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Confidence in contact: A new perspective on promoting cross-group friendship

among children and adolescents

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Abstract

Intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) proposes that positive interactions between members of different social groups can improve intergroup relations. Contact should be especially effective in schools, where opportunities may exist to engage cooperatively with peers from different backgrounds and develop cross-group friendships. In turn, these friendships have numerous benefits for intergroup relations. However, there is evidence that children do not always engage in cross-group friendships, often choosing to spend time with same-group peers, even in diverse settings. We argue that in order to capitalise on the potential impact of contact in schools for promoting harmonious intergroup relations, a new model is needed that places confidence in contact at its heart. We present an empirically-driven theoretical model of intergroup contact that outlines the conditions that help to make young people 'contact ready', preparing them for successful, sustained intergroup relationships by giving them the confidence that they can engage in contact successfully. After evaluating the traditional approach to intergroup contact in schools, we present our theoretical model which outlines predictors of cross-group friendships that enhance confidence in and readiness for contact. We then discuss theory-driven, empirically tested interventions that could potentially promote confidence in contact. Finally, we make specific recommendations for practitioners and policy makers striving to promote harmonious intergroup relations in the classroom.

Intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954), the premise that positive interactions between members of different social groups can improve relations between those groups, is arguably the most intensively studied and applied theory of prejudice-reduction. By 2006, when Pettigrew and Tropp undertook their exhaustive meta-analysis of contact research, there were over 500 studies on the topic spanning more than 50 years. However, the rate of publications on the topic has since increased exponentially, with over 700 publications on intergroup contact in the past decade. The urgency of this search to understand intergroup contact as a potential intervention to reduce prejudice is an understandable reaction to contemporary society. Unprecedented levels of conflict between different national, religious, and ethnic groups, and associated social unrest, war, and acts of terrorism, mean that the challenge of promoting positive intergroup relations is great. There is also increasing awareness and concern about other forms of discrimination including ageism, weight, and mental health stigma, which negatively impact upon the lives of many. Moreover, increasing geographic mobility means that, in many places (although by no means all) there are more opportunities for intergroup contact than ever before.

One context in which opportunity for intergroup contact is particularly salient is in the classroom. Arguably school is among the most likely places where children will experience diversity, and come into contact with children (and adults) from other intergroup backgrounds. Attending more diverse schools has a number of positive outcomes for children, including more positive intergroup attitudes (Aboud & Sankar, 2007; Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew & Wright, 2011; Killen, Crystal & Ruck, 2007; Turner, Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy & Cairns, 2013), increased prosocial behavioural intentions (Abbott & Cameron, 2014) and more inclusive friendships (Bagci, Kumashiro, Smith, Blumberg & Rutland, 2014; Feddes, Noack, & Rutland, 2009; Jugert, Noack, & Rutland, 2011). However, there is increasing awareness that diversity can also have negative consequences, including

poorer psychological adjustment, well-being and academic success, particularly among minority children and adolescents (Brown et al., 2013; Eccles, Wong, & Peck, 2006), and a decrease in intra- and intergroup trust (Putnam, 2007).

These conflicting findings represent a dilemma for educators and policy makers. How can we ensure we capitalize on the potential for positive intergroup relations provided by diverse schools, while avoiding the negative experiences that can at times characterise young people's experience of diversity? The key to resolving this dilemma may lie in the development of cross-group friendships. In diverse settings children have the opportunity to form meaningful relationships with people from backgrounds different to their own. Moreover, friendships that cross group boundaries are especially effective at promoting more positive intergroup perceptions, such as more positive attitudes, reduced anxiety about interacting with outgroup members, and increased trust (Davies, et al., 2011; Turner & Feddes, 2011; Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007b). Unfortunately, children are typically attracted to same-race friends, a preference that intensifies through childhood and adolescence (Aboud, Mendelson & Purdy, 2003; Tropp & Prenovost, 2008). Identifying the conditions that lead to cross-group friendship development is essential in order to create schools where children are positively oriented towards cross-group friendships, and where such friendships are allowed to flourish (Aboud & Sankar, 2007; Davies et al., 2011; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014).

To date, however, we know relatively little about the conditions that lead to cross-group friendship. Until recently, research in this area focused on documenting the frequency of cross-group friendships, as well as investigating the relationship between intergroup contact and outgroup attitudes. Put another way, cross-group friendships and other forms of contact have typically been considered the 'starting point' when examining intergroup relations, with the key outcome being more positive outgroup attitudes. Relatively little

attention has been paid to the intertwining role of individual, cognitive developmental and contextual conditions that lead to cross-group friendship initiation and maintenance, a limitation that has been highlighted by numerous leading psychologists (e.g., Aboud & Sankar, 2007; Bagci et al., 2014; Rutland & Killen, 2015; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014; Tropp, O'Brien & Migacheva, 2014).

We propose that in order to capitalise on the potential impact of contact in schools for promoting more harmonious intergroup relations, a new model is needed that considers the conditions that encourage cross-group friendship, as well as the consequences of these relationships and places confidence in contact at its heart. We present an empirically-driven theoretical model of intergroup contact in the classroom that outlines the conditions that help to prepare young people for successful, sustained intergroup relationships by giving them the confidence that they can engage in contact successfully. In doing so, we will provide a 'road map' for successful contact in schools, with concrete recommendations which enable educators and policy makers to determine how to best implement contact-based interventions in their school environment. Below, we begin by examining evidence for the benefits of intergroup contact generally and cross-group friendship more specifically. We then outline our theoretical model, together with key research findings that support the model. We summarise research on interventions which may help to promote confidence in intergroup contact, making young people 'contact ready'. Finally, we make specific recommendations for practitioners and policy makers interested who strive to create harmonious intergroup relations in the classroom.

Intergroup contact in schools

Allport (1954) argued that contact between members of different groups should produce more positive intergroup relations, provided that it was characterized by certain optimal conditions, specifically equal status, cooperation, common goals, and institutional

support. The robust relationship between intergroup contact and more positive outgroup perceptions is now well established (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Children spend a considerable proportion of their lives in the classroom, often working together under the conditions specified by Allport, for example completing tasks that require team work and cooperation, with the encouragement of teachers, in order to achieve common goals. This means there is enormous potential to capitalize on intergroup contact in schools to improve intergroup relations, a notion that is supported by the large number of studies examining school-based intergroup contact (see Aboud et al., 2012; Beelmnann & Heinemann, 2014; Tropp & Prenovost, 2008, for reviews). Žeželj, Jakšić, and Jošić (2015), for example, found that Serbian children who engaged in supervised contact with Roma peers in school subsequently held positive attitudes towards Roma in general, whilst Vezzali and Giovannini (2012) found that Italian secondary school students who had experienced more high quality contact with immigrants not only held more positive attitudes towards immigrants, but also held more positive attitudes towards two groups unrelated to the initial contact, the disabled and gay people. Ruck, Park, Crystal and Killen (2011) examined intergroup contact among African American ethnic minority public school children, finding that positive intergroup contact experience increased the likelihood that cross-race peer exclusion would be perceived as wrong.

In the past couple of decades, cross-group friendship has emerged as a particularly effective form of intergroup contact (e.g., Davies et al., 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Turner, Hewstone, Voci, Paolini, & Christ, 2007c). Among children aged six through to adolescence cross-group friendship is associated with more positive outgroup attitudes in a host of intergroup contexts (e.g., Aboud et al., 2003; Ata, Bastian, & Lusher, 2009; Feddes et al., 2009; Titzmann, Brenick & Silbereisen, 2015). In the context of white – South Asian relations in the UK, Turner et al. (2007b) found that white primary school children aged 8-11

years and white and South Asian high school students aged 11-15 years with cross-group friends held more positive outgroup attitudes. Turner et al. (2013a) examined cross-group friendship in segregated (either Catholic or Protestant) and integrated (mixed Catholic and Protestant) high schools in Northern Ireland, where there is a history of conflict and continued segregation between the two communities. Children attending integrated schools reported greater experience of diversity, and more cross-group friendships than children attending segregated schools. Moreover, regardless of school type, children with greater experience of diversity had more cross-group friendships, which were in turn associated with greater empathy and self-disclosure, and a more positive attitude toward the other community.

The benefits of cross-group friendship among children extend beyond intergroup relations. They include, for instance, increased levels of social competence (Eisenberg, Vaughan, & Hofer, 2009; Lease & Blake, 2005) and increased self-esteem, well-being and resilience (Bagci et al., 2014; Fletcher, Rollings & Nickerson, 2004). Children with cross-group friends also tend to be better at taking the perspective of outgroup members, making children more aware of how it feels to be discriminated against and more likely to think that race-based exclusion is wrong (e.g. Killen, et al., 2007; Tropp & Prenovost, 2008). Children who hold cross-group friendships also show greater leadership potential and are more popular (Kawabata & Crick, 2008; Lease & Blake, 2005).

There are four key reasons why cross-group friendship might be especially effective at improving intergroup relations. First, they involve sustained intimate contact, often involving extensive time spent together in shared activities over different situations (Davies et al., 2011). Second, they provide an opportunity for mutual self-disclosure, the voluntary sharing of intimate or personal information with one another, thought to be key to developing close relationships (Miller 2002). During cross-group friendships, self-disclosure increases

emotional connection by promoting intimacy and trust, and indicates an active, committed, valued relationship (Davies et al., 2011). Indeed, Turner et al. (2007b) found that the positive relationship between cross-group friendship and outgroup attitudes among primary and secondary school children was mediated by an increase in self-disclosure. Third, they are especially likely to epitomise the optimal conditions proposed by Allport (1954), involving cooperation, common goals, and equal status within the friendship. Finally, cross-group friendships provide positive intergroup experiences that reduce intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), the apprehension felt when contemplating and engaging in interactions with the outgroup which has the potential to poison intergroup encounters. This reduction in anxiety in turn promotes a positive outgroup orientation (De Tezanos-Pinto, Bratt, & Brown, 2010; Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton & Tropp, 2008; Feddes et al., 2009; Turner et al., 2007b; Vezzali, Giovannini & Capozza, 2010).

<center>Limitations of the traditional contact approach</center>

Despite the obvious benefits of cross-group friendship outlined above, we urge some caution when interpreting the findings of friendship studies. The vast majority of these findings are cross-sectional, and although they focus on cross-group friendship as a predictor of more positive outgroup attitudes, less intergroup anxiety, and so on, it could equally be argued that it is more positive attitudes and reduced anxiety that leads to more cross-group friendships. Indeed in their experimental research with adults, Page-Gould, et al. (2008) found that inducing cross-group friendship between Latinos/as and Whites not only reduced participants' anxiety during cross-group encounters, but it also increased initiation of subsequent cross-group encounters outside of the laboratory. In other words, reduced anxiety in intergroup encounters led participants to approach rather than avoid members of the other group, and to be more interested in cross-group interactions. This is an essential first step towards cross-group friendship. We will return to the argument that reduced anxiety predicts

cross-group friendship, shortly. Secondly, there is some evidence that the relationship between cross-group friendship and more positive intergroup perceptions is weaker among minority group members than majority group members (e.g., Feddes et al., 2009; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005), which may in part relate to the fact that minority group members inevitably experience more contact with the majority group (and therefore have less to gain from it), or that they have more concerns about victimization and discrimination which may limit the impact of contact (Aboud & Sankar, 2007).

Another issue is that while experiencing diversity is necessary for cross-group friendship, diversity can have adverse effects. Among minority group members, attending diverse schools increases the likelihood of experiencing prejudice and discrimination, which adversely impacts self-esteem, well-being and academic outcomes (Benner & Kim, 2009; Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002). There is also evidence that experience of diversity can result in less community trust (e.g., Putnam, 2007; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002; Schmid, Al Ramiah and Hewstone (2014). These findings are seemingly at odds with typical contact research which shows positive intergroup contact helps to promote trust (e.g., Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy & Cairns, 2009; Turner et al., 2010; Schmid et al., 2014), as well as improving inter-group orientation, behaviour and promoting personal development as outlined above.

How can we reconcile these different findings? One explanation is that living in diverse communities does not in itself provide positive outcomes, but rather the experience of positive contact (including cross-group friendship) within those settings is the key to more positive inter-group attitudes, behaviour and well-being. Thus, the crucial difference in whether diversity results in positive or negative consequences for intergroup relations is whether that diversity enables positive intergroup contact. This argument is consistent with recent trends in the intergroup literature whereby cross-group friends are considered a

resource that help those living in diverse communities deal with daily stress provoked by sometimes negative intergroup interactions (Page-Gould, 2012). Being accepted by diverse peers also communicates to young people that their developing ethnic identities are recognised and valued (Baysu, Phalet & Brown, 2014; Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2010; Mendoza-Denton, Page-Gould & Pietrzak, 2006; Page-Gould, 2012; Page-Gould et al., 2008). This suggests that provided diversity does enable cross-group friendships, it is likely to have positive rather than negative consequences.

Unfortunately, however, although children in diverse settings have the opportunity to form cross-group friendship, these opportunities are not always pursued. When observing behavioural patterns among white and South Asian students in the school cafeteria of a diverse high school over a two day period, Al Ramiah, Schmid, Hewstone, and Floe (2015) found that South Asian students tended to cluster primarily in one area of the cafeteria, whereas white students dominated other areas. A subsequent longitudinal questionnaire study revealed that for both groups, their own lack of interest reduced the likelihood of cafeteria contact. Put another way, despite opportunities for contact, children chose to self-segregate. Cross-race friendships have been shown to be relatively uncommon (Aboud & Sankar, 2007; McDonald et al., 2013; Wilson, Rodkin & Ryan, 2014), are less durable, and decline with age (Aboud et al., 2003). Nonetheless, it appears that if a cross-race friendship survives beyond the early stages, it is likely to be of similar quality to a same-race friendship (Bagci et al., 2014). In sum, we cannot assume that diversity will automatically result in the development of cross-group friendships, and positive intergroup relations, but when cross-group friendships do develop, the positive impact is clear.

Our review has briefly outlined the particular importance of cross-group friendship for how children experience diversity, their well-being and intergroup attitudes. However, contact research has continued to focus on cross-group friendships as the starting point of the

contact-attitude relationship. The impact of attitudes and other predictors on cross-group friendship has been relatively ignored, meaning that we know little about what causes these friendships to arise in the first place. To promote positive intergroup relations, mechanisms must be identified and put in place to ensure that when children are exposed to diversity, they are more likely to take up any opportunities that arise to engage in positive, sustained, intergroup relationships.

A Model for Promoting Confidence in Contact

On reviewing the intergroup contact literature, we have identified a number of key predictors or conditions that promote cross-group friendship: intergroup anxiety, intergroup attitudes, social norms and school climate, expectations of similarity, shared identity, self-efficacy, and socio-cognitive development. We believe that together these conditions form an overarching predictor of cross-group friendship, confidence in contact, which forms the centrepiece of our theoretical model (see Figure 1). Confidence in contact reflects a state of readiness for positive contact, whereby children have the necessary confidence, skills, beliefs, and experience for successful intergroup contact. We argue that instilling confidence in contact in young people will increase the chances that, because they are contact ready, they will have positive cross-group interactions and in turn form high quality cross-group friendships that are maintained over time. Below we outline recent research regarding our proposed predictors of confidence in contact.

Intergroup anxiety

Intergroup anxiety refers to the apprehension felt when contemplating and engaging in interactions with the outgroup (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). This anxiety can lead to avoidance of the outgroup, and can have a negative impact on interactions (e.g., Plant & Devine, 2003). As described previously, cross-group friendships provide positive intergroup experiences that reduce intergroup anxiety (e.g., Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2004; Turner & Feddes,

2011). Among school children, Turner et al. (2007b), for example, found that cross-group friendship among white British and South Asian primary school children (aged 7-11 years) reduced intergroup anxiety (see also De Tezanos-Pinto et al., 2010; Swart, Hewstone, Christ, & Voci, 2011; Žeželj et al., 2015). It would follow that reducing intergroup anxiety might increase children's confidence in intergroup contact, increasing the likelihood that they will seek out and engage in such encounters. Although this has not been directly tested among children, among college students reduced intergroup anxiety promotes a greater desire to seek out future contact (Page-Gould et al., 2008).

There has been little research examining the root causes of intergroup anxiety among children. However, research with adults suggests lack of prior outgroup experience, concerns about behaving inappropriately, appearing to be prejudiced, fear of rejection or discrimination, and initial negative outgroup attitudes all contribute to intergroup anxiety (Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton & Mendes, 2014). Importantly, the drivers of inter-group anxiety may differ for majority and minority status children. Minority children may be more concerned about being victimized or discriminated against, whereas majority children may be concerned about 'saying the wrong thing' (Aboud & Sankar, 2007). Addressing these concerns and reducing intergroup anxiety could increase children's confidence in intergroup contact, increasing the likelihood that they will seek out and engage in such encounters.

Initial attitudes towards the outgroup and intergroup contact

While traditionally, researchers have focused on the impact of intergroup contact on attitudes, there is some evidence that, although the relationship is weaker, initial intergroup attitudes also predict subsequent intergroup contact. Binder et al. (2009) found in a longitudinal field survey in Germany, Belgium, and England with ethnic minority and majority school students that while cross-group friendship predicted more positive attitudes over time, positive outgroup attitudes also predicted quantity and quality of cross-group

friendships 6 months later. Conversely, those with initially negative attitudes are more likely to avoid friendships with outgroup members even when opportunities exist. Yet it is these individuals who are most likely to benefit from having such friendships, precisely because their attitudes are negative. This underlines the importance of changing perceptions among these individuals so they can benefit from intergroup contact.

Another line of research has focused on perceptions of intergroup contact itself, and its perceived value and importance. According to the self-expansion model, close friendships are an important resource for self-development, as they provide an opportunity to expand one's perspective, identity and self-definition (Aron, Aron, & Norman, 2001, p. 478). This may especially be the case for cross-group friendships because they involve spending time with someone who likely has different life experiences and perspectives (Van Dick et al., 2004). Indeed, cross-group friendships have been shown to trigger more expansive social identities in adults, as a cross-group friend's ethnic identity is included in one's own self-definition (Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton, Alegre & Siy, 2010). Importantly, research has shown that self-expansion as a result of cross-group friendship leads to more positive expectations about and reduced anxiety during interactions with outgroup members (Page-Gould, et al., 2010). The extent to which cross-group friendships are valued and seen as important could also impact on initiation and maintenance of such friendships. Turner et al. (2007b) found that white British undergraduate students who had South Asian friends were more likely to perceive contact as of personal importance, and in turn, held more positive outgroup attitudes.

<div align="center">Social norms and school climate</div>

Social norms have the potential to create conditions in which positive intergroup relations can thrive (e.g. Nesdale, Griffith, Durkin & Maass, 2005; Dejaeghere, Hooghe & Claes, 2012). Negative peer norms have been cited by children as a key barrier to cross-group

friendship development (Aboud and Sankar, 2007). Tropp et al. (2014) found, among African and European American children aged 9 to 13 years, that holding inclusive peer norms (believing your friends want to include the outgroup in their friendship group) predicted interest in cross-group friendship. Turner, Hewstone, Voci, & Vonofakou (2008) found that white high school students who perceived there to be positive ingroup and outgroup norms regarding South Asians held more positive attitudes towards South Asians, whilst De Tezanos-Pinto et al. (2010) similarly found that Norwegian school students who held more positive ingroup norms held more positive outgroup attitudes towards immigrants.

Generating the perception that there are positive ingroup norms regarding the outgroup may help to encourage contact not only because they will influence group members' attitudes in a positive direction, but also because they demonstrate that group members will not be punished for developing close relationships with the outgroup (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991). Thus, they should make children feel more positive about engaging in intergroup contact. Similarly, if the perceiver believes that there are positive outgroup norms regarding cross-group friendship, that outgroup members are interested in positive intergroup relations, confidence in contact will also be bolstered because fears of outgroup rejection will be lessened.

One way in which positive perceptions of social norms can be generated is by promoting a supportive school climate, where norms of respect, tolerance and good intergroup relations are conveyed. Thijs, Verkuyten, and Grundel (2014) found that children's perception of supportive classroom norms are associated with more positive outgroup attitudes. Teachers attitudes towards diversity (Grütter and Meyer, 2014) and even teachers implicit, unconscious responses to outgroup members (eye contact, body language) may also be detected by children, shaping their outgroup attitudes and behaviour (Castelli, De Dea & Nesdale, 2008; Vezzali, Giovannini and Capozza, 2012a). These findings highlight the

importance of addressing teachers' attitudes and behaviour in order to ensure a positive school climate.

Expectation of similarity

Children typically assume that they are more different from outgroup children than other ingroup children (Doyle & Aboud, 1995). Given that perceived similarity is an important predictor of whether two people become friends (e.g., Byrne & Nelson, 1965) this exaggerated perceived difference may hinder the development of cross-group friendships. Indeed, Verkuyten and Steenhuis (2005) found that one of the reasons for not forming cross-group friendships most often cited by teenagers was perceived intergroup differences, Supporting this idea, Williams and Eberhardt (2008) found that adults who hold a biological conception of race (i.e. that racial differences are biologically determined), have less diverse friendship groups and have less desire for cross-group interactions. Thus, focusing on differences limits cross-group friendships and everyday interactions. Increased perceived similarity with an interaction partner may, on the other hand, allow a new relationship to develop more smoothly: in interactions characterized by initial anxiety or awkwardness, we are more likely to give similar others the benefit of the doubt, increasing the likelihood that the friendship will flourish rather than falter. Indeed, focusing on similarities has been shown to increase uptake of cross-group interaction opportunities. West, Magee, Gordon, and Gullett (2014) found that learning that an outgroup member has similar characteristics during an initial stage of friendship formation resulted in less intergroup anxiety during intergroup interactions and more interest in future contact with their outgroup interaction partner.

There is also evidence that children form same-group friendships because of similarity in activity preferences (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996). Shared interests are very important in the initial selection of friends, as enjoying the same hobbies and interests means children will enjoy spending time together, and will spend more time together engaged in

these activities (McGlothlin, Killen, & Edmonds, 2005). If children assume they have different interests from an outgroup member then this may limit cross-group friendship development. This has implications for the promotion of cross-group friendship as preferences and interests could in fact be used as a means of drawing out similarities across groups and individuals, and encouraging cross-group friendship.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy can be defined as an individuals' belief or confidence in their ability to carry out a particular behaviour in order to achieve a specific outcome (Ajzen, 2002; Bandura, 1997). A longitudinal study among children and adolescents showed that greater general self-efficacy, in addition to initial willingness to engage in contact and higher perceived societal norms supporting the friendship, predicted the development of cross-group friendship over time (Titzmann et al., 2015). Regarding contact-specific self-efficacy, Mazziotta, Mummendey and Wright (2011) found that college students who were higher in self-efficacy about interacting with Chinese people reported less intergroup anxiety, and in turn greater willingness to engage in contact with Chinese people. Although to our knowledge the relationship between self-efficacy and cross-group friendship has not been examined among young people, Abbott & Cameron (2014) found that adolescents' self-efficacy regarding intervening in intergroup bullying resulted in greater bystander intervention intentions in a bullying situation, showing that self-efficacy about an intergroup encounter can promote positive intergroup behavioural intentions. Promoting self-efficacy may therefore be an excellent way of encouraging cross-group friendships.

Social Cognitive Development and Abilities

Children's experience of diversity is shaped not only be their contact experiences, but also by their emerging cognitive abilities, which provide a lens through which children experience diversity (Rutland and Killen, 2015). A number of social-cognitive abilities may

impact on how children experience diversity and the development of cross-group friendships, including socio-cognitive skills such as empathy and perspective taking, and the ability to reconcile differences (i.e. to recognise that people have different perspectives to one's own, and that both are equally valid; Aboud, 1981). These abilities are explored further in the context of interventions to promote confidence in contact.

Cross-sectional research also suggests that children with cross-group friendship have better social cognitive skills, have better leadership skills and are better socially adjusted (Kawabata & Crick, 2008; Lease & Blake, 2005). Typically researchers interpret these abilities as consequences of cross-group friendships, but they could in fact be considered as predictors. Children who are more socially competent, who are better able to listen and empathize, may be better able to make friends with children who are different from them, and overcome these differences to form quality friendships (Lease & Blake, 2005). This interpretation is consistent with Aboud and Levy's (2000) argument that children with more advanced socio-cognitive skills, who are better able to take others perspectives and value views different to their own, may be less prejudiced, more inclusive in their friendships, and more sensitive to the impact of discrimination.

To summarise, we propose that a young person who has confidence in contact will hold a specific set of characteristics. They will have positive perceptions of outgroup members, and low levels of anxiety about interacting with and forming friendships with them. They will not feel heightened levels of stress in anticipation or and during intergroup interaction because their expectations are positive: they anticipate such interactions to be positive, comfortable, and friendly, and believe that they will personally benefit from engaging in such interactions. Children with high confidence in contact will also feel secure in the knowledge that their identity and culture is accepted and valued in their schools, and so cross-group friendships can be maintained without being required to change. Their lower

levels of intergroup anxiety are driven by the perception that they are similar to outgroup members, and that there is a supportive social climate in which schools, teachers, and peers all accept and encourage cross-group friendships. Children with confidence in contact believe they have the skills necessary to interact effectively with members of other groups. Indeed, these children will hold a range of skills and perspectives that will lead to positive approaches to diversity and effective intergroup interactions. Specifically, they will have the ability to emphasise and take the perspective of outgroup members, appreciating that it is possible for different people to hold different attitudes simultaneously, and will have good social skills.

Put simply, these children will be 'contact ready'. They are more likely to respond positively, and engage with cross-group peers, in diverse settings. Moreover, those in contexts lacking diversity are likely to retain this positive approach to diversity as they go out into the world. This increased experience of sustained and intimate intergroup contact is also likely to improve cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes, such as general attitudes towards the outgroup, support for equality, and prosocial behaviours towards the outgroup. Finally, we believe that 'contact ready' young people who go on to experience cross-group friendships will subsequently feel even more confidence in contact as they have positive experiences and learn new skills from their intergroup experiences, resulting in the development of further cross-group friendships in the future. This feedback loop is depicted in the model (see Figure 1).

Interventions that promote confidence in contact

Having identified several processes that we believe promote confidence in contact, below we outline empirically tested interventions that may be helpful in promoting these mechanisms, instilling in young people increased confidence in contact.

Indirect contact

'Indirect contact' refers to measures or interventions based on the principles of intergroup contact (Allport, 1954), but which do not involve a face-to-face intergroup interaction (see Lemmer & Wagner, 2015; Miles & Crisp, 2014; Turner et al., 2007c; Vezzali et al., 2014).

Extended contact is the idea that knowing ingroup members who have outgroup friends will improve intergroup relations (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997, see Vezzali et al., 2014, for a review). A subtype of extended contact, vicarious contact, involves learning about contact by directly observing or learning about an ingroup and outgroup member having a successful interaction (Mazziotta et al., 2011). Numerous studies show that young people who know ingroup members with outgroup friends hold more positive outgroup attitudes (e.g., De Tezanos-Pinto et al., 2010; Turner, et al., 2007a, b; 2013). De Tezanos-Pinto et al. (2010) found that Norwegian school students who knew ingroup members with ethnic minority classmates or friends had more positive attitudes towards ethnic minorities, whilst Turner and colleagues show that British white and South Asian teenagers in England, and Catholic and Protestant teenagers in Northern Ireland, who know ingroup members with outgroup friends hold more positive outgroup attitudes (Turner et al., 2007b; 2013a). Among a younger sample of Italian primary school children, Vezzali, et al., (2012a) similarly found that extended contact was positively related to attitudes towards immigrants. Importantly, extended contact promotes a number of the psychological processes associated with confidence in contact. First, it promotes positive ingroup and outgroup norms; when we learn about the cross-group friendships of others, we deduce that ingroup and outgroup members are interested in positive relations with one another (e.g., De Tezanos-Pinto et al., 2010, Gomez, Tropp, & Fernandez, 2011; Turner et al., 2008, 2013a). By highlighting positive social norms regarding contact, negative expectations about future intergroup encounters should be reduced. Supporting this notion, extended contact is

associated with less intergroup anxiety (e.g., De Tezanos-Pinto et al., 2010, Gomez et al., 2011; Paolini et al., 2004; Turner et al., 2008; West & Turner, 2014). Earlier we noted perceived similarity as a potential promoter of confidence in contact. In line with this, extended contact increases the extent to which we include the outgroup in the self (e.g., Tropp & Wright, 2003), perceiving there to be cognitive overlap, or greater similarity, between the self and the outgroup (Turner et al., 2008). Finally, in line with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, observing someone engage in contact should increase our self-efficacy about personally engaging in intergroup contact. This may in turn increase willingness to engage in future contact and increase the likelihood of contact initiation (Bandura, 1997; Mazziotta et al., 2011). There is also evidence that extended contact increases perceptions of how enjoyable future contact would be (Gomez et al., 2011), increases subsequent numbers of cross-group friends (Mallett & Wilson, 2010; Vezzali, Stathi et al., 2015b), and increases friendliness during face-to-face intergroup encounters (West & Turner, 2014).

Social and developmental psychologists have developed and evaluated extended contact interventions in schools (see Cameron & Rutland, 2008; Cameron & Turner, 2010 for reviews). Cameron and colleagues had children read illustrated stories portraying intergroup friendships, and then engaged in small group discussions about the stories. A series of stories would be read once a week for several weeks, and the group membership of children in the stories was made salient to ensure that any effect of the intervention would generalize to the entire outgroup. These interventions have been shown to effectively improve intergroup attitudes in several contexts. Primary school children who read stories featuring friendships between white English children and refugees (Cameron, Rutland, Brown, & Douch, 2006; see also Cameron, Rutland, & Brown, 2007), non-disabled and disabled children (Cameron & Rutland, 2006) and English and Indian-English children (Cameron et al., 2011a) subsequently held more positive outgroup attitudes and intended behaviour, for example greater

willingness to play with an outgroup member. Among older children, Vezzali and colleagues (2012b) found that Italian teenagers who read books which featured positive intercultural contact subsequently reported less stereotypes, more positive attitudes, and a greater desire for future contact with immigrants. Vezzali et al. (2015a) showed that extended contact stories are effective even when the contact does not involve an ingroup member, or even 'real' social groups. Italian elementary school children read passages once a week for six weeks from J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter books, featuring issues of prejudice (e.g., Harry Potter standing up to Draco Malfoy when he insults Harry's friend Hermione for only being half wizard) followed by a group discussion. Children subsequently reported more positive attitudes towards immigrants than did control participants who had read passages unrelated to prejudice, albeit only if they identified with Harry Potter. These findings are exciting, because they show that extended contact can be effective in subtle ways, and that through mass media, can reach a very large audience. There is also some evidence that learning about ingroup peers' experience of contact can promote intergroup tolerance (Liebkind & McAlister, 1999; Liebkind et al., 2014), as can watching TV shows such as Sesame Street which involve positive intergroup encounters (see Mares & Pan, 2013, for a review).

However, despite the obvious strengths of extended contact, its impact may be qualified by a range of conditions. For example, successful interventions are likely to be those are endorsed by an authority figure (Gomez & Huici, 2008), when the group memberships of those involved remain salient (Cameron & Rutland, 2006), when a shared group membership is emphasized (Cameron & Rutland, 2006) and in contexts where there is little opportunity for direct contact (Cameron, et al., 2011b; Christ et al., 2010; Vezzali, et al. 2012a). Age of the participant may also moderate extended and vicarious contact effects for children, but the findings are mixed (Cameron et al., 2006; Cameron et al., 2011a; Johnson & Aboud, 2013; Liebkind et al., 2014). In addition, interventions that involve repeated sessions

in a variety of contexts (e.g., reading a different story once a week) are more likely to be

effective than those that involve a one-off activity. Following exposure to extended contact

with an interactive activity such as a group discussion about the cross-group friendship is

important, and must be guided by a facilitator who can encourage children to focus on

positive aspects of the cross-group friendship (e.g., Cameron et al., 2006, 2011a; Vezzali et

al., 2015).

Imagined contact is the mental simulation of a social interaction with an outgroup

member (Crisp & Turner, 2009; 2012, see Miles & Crisp, 2014, for a meta-analysis), and is

thought to improve intergroup relations by activating concepts normally associated with

successful interactions with members of other groups, such as feeling more comfortable and

less apprehensive about contact (Turner et al., 2007a). In addition, when we make detailed

plans, as is the case during imagined contact, this provides a behavioural script that can

provide a cognitive roadmap for future behaviour (Gollwitzer, 1993), potentially making

subsequent intergroup encounters more positive and comfortable. For these reasons, Crisp &

Turner (2009; 2012) argued that imagined contact is an important first step for facilitating

face-to-face contact. Miles and Crisp (2014) recently undertook a meta-analysis of 71 tests of

imagined contact, finding that imagined contact had a reliable small to medium effect (d =

.35) on outgroup attitudes, emotions, intergroup intentions, and behaviour. Imagined contact

was especially effective among children, but this may reflect that most studies with children

are interventions involving high levels of elaboration and repetition. Studies in which

participants provide details about what they had imagined had a stronger effect, perhaps

because it results in a more comprehensive behavioural script. Imagined contact promotes

mechanisms associated with confidence in contact, increasing self-efficacy about contact

(Stathi, Crisp, & Hogg, 2011) and reducing intergroup anxiety (Birtel & Crisp, 2012, Husnu

& Crisp, 2010; Turner et al., 2007a; West, Holmes, & Hewstone, 2011), and promotes more

positive behaviour during actual interactions with outgroup members (e.g., Birtel & Crisp, 2012; West, Turner, & Levita, 2015).

Imagined contact has proven to be effective as an intervention for use in schools. Over three weekly sessions, Stathi, Cameron, Hartley, and Bradford (2014) asked white 7-9 year olds to create three stories using pictures about a day spent with an Asian child. Compared to classmates who did not undertake the intervention, children held more positive outgroup attitudes, greater willingness to engage in future contact, and perceived themselves to be more similar to Asians. In another study, Cameron and colleagues (2011b) found that non-disabled children who imagined a positive interaction with a disabled child subsequently reported more positive attitudes and greater intentions for friendship with disabled children (see also Turner, West, & Christie, 2013b). Vezzali, Capozza, Giovannini and Stathi (2011) similarly tested the effectiveness of a three week imagined contact intervention with Italian elementary school students (mean age 10 years). Each week participants imagined contact with an unknown immigrant peer in different social situations, before writing down what they had imagined and discussing it with the researcher. One week later, participants in the intervention condition reported more positive contact intentions compared to a control group, an effect that was mediated by increased intentions to self-disclose to immigrants. Finally, imagined contact has also been examined as a classroom intervention with older children. Turner, West & Christie (2013b) showed British high school students aged 16-17 year a picture of a same-gendered asylum seeker who had recently arrived from Zimbabwe. They were asked to imagine having a positive interaction with this individual, before writing a detailed outline of the interaction they imagined. Compared to control participants, students who imagined contact reported a greater desire to approach asylum seekers (e.g., get to know them, find out more about them), a relationship that was mediated by an increase in outgroup trust.

Despite the generally supportive evidence for imagined contact as an intervention, the nature of the scenario imagined can influence its efficacy. Imagined contact is, for example, more effective if the interaction is positive (Stathi & Crisp, 2008) and does not confirm existing negative stereotypes (West et al., 2011). There is also evidence that imagined contact is more effective when the group membership of the imagined outgroup target remains salient, to ensure generalization (e.g., Pagotto, Visintin, De Iorio, & Voci, 2012), and when participants elaborate on what they imagine, thus creating a more vivid script (e.g., Husnu & Crisp, 2011).

The concept of imagined contact has also been subjected to a number of critiques, specifically that it lacks real world significance (Lee & Jussim, 2010) and is caused by demand characteristics (Bigler & Hughes, 2010). However, the effect of imagined contact on anxiety and attitudes has been demonstrated up to 3 months later (e.g., Vezzali et al., 2015b), and imagined contact can influence intergroup behaviour (e.g., Birtel & Crisp, 2012; West et al., 2015), suggesting that it genuinely impacts upon intergroup relations. Concerns regarding demand characteristics have also been addressed, with the recent meta-analysis showing imagined contact affects subtle measures of implicit attitude, physiology, and behaviour, which are difficult to control (Miles & Crisp, 2014).

Although there is relatively little research on it to date, another indirect contact method worth considering in the classroom, particularly where opportunities for contact are few, is computer mediated, or E-contact. White and Abu-Rayya (2012) developed and tested an E-contact programme in religious segregated high schools in Australia, finding that groups of two Christian and two Muslim children who worked cooperatively online over nine weeks to achieve a common goal (complete a classroom project on environmental issues) subsequently showed reduction in intergroup bias and intergroup anxiety that remained six months later. Importantly, the dual identity of the participants was emphasised: children were reminded

that they belonged to both their religious group but also the shared category of Australian. While the effect of E-contact on behavioural outcomes has not been examined, its impact on anxiety suggests it might be a useful promoter of confidence in contact.

The research reviewed above suggests that indirect contact may help to prepare children for face-to-face contact by influencing factors that promote confidence in contact. Specifically, they reduce anxiety and promote more positive expectations of outgroup member, positive social norms, perceptions of similarity, greater self-efficacy and positive behavioural intentions regarding contact. Moreover, they have been developed into highly effective interventions that have been successfully applied in schools across a range of age groups. These interventions are relatively easy to operationalize, being cheaper, quicker, and logistically easier than interventions involving direct contact, have a sound theoretical basis, and offset some of the limitations of face-to-face contact. They can, for example, be useful at changing outgroup perceptions in contexts where opportunities for direct contact are scarce (e.g., Turner et al., 2007b, 2008).

Opinion is nonetheless mixed regarding the impact of indirect contact as an intervention, particularly among children, due to their poor perspective taking abilities and inflexible stereotypes (Johnson & Aboud, 2013). Indeed, in their meta-analyses examining the effectiveness of prejudice-reduction intervention programs for children, Beelmann and Heinemann (2014) concluded that direct contact is superior to all forms of indirect contact, in terms of impact on children's attitudes. They recommend that indirect contact should be supplemented with direct contact in some form. Meanwhile, a recent meta-analysis concluded that direct and indirect contact interventions were equally effective, worked in both conflict and non-conflict settings (Lemmer & Wagner, 2015). We do not argue that indirect contact should replace direct contact, but instead suggest that for maximal effect, the two approaches

should be used in combination, with indirect forms of contact preceding direct contact for

maximal effect (Crisp & Turner, 2009, 2012). We discuss this later in the article.

Socio-cognitive Capacity Interventions

Cognitive abilities or perspectives, which we believe are associated with confidence

in contact include perceived similarity, empathy and perspective taking, and reconciling

perspectives which may reduce intergroup anxiety. Interventions to promote cross-group

friendships could therefore address these abilities (for reviews, see Aboud et al., 2012;

Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014).

Interventions that increase perceived similarity may help to promote confidence in

contact. A rare intervention to promote similarity between groups was implemented by

Aboud and Fenwick (1999). Over 11 weeks, they encouraged children to process individual

characteristics of 30 photos of children from different ethnic and racial groups. As a result of

the intervention, children were more focussed on similarities in internal attributions such as

likes and dislikes, as opposed to physical descriptors including race, suggesting that it is

possible to reduce the focus on intergroup differences. Another way to enhance perceived

similarity is to increase the extent to which children believe that the ingroup and outgroup

hold a shared identity. Categorizing people into one of two groups has been consistently

found to result in greater intergroup bias (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); so it follows that

emphasising a common group to which members of two different groups belong, for example

being in the same class at school or the same nationality, may reduce intergroup bias

(Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Guerra, Rebelo, Montiero, & Gaertner, 2013). There is also

evidence that a shared identity can promote intergroup contact. Houlette et al. (2004)

evaluated the Green circle programme, an elementary school-based intervention programme

designed to widen children's circle of inclusion to include people from different social

groups, with a key goal of showing children that one can belong to a different group from

someone else but still share the same human feelings. Children who took part in the intervention were subsequently more likely to select a child to play with who was different from themselves in terms of ethnicity and gender after the intervention.

It is, however, important to acknowledge that shared identities do not always reduce intergroup bias. Merging category boundaries can lead to an increase in intergroup bias because group members' are motivated to achieve positive distinctiveness from other groups, particularly those who highly identify with their ingroup (e.g., Crisp, Stone, & Hall, 2006; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). Indeed, high school students who learned that students from another school (outgroup members) saw both the ingroup and outgroup as within a superordinate group ('students') held a more negative outgroup orientation, unless they learned that ingroup members also endorsed this shared identity (Gomez et al., 2013). This highlights the importance of both groups agreeing on the shared identity they hold. Another way to avoid any threat to one's group distinctiveness is to ensure that when a shared identity is introduced, initial group categories are also retained. In other words, children have a dual identity, consisting of their original ingroup membership and the shared group (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000).

One reason why cross-group friendships are less frequent and more difficult to maintain than same-group friendships is that children find it more difficult to take the perspective of members of other groups (Abrams et al., 2009). Promoting empathy and reconciling perspectives via interventions may therefore be important. Interventions that promote empathy and perspective taking have long been linked with more positive intergroup attitudes (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014; Levy et al., 2005; Sierksma, Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014). Indeed, in their meta-analysis of interventions to reduce prejudice among children and adolescents, Beelmann and Heinemann (2014) found that programmes that include training in social-cognitive abilities such as empathy and perspective taking, as well as direct contact,

had the biggest impact on intergroup attitudes. To our knowledge the effect of these interventions on the initiation of cross-group friendships has yet to be examined. Similarly, children's ability to reconcile different attitudes has received little empirical attention. It is possible that children in diverse settings, through exposure to different perspectives, may be more practiced in reconciling contrasting attitudes, and engagement in empathy and perspective taking, helping them to initiate and maintain further cross-group friendships. However, interventions that focus on improving young people's ability to take other perspectives, and to empathise with others, and to recognise and accept differences, are likely to help young people form cross-group friendships due to their superior socio-cognitive skills. Therefore, interventions addressing these abilities could help young people to overcome this barrier.

Although they have not yet been examined in children, intensive programmes for the initiation of cross-group friendships have been developed and systematically evaluated among adults in college settings in North America. These could potentially be introduced in schools with young people. Page-Gould et al. (2008) developed a cross-group friendship formation programme using techniques developed to build intimacy in a short space of time (e.g., Aron et al., 1997). Participants were paired with same-sex partners from an ethnic outgroup whom they subsequently met with three times, engaging in a series of activities. As the aim of the intervention is to develop a cross-group friendship, the activities provided the opportunity for cross-group collaboration, self-disclosure and generating trust. For example, participants and their outgroup partner worked through a list of questions that require increasing levels of self-disclosure. In order to capture changes in anxiety levels as a result of cross-group friendship development, physiological stress responses (indicating anxiety) were monitored across three cross-group friendship meetings. Participants who were initially high in intergroup anxiety and held negative outgroup attitudes showed a significant decline in

anxiety as the friendship progressed. Crucially, in the week and a half following the last cross-group friendship meeting, participants' daily diaries revealed they were more likely to seek out intergroup interactions and felt less anxious in diverse settings. This finding was consistent across ethnic minority and majority participants. Put simply, reducing intergroup anxiety via intergroup friendships can help to increase people's confidence about future intergroup contact. Given the importance of high quality friendships for intergroup orientation, intensive friendship formation programmes such as those used by Page-Gould et al. (2008) could be potentially useful in a diverse school setting across year groups, creating confidence in contact and supporting the development of cross-group friendships.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Psychological research has shown that cross-group friendship is a particularly potent form of intergroup contact that improves intergroup attitudes and behaviours, and can also be a resource to help young people deal with discrimination (Davies et al., 2011; Turner et al., 2007b, c). In diverse schools, children have the opportunity for cross-group friendships but their friendships do not always reflect the diversity of friendships available to them, self-segregation is common, and increases with age (Aboud & Sankar, 2007; Aboud et al., 2003). Therefore, schools must ensure their students make the most of opportunities available to them to form cross-group friendships. Meanwhile in non-diverse settings, children have little opportunity to benefit from cross-group friendships, particularly majority children, yet they still need to be prepared for future contact opportunities. It is therefore crucial that schools prepare young people for future contact experiences beyond the school gates and in adulthood. In our theoretical framework we argue that enhancing confidence in contact is one way in which this can be achieved. One of our main recommendations, therefore, is that in order to enhance cross-group friendships and uptake of future contact opportunities, both

diverse and non-diverse schools, need to be provided with essential support and guidance in order to nurture children's confidence in contact, to create young people who are 'contact ready'. This includes evaluating intergroup relations in school, introducing interventions to improve confidence in contact and cross-group friendships, and removing systematic barriers to cross-group friendship. These are outlined in greater detail below.

Schools should evaluate the state of cross-group friendships in their school

Cross-group friendships are the 'gold standard' of a successfully integrated and multicultural school, and so schools should be encouraged to measure or audit the level of cross-group friendships (frequency and quality) inside and outside of the classroom. Perhaps the most effective way in which this can be achieved is using social network analysis (see Vezzali et al., 2014, for a more detailed discussion). This technique involves getting every child in a class to indicate their relationship with every other child in the class (e.g., best friend, friend, acquaintance). This information is then analysed to examine the number of intergroup friendships within a network of peers. It has advantages over self-report methods often used, where children are typically asked to simply estimate the number of cross-group friendships they have, because both individuals must indicate that they are friends with one another for it to 'count' as a friendship. It is also possible to see the spread of friendships across an entire network rather than focusing on individual friendships. Using this information, schools will be able to get a clearer picture of the state of intergroup relations in their school and, where cross-group friendships are not widespread, decide on appropriate interventions to promote confidence in contact that will increase uptake of such friendships. Any interventions that are being used in schools (e.g., multicultural and anti-racist education, direct and indirect contact programmes) should also be evaluated in terms of their impact on cross-group friendship networks, rather than simply focusing on self-reported outgroup attitudes as has traditionally been the case (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014).

Improving confidence in contact and promoting cross-group friendship

Drawing on the predictors of confidence in contact outlined in our model, interventions designed to make children 'contact ready' should focus on improving socio-cognitive abilities including empathy, perspective taking and reconciliation of attitudes. They should also work on changing children's perspectives, for example by reducing anxiety about intergroup interactions, increasing perceived intergroup similarity, and developing behavioural scripts for successful contact. Moreover, they must promote a positive social context, ensuring that the social norms of peers, teachers and the school are supportive of cross-group friendships, and making sure this message is salient within the school.

We recognise that within the education sector there is a vast array of multicultural, materials available to schools, that aim to improve intergroup attitudes and intergroup relations. We recommend that schools consider the principles identified in our model: the need to improve confidence in contact, the need to address this issue regardless of opportunity for contact, and the need to put in place interventions designed to address the principle components identified above. These principles can then help teachers in selecting and developing their classroom materials. We also make a number of specific recommendations regarding interventions, based on the above review, which we summarize below.

Indirect contact interventions may be especially effective at promoting confidence in contact, particularly for majority group members in low diversity settings. Extended and vicarious contact (Wright et al., 1997), learning about ingroup members' positive contact or cross-group friendship experiences, promotes positive social norms regarding contact, reduces intergroup anxiety, increases perception of self-outgroup similarity, promotes self-efficacy (e.g., Cameron et al., 2006, 2011a; Mazziotta et al., 2011; Turner et al., 2008), and predicts more positive intergroup encounters as well as greater uptake of cross-group

friendships (Mallett & Wilson, 2010; West & Turner, 2014). School interventions using cross-group friendship stories, in books and on the television (e.g., Cameron et al., 2006), and sharing of real peer cross-group friendship experiences (Liebkind & McAlister, 1999) have proven effective, and we recommend their implementation in schools.

Imagined contact (Crisp & Turner, 2009, 2012) has also proven highly effective. It allows children to mentally rehearse intergroup contact, therefore providing them with a positive script for how to behave, reduces intergroup anxiety (e.g., Turner et al., 2007a), promotes self-efficacy regarding contact (Stathi et al., 2011) and greater perceived intergroup similarity (Stathi et al., 2014), and results in more positive friendship intentions (Cameron et al., 2011a; Turner et al., 2011) and friendly behaviours during intergroup contact (West et al., 2015). Importantly, extended, vicarious and imagined contact interventions should be carefully structured in order to maximise effectiveness. For instance, the indirect contact observed or experienced should be positive, group memberships should be salient and in the case of imagined contact, children should elaborate on their imagined interaction.

Socio-cognitive interventions that enhance empathy and perspective taking have a lot of potential for use in the classroom since these techniques are practical, adaptable, and have been shown to be effective (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014). In addition, a focus on reconciling perspectives, valuing and respecting diverse views, is essential. Finally, as many of the predictors of cross-group friendship are related to intergroup anxiety, a focus on first identifying young people's main concerns about cross-group friendships, and second helping to alleviate these anxieties, is vital. Reducing anxiety, and focusing on potential for positive outcomes is key to preparing young people for, and increasing confidence in, contact. One way in which this could be achieved is through intensive cross-group friendship initiation programmes, such as those developed by Page-Gould and colleagues (Page-Gould et al., 2008).

Effective Implementation of interventions

In addition to recommendations regarding the content of interventions to promote confidence in contact, a number of key recommendations can also be made regarding the design and implementation of such interventions.

Careful structuring of contact interventions: There is some evidence that practitioners tend to think intergroup contact interventions work best with little interference from practitioners or facilitators, and when they are left to unfold naturally. In reality, however, this is likely to lead to negative and unsatisfactory interactions or avoidance of interaction all together. For instance, Ellis and Maoz (2007) found that unstructured and unsupervised interactions between Israelis and Palestinians online tended to involve negative and dead-end arguments that did not seek to resolve conflict. When contact itself takes place, interventions should guide young people so as to ensure sustained interaction between the groups (Leman & Lam, 2008). Carefully structured activities are required to ensure a positive experience and genuine interactions. This is consistent with decades of research that suggests in order for intergroup contact to be effective, it must meet Allport's (1954) optimal conditions, involving cooperation to achieve common goals, the equal status of group members, and institutional support for the contact. Contact interventions should ideally involve structured cooperative activities, for example cooperative learning programmes (e.g., Cummings, Williams & Ellis, 2002), which provide opportunities for meaningful interactions, cooperation and interdependence, a common goal and a chance for positive intergroup experiences (Brown, 2010).

Integrating interventions: Interventions to promote more positive outgroup attitudes and cross-group friendship, should consider both cognitive abilities as well as social contextual variables (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014; Rutland & Killen, 2015). For example, an intervention with multiple components, which simultaneously enhances children's empathy

and perspective skills, encourages children to see outgroup members as similar to themselves, involves learning about the contact experiences of others and imagining contact encounters, and promotes cooperative intergroup learning where there are opportunities to do so, may be especially effective at enhancing confidence in contact, and make children 'contact ready'. This is also consistent with Crisp and Turner's (2009, 2012) proposed continuum of contact whereby, where no opportunities for contact exist, interventions that do not involve direct contact might be gradually introduced increasing the likelihood and success of direct contact when such opportunities are provided. In this way young people could benefit from preparatory interventions, like extended and imagined contact, which help make them 'contact ready', preparing them to positively engage with the outgroup, and increasing the chance of positive intergroup interaction and cross-group friendships when the opportunity arises.

Intensity and longevity of interventions: While there is evidence that some interventions result in more positive intergroup perceptions several months later, most studies reviewed here only look at the immediate impact of interventions. To ensure sustained changes in attitudes and behaviour, interventions should take place, and be evaluated, on a long-term, ongoing basis (e.g. see Paluck, 2009). One way in which this might be achieved is through incorporating interventions into the curriculum, rather than carrying out one-off or short-term interventions. This approach to prejudice-reduction involves extensive changes to the curriculum (Bigler, 1999) and the introduction of a whole programme of activities designed to combat prejudice, of which direct and indirect contact interventions would play a large part. We acknowledge that this is a tall order for educators, but it would most certainly be the best way to ensure lasting attitude change.

A critical requirement for the development of sustained, high quality cross-group friendships is the opportunity to maintain the friendship outside of the school setting, and meet in multiple contexts in the wider community (Aboud & Sankar, 2007; Hughes et al., 2014; Stringer et al., 2009). Ideally, practitioners would therefore put in place structures that will ensure that friendships can flourish in the long-term. Specifically, in order to encourage cross-group friendships, children would benefit from the opportunity to engage in multiple activities with outgroup peers, and in multiple settings, for example sports clubs, youth groups, and at home. We appreciate that this would be no easy task, as it would necessitate the support of families and communities. However, it is an important aspiration for researchers and practitioners hoping to improve intergroup relations.

Critical age for intervention: Given that children go through a number of developmental stages during their time in school, children's age must be taken into account when deciding when interventions might be used to maximal effect. Raabe & Beelmann (2011) examined the development of prejudice in children, and found that attitudes are relatively consistent throughout adolescence. They therefore suggest that during adolescence, attitudes might be particularly dependent on social context and contact experiences. This, coupled with the finding that cross-group friendships decline with age (e.g., Aboud et al., 2003; Graham & Cohen, 1997), means that early adolescence, and the years immediately prior to this, are a critical age to promote cross-group friendship if this decline is to be avoided.

Identifying and removing systemic barriers to contact

Finally, while the interventions outlined in this chapter can help to enhance confidence in contact, often barriers to cross-group friendships are due to systemic procedures that create segregation within diverse schools. These include schools segregated on the basis of religion or community, academic tracking, ability grouping and separate language classes. Such

systemic barriers can often create segregation among pupils, prevent positive interactions in the classroom, and impede cross-group friendship formation. Where possible, these procedures should therefore be avoided if policy makers are serious about promoting harmonious intergroup relations (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014; Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2010).

Considerations for Future Research

Firstly, we recognise that the majority of intergroup contact research examines contact between two groups (usually a majority and minority status group). However, increasingly this approach underestimates the complexity and abundance of diversity experienced by young people in their everyday lives, where people can be categorized in terms of a multitude of nationalities, ethnicities, and religions, not to mention sexual and gender orientation, mental health status, weight, and presence or absence of a mental or physical disability (Stringer et al., 2009; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014). However, we believe the principles outlined in our theoretical framework hold in multiple group contexts. Work on the secondary transfer effect suggests that contact with one group can result in more positive attitudes towards other groups not directly involved in the contact (e.g., Tausch et al., 2010; Vezzali & Giovannini, 2011), while extended contact involving intergroup contact between fictional social groups also promotes more positive intergroup relations towards a real-life stigmatized group (Vezzali et al., 2015a). We believe that confidence in contact is a perspective or skillset that can be applied to multiple outgroups, and this remains to be tested.

Secondly, there is little direct evidence regarding the process of cross-group friendship formation and maintenance in children, the barriers that exist to such friendships, and how they differ for minority and majority group member (Bagci et al., 2014; Tropp et al., 2014). Such pathways must be systematically tested if we are to develop optimal means of promoting confidence in contact.

Concluding Remarks

There is evidence among all ages groups that cross-group friendship is an especially effective form of contact, with powerful effects on outgroup attitudes (e.g., Davies et al., 2011; Paolini et al., 2004; Turner et al., 2007b, c). However, the factors that predict when positive contact, particularly cross-group friendships, will arise have been relatively neglected in the literature (Tropp et al., 2014). This is concerning given evidence which suggests that even in diverse contexts, children often fail to take up opportunities to develop cross-group friendships. In order to fully understand how schools can capitalise on opportunities for contact and prepare young people for future contact experiences, it is essential to understand the conditions that facilitate the initiation and maintenance of cross-group friendship.

We propose a new model that puts predictors of cross-group friendship, which together can be described as confidence in contact centre stage. Specifically, we argue that by reducing intergroup anxiety, encouraging positive attitudes towards outgroup members and contact itself, promoting positive social norms and a positive school climate, reducing expectations of intergroup difference, increasing self-efficacy, and enhancing socio-cognitive abilities such as empathy, perspective taking, and reconciling perspectives, it is possible to develop young people who are 'contact ready'. These individuals will have positive expectations about contact, anticipating friendly, positive encounters that will be of personal benefit to them, and will have a high degree of intercultural competence providing them with the skills and abilities they need to successfully navigate intergroup encounters. In turn, they are more likely to initiate and sustain cross-group friendships. As well as benefiting intergroup relations, children who have confidence in contact will also personally benefit. They are likely to have better social skills, and feel more capable and confident about managing challenging situations in general, which might promote general self-efficacy, self-

esteem and well-being. More generally, experiencing diversity via cross-group friendship might also help promote creativity and cognitive flexibility.

Finally, it is important to reiterate that creating confidence in contact alone may be insufficient to promote cross-group friendships. Systemic patterns of discrimination, segregation in communities, or school policies that inadvertently create segregation, historical conflict and current threat, may prevent contact under optimal conditions, and means that future cross-group interactions may be handicapped by conditions of unequal status, disadvantage and hostility (Barrett et al., 2014). Academics and practitioners must therefore throw down the gauntlet to policy makers to ensure that the infrastructure is in place to ensure that the interventions proposed can take place under conditions that given them a good chance of success. In doing so, the potential benefits for intergroup relations are immense, and children will leave school with the skills, abilities, and perspectives that will equip them for successful lives and careers in a diverse society.

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Figure Caption

Figure 1. Promoting Confidence in Contact: A Theoretical model

Situational
Peer norms
School climate
Teacher norms

Individual
Intergroup anxiety
Initial attitudes
towards outgroup and
contact
Expectation of
difference
Empathy and
perspective taking
Socio-cognitive
competence

Interventions
Indirect contact
- Extended and
  vicarious contact
- Imagined contact
Socio-cognitive
capacity
- Perceived similarity
- Promotion empathy
  and reconciliation
  of differences

CONFIDENCE IN CONTACT
Low levels of anxiety
Positive expectations about
contact
Positive attitudes about
outgroup
Perceived intergroup
similarity
Strong behavioural scripts
for contact, resulting in high
levels of self-efficacy
Perception that identity is
secure and accepted
Empathy, perspective taking,
and social skills
Intercultural competence

**OPPORTUNITY FOR
CONTACT**

**SUCCESSFUL INTERGROUP
RELATIONS**
Greater initiation of contact
More cross-group friends
Higher quality and longer-
lasting friendships
characterized by self-
disclosure and trust
Support for diversity and
equality

PERSONAL BENEFITS
Higher self-esteem and
wellbeing
Better academic
performance, cognitive
flexibility and creativity

SUSTAINED CROSS-GROUP FRIENDSHIPS FURTHER ENHANCE CONFIDENCE IN CONTACT