same- and cross-ethnic peers both at the level of the social setting (e.g., school) and within the network (e.g., children's friendship network) influence decision-making about cross-ethnic friendships. However, more availability of cross-ethnic peers does not automatically lead to more cross-ethnic friendships (cf. Moody, 2001). Similarity based on ethnicity may be an important criterion for friendships decisions early on in the acquaintance process. Nevertheless, studies suggest that when children also have information regarding other important criteria (e.g., activity interests), ethnicity may become less important. Status among peers is another important factor determining friendship decisions. Studies suggest that high peer status is associated with having cross-ethnic friendships and that status of ethnic minority children may depend on whether they form a majority in the classroom.

With regard to intergroup factors, acculturation attitudes, intergroup attitudes, peer group norms, and contact conditions all have an influence on whether children and adolescents are likely to have cross-ethnic friends. Only recently, have researchers begun to explore the influence of parents on children's decision-making about intergroup peer relations. The evidence to date suggests that parents are influential, particularly with regard to friendships outside the classroom.

The second part of the chapter focused on consequences of cross-ethnic friendships. Research has now shown that having cross-ethnic friendships has positive psychosocial consequences which include better social adjustment and more positive attitudes towards ethnic out-groups. In regard to the question *why* cross-group friendship leads to more positive attitudes it has been found that having cross-ethnic friends changes perceived peer group norms, it results in greater identification with the out-group as well as more empathy and trust towards the out-group. Importantly, cross-ethnic friendship reduces feelings of intergroup anxiety. Ethnicity (i.e., ethnic status) has been found to be a key moderator of the friendship-attitudes relationship as the relationship is stronger for ethnic majority than ethnic minority members. Cross-ethnic friendship may also have negative consequences when it is the only kind of friendship children have or when parents or peers do not approve of the friendship.

Future Directions

We want to repeat the call made by Graham et al. (2009) that scholars interested in cross-ethnic friendships need to take a multidisciplinary perspective. Some of the most important advances in the field have come from sociology. This is not only true for theory but also for analytical approaches. One of the most intriguing analytical tools developed by sociologists is longitudinal social network analysis (e.g., SIENA; Snijders, Van de Bunt, G. G., & Steglich, 2010). With longitudinal peer nominations data, on for example classroom networks, SIENA allows for disentangling processes of selection (e.g., selecting friends

because of certain characteristics) and influence (e.g., being influenced by friends' characteristics) and takes into account the complex statistical interdependency in social networks.

To illustrate, using social network analysis Munniksma, Stark, Verkuyten, Flache, and Veenstra (2013) were able to provide more insight in how extended friendship influence intergroup attitudes. These researchers noted that measures of extended friendships are strongly related to measures of direct friendship (Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2004; Turner & Brown 2008). The reason for this is that extended intergroup friendships within a social setting are likely to be associated with direct friendships in that setting. To examine the unique effects of extended friendship on intergroup attitudes it was necessary to exclude these direct friendships. By assessing the entire social network in the classroom these researchers could determine an individual's number of extended friendship relations that were *not* simultaneously part of direct friendships. Using this approach among 661 Dutch students in multi-ethnic schools they could show that for students with relatively unfavourable outgroup attitudes, extended friendship with out-group members was related to more positive attitudes independent of direct friendships. The network analyses, therefore, avoided the misclassification of intergroup friendship as extended when it was, in fact, direct intergroup friendship.

Future research should also investigate children's interpretations of friendship choices. Do children justify why they may not befriend a member of another ethnic group and how? We need to know more about when and how ethnic group membership plays a role in children's friendship choices. Stark and Flache (2012) argue that ethnic segregation in friendship networks is a mere by-product of opinion homophily. That is, because ethnic group membership and opinions are often correlated preference for same- over cross-ethnic friends may simply occur because children from different ethnic groups do not share the same

opinions. But more open-ended assessments could also shed more light on children's reasoning about friendship choices (cf. Killen, Henning, Kelly, Crystal, & Ruck, 2007). Another interesting avenue for future research are cross-group friendships based on religion. Across Western Europe questions of diversity have been increasingly coined in religious terms with particular focus on Islam (Verkuyten & Slooter, 2007). Thus, religious group membership may have become an important social marker next to ethnicity.

Overall, the literature on cross-ethnic friendships is poorly integrated because researchers have used different definitions of friendship (best friendships vs. more lenient definitions, one-way vs. reciprocal), and different ways to measure friendship (peer nominations vs. closed questions). The picture will become even more complicated as the number of mixed-ethnic children is increasing. Mixed-ethnic children pose a problem to the researcher as it is difficult if not impossible to define when a mixed-ethnic child has a cross-ethnic friendship. In addition, much of the research has been merely explorative or descriptive with very few studies trying to address questions of moderation and mediation. However, there is a clear need to move beyond descriptive studies specific to particular study contexts to generalizable findings. Thus, future studies should aim to study contextual factors with experimental and multi-level approaches (e.g., compare teaching methods, school-level factors).

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