Friendships and outgroup attitudes among ethnic minority youth: The mediating role of ethnic and host society identification

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates among ethnic minority adolescents how friendships with ethnic minority and majority group peers are related to their attitudes towards the majority outgroup.

Friendships with majority group peers are proposed to be indirectly related to outgroup attitudes through host society identification. Friendships with ethnic ingroup peers are proposed to be indirectly related to outgroup attitudes through ethnic ingroup identification.

Hypotheses were tested longitudinally among ethnic minority adolescents ($n = 244$) who recently entered middle schools in the Netherlands. Lagged structural equation models showed that friendships with majority group peers were related to stronger identification with the host society which was in turn related to improved attitudes toward the majority outgroup. Ingroup friendships and ingroup identification was not related to outgroup attitudes. Additional analyses indicated that the relation between host society identification and majority group friendships was bidirectional.

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1. Introduction

With many societies becoming more ethnically diverse it is increasingly important to understand the determinants of intergroup attitudes. The majority of studies focuses on the attitudes of natives towards immigrants and ethnic minorities. However, there is also the question about conditions that encourage or hamper host society identification of minority group members and the consequences of this identification for their attitude towards the native majority group. In several societies, concerns have been expressed about their assumed lack of host society belonging and the corresponding negative attitudes towards natives (see Verkuyten, 2014).

Studies on contact between different ethnic groups have shown that positive intergroup contacts and friendships in particular, are related to more favorable outgroup attitudes (Allport, 1954; Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Intergroup contact improves outgroup attitudes because it enhances knowledge about outgroup

members, reduces intergroup anxiety, and increases empathy and perspective taking (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). In addition, the common ingroup identity model (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007) suggests that intergroup contact affects group identifications (Maliepaard & Phalet, 2012), and that group identifications in turn are related to intergroup attitudes (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000).

From an acculturation perspective, identification with the ethnic ingroup and identification with the host society correspond to two central questions in the acculturation process (Berry, 1997). First, is maintaining one's ethnic heritage culture and identity considered to be important? And second, is developing relationships and commitments with the larger society valued? The current study relates these two aspects of acculturation to how ethnic minority adolescents in the Netherlands view the native majority group. With panel data, we investigate whether friendships with ethnic ingroup peers and with majority outgroup peers are associated with ethnic ingroup identification and host society identification, and whether these group identifications in turn are related to improved attitudes towards the majority outgroup.

This study adds to previous research on intergroup contact and outgroup attitudes in three ways. First, whereas most previous studies examined how outgroup friendships affect outgroup attitudes, the current study also examines whether ethnic ingroup friendships are related to outgroup attitudes. People with an immigrant background are confronted with bicultural worlds (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000) in which they can identify with their ethnic ingroup as well as with the host society (Berry, 2005; Ryder et al., 2000; Verkuyten, 2014). To get insight in how this may be related to their outgroup attitudes, we examine the role of identification and friendships with ethnic ingroup members and identification and friendships with host society members.

Second, whereas several studies examined cognitive and affective mediators of the relationship between intergroup contact and outgroup attitudes (for meta-analytical results see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Swart, Hewstone, Christ, & Voci, 2011), few studies examined whether the contact-attitudes link is mediated by identification with the superordinate group (e.g. Eller & Abrams, 2003). More specifically, it has not been investigated whether friendships with majority group members are indirectly related to outgroup attitudes through identification with the host society. Third, whereas most of the intergroup contact literature investigated contact effects among majority group members, the current research adds to the relatively few studies (e.g. Binder et al., 2009; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005) that examined intergroup contact effects among minority group members. An understanding of the associations between group identifications, in- and outgroup contact (friendships), and attitudes towards the majority group, sheds further light on the acculturation process of immigrant youth.

These associations will be examined longitudinally among children (12–14 years) of immigrants during their first year of middle school in the Netherlands. Over the past decades, ethnic diversity of the Dutch school population has increased due to immigration and an increasing number of second-generation immigrants (SCP, 2012). Among the largest immigrant groups are the Turks and Moroccans that came to the Netherlands as labor immigrants and that have the lowest social status (in terms of education and labor market position) and are the least accepted, also by native early adolescents (SCP, 2012; Verkuyten & Kinket, 2000) There are also members of ex-colonial groups of Surinamese and Antilleans that have relatively higher social status and are more accepted in society (Castles & Miller, 2003). Furthermore, there are non-western immigrants from many other and numerically smaller groups that tend to have a relatively unfavorable social position (e.g., from Somalia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan).

1.1. Majority group friends and host society identification

Peers are an important source of influence during adolescence (see Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011), and play a central role in identity formation (Meeus & Dekovic, 1995; Meeus, 2011). Friends convey social norms that are regulated through processes of social control, which lead to similarities in opinions and behaviors over time. Friendships of ethnic minority students with majority peers are therefore likely to lead to similarities (reduced differences) in behaviors and opinions between members of these groups (Stark & Flache, 2012). Reduced differences between groups make group boundaries less salient leading to more inclusive ingroups. If this is the case, then friendships with ethnic majority members are likely to strengthen minority students' identification with the host society. This is particularly likely in countries where the native majority group is seen as representative of the host country (like in the Netherlands where the Dutch term used for the natives – 'Nederlanders' – is similar as the one used for the country – 'Nederland').

In turn, based on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993), it can be expected that identification with the host society improves attitudes toward the majority group. Social identity research has shown that higher identifiers tend to view the ingroup more favorably (Brown & Hewstone, 2005). Gaertner et al. (1993) argued that if the ingroup becomes more inclusive, former subgroups become part of one superordinate ingroup, which will lead to more positive attitudes toward members of those subgroups. Accordingly, the common ingroup identity model (Dovidio et al., 2007; Gaertner et al., 1993; Gaertner, Dovidio, & Bachman, 1996) proposes that for contact to reduce prejudice it needs to be structured in such a way that it leads to identification with an inclusive superordinate category. In line with this reasoning, research has shown that superordinate identities improve outgroup attitudes among minority as well as majority group members (Nier et al., 2001; Pfeifer et al., 2007). This suggests that identification with the host society will improve the attitudes of ethnic minority youth towards majority group members.

We expect that friendships of ethnic minority students with majority group peers are related to identification with the host society. Furthermore, based on the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner et al., 1993) we expect that identification with the host society is related to improved attitudes toward the majority group. Thus, we hypothesize that friendships with

majority group members is related to stronger identification with the host society, which in turn is related to improved outgroup attitudes (*Superordinate Group Identification Hypothesis*). Mediation of the contact-attitudes link by superordinate group identification was examined in several studies by Eller and Abrams (2003, 2004). They found cross-sectional support for this hypothesis among Mexican employees regarding friendships with American co-workers in Mexico (Eller & Abrams, 2004), and (partial) longitudinal support among American temporary language students in Mexico (Eller & Abrams, 2003), and among British university students regarding contact with French (Eller & Abrams, 2004). The current research adds to these studies on majority groups and temporary visitors by testing the superordinate group hypothesis among adolescents with an immigration background in the Netherlands. Unlike the groups examined in earlier research, adolescents in our sample grow up in a bi-cultural world of their ethnic ingroup and the host society. This raises the question whether for these adolescents identification with the host society may come more naturally and may therefore be less related to their friendships and attitudes toward the majority group.

Identification with the majority group has also been argued to be a predictor of friendship preferences (Rutland et al., 2012), and minority group identification has been shown to be bidirectionally related to ethnic outgroup friendships (Maliepaard & Phalet, 2012). This indicates that next to majority group friendships leading to stronger identification with the host society, host society identification might make it more likely for minority group adolescents to select majority group friends. Therefore, we will also examine this reversed causality between host society identification and majority group friendships.

1.2. Ethnic ingroup friends and ethnic ingroup identification

Festinger (1954) theorized that social comparison with valued reference groups is important for the development of behaviors and opinions. By adopting behaviors or opinions of the group, group members become more similar over time. Members that do not follow the behavior or opinions of the ingroup tend to be sanctioned, in particular when the behavior or opinions are relevant to the group's identity. Whereas studies on peer influence mainly focus on opinions and behaviors, peers are also important role models for what it means to be an ethnic group member (Noels, Leavitt, & Clément, 2010). In particular ethnic ingroup peers are likely to be important reference group members (Leach & Smith, 2006). In support of this view, Syed and Juan (2013) showed among college students that ethnic identity exploration and commitment to the ethnic ingroup was more similar among same-ethnic friends than among cross-ethnic friends, indicating that especially same-ethnic friends are of importance for ethnic identity formation. Furthermore, more frequent interactions with peers from the same ethnic group have been shown to be related to stronger ethnic identities among Armenian, Vietnamese, and Mexican adolescents in the United States (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). Thus, in particular ethnic ingroup friends seem to strengthen ethnic ingroup identification of minority adolescents. However, similar to identification with the host society and friendships with majority group members, the relation between ingroup friendships and ingroup identification might also be reversed (Rutland et al., 2012) or bidirectional (Maliepaard & Phalet, 2012). Hence, the possibility of a bidirectional relationship between ethnic ingroup identification and ingroup friendships will also be examined.

The literature offers two opposing explanations for the subsequent influence of ethnic ingroup identification on outgroup attitudes, leading to two different *Ingroup Identification Hypotheses*. On the one hand, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) proposes that people want to positively differentiate their ingroup from relevant outgroups, which typically leads to ingroup bias. Whereas positive intergroup differentiation can be attained by more favorable ingroup attitudes, it can also be attained by less favorable outgroup attitudes (Brewer, 1999). In support of this view, several studies have shown that ingroup identification is related to less positive outgroup attitudes (e.g., Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001). Thus, based on this reasoning we can expect that ethnic ingroup friendships are related to stronger ethnic ingroup identification which in turn is related to less positive outgroup attitudes (*Ingroup Identification Hypothesis 1*).

On the other hand, there are scholars who argue for a positive effect of minority ingroup identification on outgroup attitudes. Based on the developmental theory of ethnic identity, Phinney, Jacoby, and Silva (2007) argued and showed that a strong ethnic identity allows for more tolerant attitudes toward outgroups. When minority adolescents feel confident about their ethnic identity they consider other groups less of an identity threat and therefore they can be more open and tolerant toward outgroups (see also Nesdale, Durkin, Maass, & Griffiths, 2005). Hence, based on peer influence and ethnic identity development, the contrasting hypothesis is that ethnic ingroup friendships are related to stronger ethnic ingroup identification which in turn is related to improved outgroup attitudes (*Ingroup Identification Hypothesis 2*).

1.3. Present study

The main goal of this study is to investigate how minority adolescents' orientations towards their ethnic ingroup and the host society, in terms of friendships and group identification, are related to their attitude towards the native majority group. Hypotheses will be tested longitudinally among ethnic minority students during their first year of middle school in the Netherlands. The transition to middle school is characterized by a complete re-location of students to school-classes, which means that many students encounter their new classmates for the first time. During this first year at middle school new friendships are formed (Hardy, Bukowski, & Sippola, 2002), which in turn are likely to affect identity formation (Meeus, 2011) and outgroup attitudes (Poteat, 2007). To examine causal relations, a lagged design is used in which ethnic ingroup

and outgroup friendships (with native Dutch) formed three months after entering middle school predict outgroup attitudes (towards the Dutch) at the end of the first school year, controlling for earlier attitudes.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

This study is based upon a subsample of The Arnhem School Study. This is a Dutch longitudinal survey in which 1350 students, within 61 classrooms of 12 middle schools, were followed during their first two middle school years (age 12–13). There were three waves of data collection during this first year of middle school. The first wave (T1) was right after the transition to middle school in September, the second wave (T2) took place three months later in December and the third wave (T3) at the end of the school year in June (for more details about the study see Stark, 2011; Stark & Flache, 2012).

Students of whom both parents were born in a country outside the Netherlands (*n* = 244, from 49 different school classes, at 12 schools) were selected for the current study. This precluded the risk that identification with the host society was affected by one of the parents being born in the Netherlands. The ethnic background of this subsample was 44% Turkish, 12% Moroccan, 9% Afghani, 7% Surinamese, 5% Dutch-Antillean, and 23% other backgrounds. Students in this subsample were part of classrooms with different levels of ethnic diversity (8% to 93% Dutch, *m* = 50%). Dutch classmates were not selected for the analyses but were included in the computations of classroom ethnic diversity and in the coding of outgroup friendships with majority group peers.

2.1.1. Procedure

After schools agreed to participate, parents were given the possibility to deny consent for their children to participate in the study. In addition, participating students were assured confidentiality and were informed that they were free to discontinue participation. Per school class, students simultaneously completed online questionnaires in their school's computer lab. Teachers read instructions to the students and supervised the completion of the questionnaires, which took 30 minutes on average.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Ethnicity

Ethnic background was based on the reported countries of birth of both the parents. If parents were born in different countries, the country of the mother was assigned. Because nearly half of the sample (44%) was of Turkish origin, and all other groups were small (≤12%), we created a dummy for Turkish (1) versus other (0) to control for ethnic group differences in the dependent variables. For the coding of outgroup friendships with majority group peers, classmates were assigned the Dutch ethnicity if both of their parents were born in the Netherlands.

2.2.2. Ethnic ingroup and outgroup friendships (T2, T3)

At all waves participants were asked "Which of your classmates are your best friends?" Students could nominate an unlimited number of best friends on a list with the names of all their classmates. Based on ethnicity data of the nominator and the nominee, the number of friendships with majority group (Dutch) classmates and with ethnic ingroup classmates (that is, with classmates that indicated the same ethnic background) were counted. Friendships at T2, three months after the transition to middle school, were selected to predict outgroup attitudes because friendships are likely to have formed by this time (Hardy et al., 2002).

2.2.3. Ethnic ingroup and host society identification (T3)

Ethnic ingroup identification was measured at T3 using two items: 'Do you feel [ethnic group parents]?', and 'How proud are you to be [ethnic group parents]?' The same two items were used for identification with the host society: 'Do you feel Dutch?', and 'How proud are you to be Dutch?' Because Dutch natives form the majority group in the Netherlands and define the country's mainstream culture, we argue that if ethnic minority students indicate to feel Dutch this means that they feel that they are a member of Dutch society (i.e., not ethnic Dutch). Students could answer on a scale from 1, *absolutely not*, to 5, *very strong*. The correlation between the two items for ethnic ingroup identification was *r* = .73, and for identification with the host society, *r* = .69. Whereas ethnic predictors are preferably measured before the dependent variable, ethnic group identification and host society identification were not measured at T1 and T2 but only at T3.

2.2.4. Outgroup attitudes (T2, T3)

At all waves, a four-item social stereotyping scale was used to measure students' outgroup attitude toward the Dutch majority group. Students indicated on a scale from 1, *totally disagree*, to 7, *totally agree*, how much they agreed with the statements: "All Dutch are (a) honest, (b) friendly, (c) smart, (d) helpful" (cf. Vervoort, Scholte, & Scheepers, 2011). Only positive traits were included in this scale because children older than 7 have been shown to be less willing to differentiate between social groups on negative traits than on positive traits (Bigler, Brown, & Markell, 2001; Rutland et al., 2007). Higher

scores indicate a more positive attitude toward the majority group. The scales were internally consistent at T2 (Cronbach's α = .97), and at T3 (Cronbach's α = .97).

2.2.5. Background variables

Gender was measured by self-report and coded as zero for boys and one for girls (47%). Because the Dutch middle school system is tracked, we controlled for whether students were in the lower (69% VMBO, preparatory secondary vocational education) the middle (22% HAVO, senior general secondary education), or the higher (9% VWO, pre-university education) educational track. This was dummy coded into 0, *lower track*, and 1, *middle or higher track*. To control for friendship opportunities the proportion of Dutch classmates was included as a control variable (range = .08–.93, M = .50, SD = .19).

2.3. Attrition analyses

Of the 244 minority students (with both parents born outside the Netherlands) that participated in the study during the first year of middle school, 232 students participated at T1, 235 at T2, and 216 at T3. Of the students who participated at T2 (n = 235), 89% also participated in T3 (n = 209). Attrition analyses showed that the number of Dutch friends at T2 did not differ from T3 (F(1, 233) = .21, p = .65), but attitudes toward the Dutch at T2 differed significantly between students that did (M = 4.07, SD = 1.75) and students that did not participate (M = 4.84, SD = 1.71) at T3, F(1, 223) = 4.74, p = .03.

Missings occurred mainly for variables at T3. We considered using an imputation approach but given that cases with missing data on dependent variables should be omitted from final analyses even when using imputed data (Graham, 2009), this approach would only add 7 additional cases to the final model (that is, the number of students with data on the dependent but missing values on independent variables). Given this small number of added cases we decided not to use an imputation approach.

2.4. Analytical strategy

To test the hypothesized indirect effects we made use of structural equation modeling in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2010). Due to sample size restrictions not all hypothesized effects were modeled simultaneously. Preliminary models examined the relationships between ethnic ingroup and outgroup friendships and group identifications. Subsequently the relationships between group identifications and outgroup attitude were examined. Based on these preliminary findings one final model was constructed. Indirect effects were tested using the 'model indirect' command in Mplus, which uses the Delta method (described in MacKinnon, 2008). This is a Sobel test with an added covariance term between the two path estimates. To take into account that students were embedded in classrooms (n = 49) we used the option "Type = Complex" in Mplus. These models correct standard errors and chi-square statistics for clustering/non-independence of observations.

The latent factors outgroup attitudes at T2 and T3 (4 items), ethnic ingroup identification (2 items) and host society identification (2 items), were constructed in the structural equation models. The measurement model including all latent variables indicated that the different indicators fitted the latent factors well. Indicator loadings ranged from .78 to .97 and were all statistically significant at p < .05, and the model fitted the data, χ^2 (73) = 144.29, p < .01, *CFI* = .97, *TLI* = .97, *RMSEA* = .06, *RMSEA CI*: .05–.08, *SRMR* = .06.

To control for baseline differences in the dependent variables based on personal and school class characteristics, dependent variable(s) were initially regressed on the control variables gender, ethnic background, percentage Dutch classmates, and education level. Non-significant controls (p > .05) were excluded from the final models for reasons of parsimony. Standardized parameter estimates are reported.

Preliminary analyses showed that ethnic ingroup identification was highly skewed toward strong ethnic identification. Hence, Maximum Likelihood Estimation with Robust Standard Errors (MLR) was used in the structural equation models, which reduces the bias in standard errors that non-normal data are prone to. Also because of the skewedness of this measure, analyses including ethnic ingroup identification were additionally performed with identification dummy coded by using a split at the first quartile to distinguish moderate (lowest 25%) and high (highest 75%) ethnic ingroup identifiers.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive analyses

Descriptive statistics of the main variables are presented in Table 1. A paired sample *t*-test showed that ethnic ingroup identification (M = 4.49, SD = .89) was stronger than host society identification (M = 2.45, SD = 1.12), t(207) = 17.29, p < .001. Regarding ingroup and outgroup friendships at T2, we examined whether students had more ethnic ingroup than outgroup friends than could be expected from numerical availability. Paired sample *t*-tests showed that the friendship ratio of ingroup versus outgroup friends (M = 63% Dutch friends) was significantly lower than the availability ratio of ingroup versus outgroup classmates (M_{ratio} = 80% Dutch classmates, t(210) = −7.86, p < .001). This indicates that, compared to ethnic ingroup friends, students tended to have less Dutch friends than could be expected based on availability of Dutch versus ethnic ingroup classmates.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for main study variables ($n = 244$).

	n	M	SD	Range
Percentage Dutch classmates	244	.50	.19	.08–.93
Ethnic ingroup friendships T2	235	1.02	1.60	0–10
Majority group friendships T2	235	2.42	3.13	0–23
Ethnic ingroup identification T3	208	4.49	.89	1–5
Host society identification T3	218	2.43	1.20	1–5
Attitude toward majority group T2	226	4.16	1.66	1–7
Attitude toward majority group T3	218	4.20	1.63	1–7

Table 2
Bivariate correlations between study variables.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Sex (0 = boy, 1 = girl)									
2. Ethnic background (0 = other, 1 = Turkish)	−.06								
3. Education level (0 = low, 1 = mid-high)	.04	−.29**							
4. Percentage Dutch classmates	.04	−.29**	.56**						
5. Ethnic ingroup friendships T2	−.02	.57**	−.25**	−.43**					
6. Majority group friendships T2	.03	−.16*	.16*	.36**	−.11				
7. Ethnic ingroup identification T3	−.10	.25**	−.07	−.22**	.18**	−.22**			
8. Host society identification T3	.12†	−.23**	.01	.14*	−.16*	.21**	.29**		
9. Attitude toward majority group T2	.18**	−.10	.00	.10	.02	.19**	−.13†	.24**	
10. Attitude toward majority group T3	.08	−.11†	.00	.11	−.04	.13†	−.20**	.33**	.38**

† $p < .1$.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

For the change in outgroup attitudes from T2 to T3, a paired sample t-test showed that even though outgroup attitudes improved somewhat over time, this difference was not significant ($t(202) = −.66$, $p = .51$). Table 2 shows that the correlation between attitudes at T2 and T3 was significant but moderate, which indicates that the outgroup attitude was not very stable within students over time. Furthermore, the correlations indicate that ethnic ingroup and outgroup friendships were related to group identifications, and that the group identifications were related to outgroup attitudes.

3.2. Friendships and group identifications

The first structural equation model is the *friendships-identification model* (Fig. 1). This model examined whether ingroup and outgroup friendships were related to ethnic ingroup identification and host society identification. Both ingroup and outgroup friendships are added to this model in order to examine whether it is not just the total number of friends but in particular ingroup or outgroup friendships that affect group identifications. If only ingroup friendships are in the model, then this may closely reflect the number of total friends a student has. Thus, we included both ingroup and outgroup friendships in order to assess the specific effects of ingroup and outgroup friendships.
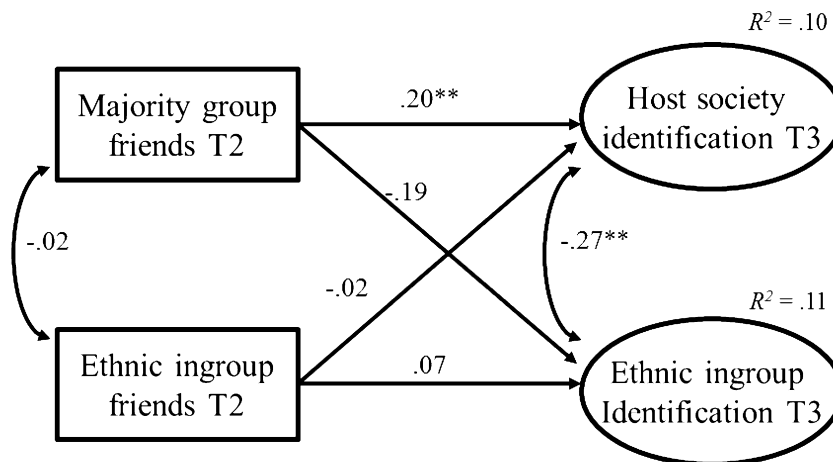

Fig. 1. Structural equation model predicting identification with the ethnic ingroup and with the host society by ethnic ingroup and majority group friendships. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.
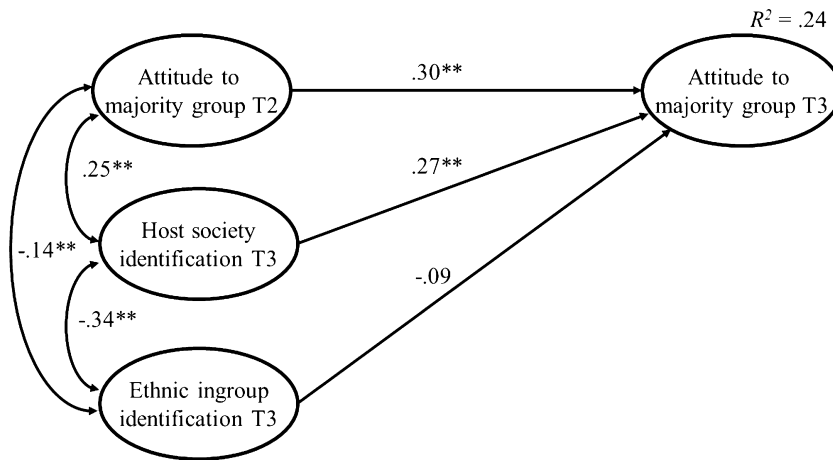
Fig. 2. Lagged structural equation model predicting outgroup attitudes at T3 by ethnic ingroup and host society identification. $^{*} p < .05$; $^{**} p < .01$.

The model (see Fig. 1) fitted the data well, χ^2 (7) = 5.01, $p = .66$, $CFI = 1.00$, $TLI = 1.02$, $RMSEA = .00$, $RMSEA$ CI: .00–.06, $SRMR = .01$. Friendships with Dutch peers were related to stronger identification with the host society ($B = .20$, $SE = .06$, $p < .01$), but not to ethnic ingroup identification ($B = -.19$, $SE = .13$, $p = .13$). Ethnic ingroup friendships were not significantly related to identification with the host society ($B = -.02$, $SE = .07$, $p = .80$) and also not with ingroup identification ($B = .07$, $SE = .08$, $p = .39$). Thus, only outgroup friendships were related to stronger identification with the host society. Of the controls, only ethnic background was a significant predictor of host society identification ($B = -.21$, $SE = .08$, $p < .05$) and ethnic ingroup identification ($B = .19$, $SE = .09$, $p < .05$). Turkish students identified less with the host society and more with their ethnic ingroup than students from other ethnic minority groups.

An additional model in which the predictor ethnic ingroup identification was dummy coded (because of its skewedness) showed similar results with only outgroup friendships being related to stronger host society identification, $B = .19$, $p < .05$, estimator: WLSMV, χ^2 (3) = 4.29, $p = .23$, $CFI = .99$, $TLI = .95$, $RMSEA = .04$. However, ethnic ingroup friendships were also related to stronger ethnic ingroup identity in this model ($B = .15$, $p < .01$).

3.3. Group identifications and attitudes toward the majority group

Using a lagged structural equation model we next examined whether ethnic ingroup identification and host society iden-tification were related to outgroup attitude change during the first year of middle school. That is, we controlled for attitudes at T2 in the prediction of attitudes at T3. This *identification-attitude model* (see Fig. 2) fitted the data well, χ^2(48) = 61.14, $p = .10$, $CFI = .99$, $TLI = 99$, $RMSEA = .03$, $RMSEA$ CI: .00–.06, $SRMR = .03$. Identification with the host society ($B = .27$, $SE = .09$, $p < .01$) but not ethnic ingoup identification ($B = -.09$, $SE = .10$, $p = .34$) improved outgroup attitudes. None of the controls predicted outgroup attitude change.

3.4. Indirect effect through host society identification

The identification attitude model showed that ethnic ingroup identification did not affect students' outgroup attitudes. Hence, we only examined a *host society (superordinate) identification model* (Fig. 3) which tests the indirect effect of majority group friendships on outgroup attitudes through host society identification. This model fitted the data well (estimator MLR: χ^2 (56) = 81.53, $p = .01$, $CFI = .98$, $TLI = .98$, $RMSEA = .04$, $RMSEA$ CI: .02–.06, $SRMR = .07$). The indirect effect of outgroup friendships on outgroup attitudes through host society identification was significant ($B = .06$, Delta indirect test: $z = 2.18$, $p = .03$). Thus, in support of the superordinate identification hypothesis, we found that majority group friendships were related to higher identification with the host society, which in turn was related to more positive outgroup attitudes. This mediation was also significant when controlling for outgroup attitudes at T1 instead of T2 ($B = .05$, Delta indirect test: $z = 2.03$, $p < .05$).

The preliminary models and the host society (superordinate) identification model were also examined with an alternative measure, which combined the number of ingroup versus outgroup majority friendships into a ratio score. The analyses with this alternative measure gave the same results and can be found in Appendix A.

3.5. Additional analyses

To investigate whether the influence between ingroup and outgroup friendships and group identifications is bidirectional, we additionally estimated a model in which ingroup and outgroup friendships at T2 predict host society identification at
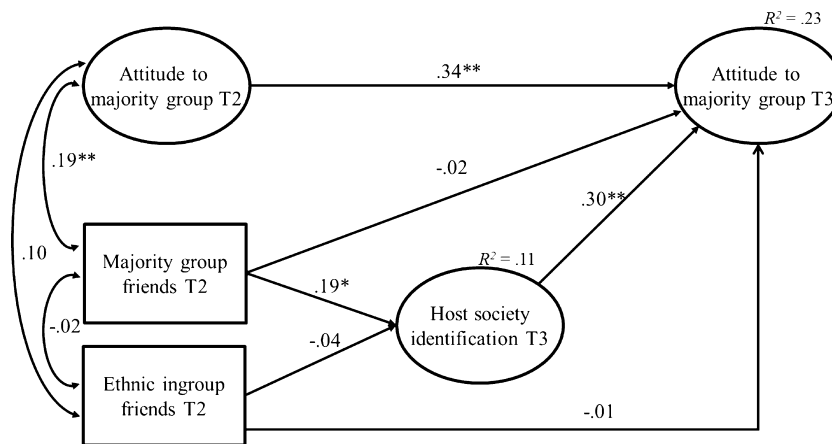
Fig. 3. Lagged structural equation models to examine the direct and indirect pathways predicting outgroup attitude toward Dutch at T3. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

T3, which in turn was modeled to predict ingroup and outgroup friendships at T3. In doing so, stability paths from ingroup versus outgroup friendships at T2 to friendships at T3 were included. Group identification and friendships were both only measured at T3. Ethnic ingroup identification was excluded from the model, because it was not related to ingroup and outgroup friendships. The final model showed that outgroup friendships at T2 were related to stronger identification with the host society at T3 ($B = .18$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$), which in turn was related to more outgroup friendships at T3 ($B = .17$ $SE = .07$, $p < .05$). Ethnic ingroup friendships were not related to identification with the host society. This model fitted the data well, χ^2 (6) = 14.26, $p = .03$, CFI = .96, TLI = .87, RMSEA = .07, RMSEA CI: .02–.13, SRMR = .02.

Second, we added ingroup and outgroup friendships at T3 to the *host society (superordinate) identification model*. The resulting model predicted, next to change in outgroup attitudes, the change in the number of outgroup friends. The bidirectional model also fitted the data well, χ^2 (77) = 123.51, $p = .01$, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .06, RMSEA CI: .03–.07, SRMR = .08, and shows that having Dutch friends at T2 was related to stronger identification with the host society at T3 ($B = .18$, $SE = .07$, $p < .01$), which in turn was related to improved outgroup attitude at T3 ($B = .30$, $SE = .08$, $p < .01$), and to an increase in the number of Dutch friends at T3 ($B = .18$, $SE = .07$, $p < .01$). Also, the indirect path (of outgroup friendships on attitudes through host society identification) in this model stayed significant ($B = .05$, Delta indirect test: $z = 2.07$, $p < .05$). These findings indicate that the relation between host society identification and having majority group friends is bidirectional.

4. Discussion

The current study started out with Berry's (1997) questions concerning the acculturation of immigrants: is maintaining one's ethnic heritage culture and identity considered to be important?, and is developing relationships and commitments with the larger society of value? We addressed these two questions by proposing two pathways that reflect the bicultural world of ethnic minority adolescents. In doing so, the study provides insights into whether and how minority students' orientations towards the host society and their ethnic ingroup are associated with their attitudes toward the native majority group.

Regarding minority students' host society orientation, we hypothesized, based on the peer influence literature and the common ingroup identity theory (Gaertner et al., 1993), that friendships with majority group members would be related to stronger identification with the host society, which in turn would be related to improved attitudes towards the majority group (*Superordinate Group Identification Hypothesis*). Our findings were in line with this hypothesis. Thus, for ethnic minority adolescents, host society identification mediates the link between majority group friendships and attitudes toward the majority group. This indicates that intergroup contact (outgroup friendship) is important to create a superordinate identity, which in turn is related to improved attitudes toward former subgroups (see Dovidio et al., 2007).

Tropp and Pettigrew (2005) pointed out that intergroup contact affects minority and majority members differently. They explain this by the different positions these two groups have in society. Whereas majority members more often hold stereotypes about minority groups, minority group members might be more concerned about being discriminated by majority members. Adding to this, the current study shows that minority students' outgroup friendships make students feel more connected with majority group students in the sense that they feel like they are part of the same society. It may be that minority students feel like they are part of the common ingroup because intimate contact reduces (perceived) prejudice and discrimination or increases perceived similarity and decreases intergroup anxiety. Examining different possible mediating mechanisms is an interesting avenue for further research. It would contribute to theory and research on the common ingroup identity model that has shown that positive intergroup contact can lead to a sense of shared belonging (Dovidio et al., 2007). Investigating different mechanisms could improve our understanding of why exactly contact has this effect and thereby make a contribution to the theory.

Whereas we theorized and examined friendships as predictor of identification with the host society, reverse (Rutland et al., 2012) and bidirectional causality (Maliepaard & Phalet, 2012) between intergroup contact and group identification has also been demonstrated. Additional analyses to test the direction of the relationship showed that majority group friendships were related to stronger identification with the host society, and identification with the host society was related to more friendships with majority group peers. These findings suggest that the relation between identification with the host society and contacts with the majority group are probably bidirectional (Maliepaard & Phalet, 2012).

Regarding minority students' ingroup orientation, we expected that friendships with ethnic ingroup members would be related to stronger ethnic ingroup identification. Based on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the developmental theory of ethnic identity (Phinney et al., 2007), ethnic ingroup identification was theorized to subsequently be related to either less or more positive attitudes toward the majority group. However, there was only partial support for the relationship between ethnic ingroup friendships and ethnic ingroup identification, and no support for the relation between ethnic ingroup identification and change in outgroup attitude. One explanation for the lack of these findings could be that ethnic ingroup identification was quite strong among most students. Hence, for many students it was not possible to further increase their ethnic ingroup identification.

It could also be that the ethnic ingroup pathway follows a different sequence than the superordinate identification pathway. For example, it might be that stronger ethnic ingroup identification leads to more ethnic ingroup friendships, which in turn may affect students' attitudes toward the majority group. Yet, additional analyses in which we further examined the causality between ethnic ingroup identification and friendships showed that ethnic ingroup identification did not predict ethnic ingroup friendships. One other explanation for the lack of a relation between ingroup friendships and ethnic ingroup identification could be that the negative effect as proposed by social identity theory and the positive effect as proposed by the developmental theory of ethnic identity occur simultaneously and cancel each other out. Because our data did not enable us to examine all relations with cross-lagged analyses, future studies should examine this in more detail.

Next to the separate effects of identification with the ethnic ingroup and with the host society, dual identity theory (e.g. Gaertner et al., 1996; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000) builds on the common ingroup identity model and argues that identification with the superordinate group (host society) is related to more positive outgroup attitudes when it goes together with identification with the subgroup (ethnic minority group) (González & Brown, 2006). Because nearly all students in our study indicated to identify strongly with their ethnic ingroup we were not able to examine the dual identity hypothesis (for which we would need students with low ethnic ingroup identification). However, the fact that the students generally identified with their ethnic ingroup suggests that our findings are in line with dual identity theory. Importantly they indicate that it is not necessary that students distance themselves from their ethnic identity for host society identification to occur and to have a positive effect on outgroup attitudes. Thus, whereas early formulations of the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner et al., 1993) suggested that the superordinate identification should replace subgroup identification, the current study is in line with more recent formulations of the theory in showing that it is not necessary that minority members give up their subgroup identity (Dovidio et al., 2007).

The current findings add to previous research in several ways. First, we distinguished between the effects of both ingroup and outgroup friendships, as well as ethnic and host society identification. This reflects the bicultural world of ethnic minority youth, and it also reflects the group identification structure of the common ingroup identity model. Whereas most previous studies on the ingroup identity model focused on identification with groups within a restricted social setting like a work organization (see for an overview Dovidio et al., 2007), the current study provides a relevant societal test case for how minority members can identify with their own ethnic group versus society as a whole. The findings indicate that in particular the orientation toward the host society in terms of friendships and group identification is related to changes in attitudes toward the majority group.

This study also adds to previous research because it is one of the relatively few studies that examined the common ingroup identity model longitudinally among minority group members. When controlling for earlier outgroup attitudes, identification with the host society was related to improved outgroup attitudes at the end of the school year. Also, whereas most previous studies examined intergroup contact effects and their mediators among majority group students, this study adds to our understanding of ingroup and outgroup friendships of second generation immigrant youth and indicates that identification with the host society is an additional mediator of the association between intergroup contact and outgroup attitudes. Research on intergroup contact among minority youth is important because it sheds light on how integration processes affect the positive social development of ethnic minority youth.

Despite these contributions, we want to discuss some limitations. We only considered friendships within school classes, but it is possible that students have ingroup and outgroup friendships outside the classroom and outside the school as well. However, a study on social networks within and outside the school context among students with an immigration background in Sweden (Svensson, Stattin, & Kerr, 2011) showed that the relative numbers of ingroup and outgroup friendships were similar across contexts. Whether this is also the case in our sample we do not know. Nevertheless, even given students' friendships outside school, we found that friendships with majority group peers within school classes are related to students' identification with the host society, which in turn is related to improved outgroup attitudes over time.

A second limitation concerns the causality of our findings. In the mediation model, identification with the host society was modeled as a mediator measured at the same time (T3) as the dependent variable (outgroup attitudes at T3). Even though analyses showed that identification with the host society was related to change in outgroup attitudes from T2 to T3, the current study did not offer a stringent test of the causal relationship between outgroup friendships and identification with

the host society because identification was not measured at T2. Hence, to fully examine causality of the relations, mediation should be examined in a model with outgroup friendships, superordinate identification, as well as outgroup attitudes all measured at three time points (see Bullock, Green, & Ha, 2010; Leszczensky, 2013).

Regarding the causality of friendships and attitudes, it can be argued that the direction of influence goes from attitudes to friendships rather than the other way around. However, a recent study on the same dataset (Stark, Flache, & Veenstra, 2013) showed that, among minorities in this sample, positive relationships (liking nominations) with Dutch classmates improved attitudes toward the Dutch, but positive attitudes toward the Dutch did not increase positive relationships with Dutch peers. This earlier finding suggests that the causal relationship is mainly from friendships to attitudes and not the other way around. Adding to the finding of Stark et al. (2013) the current study indicates that this causal link is mediated by host society identification.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that ethnic ingroup friendships and ingroup identification do not improve but–importantly–also do not harm the attitudes that ethnic minority group adolescents develop toward the native majority group. Whereas early work on ethnocentrism argued that ingroup identification would be related to less favorable outgroup attitudes (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Sumner, 1906), later work on acculturation recognized that ingroup identification could go together with positive intergroup relations (Berry, 1997, 2001). In line with this later work, the current study showed that regardless of minority students' ethnic ingroup identification, identification with the host society was related to more positive attitudes toward the host society. This indicates that minority group orientation does not have to stand in the way of developing a sense of host national belonging.

Whereas ethnic ingroup friendships did not affect outgroup attitudes, outgroup friendships were related to more positive outgroup attitudes. Outgroup friendships improve attitudes toward the majority group through identification with the host society. These findings support the common ingroup identity model by showing that identification with a superordinate group improves attitudes toward a former subgroup (majority group members). In addition, ethnic minority students' friendships with majority group peers encourage superordinate identification. Thus, among ethnic minority adolescents, identification with the host society appears to be a mediator between majority group friendships and majority group attitudes.

In conclusion, this study underscores the significance of outgroup friendships in multicultural contexts. For the integration of minority students, friendships with majority group peers are important. Given that both majority and minority students have to take part in those intergroup friendships, students with an ethnic minority background as well as their native majority peers play a role in making minority group students feel part of the host society and to make them view majority group members positively.

Appendix A.

A.1. Analyses with ratio score

In the current study we theorized and tested whether the number of ethnic ingroup and majority group friendships have separate effects on group identifications and outgroup attitudes. Yet, it might also be that not so much the number of friendships, but in particular the ratio of ethnic ingroup and majority group friends is related to identification processes.

Including the ratio of ingroup versus majority group friends to the model was considered but the number of majority group friends and the friendship ratio were strongly correlated ($r(235) = .54$, $p < .001$) which leads to multicollinearity problems. To examine whether the ratio is particularly important for ethnic ingroup and outgroup identification, additional analyses were performed with the ratio measure instead of the separate numbers of ingroup and majority group friends.

The friendships-identification model showed that a higher ratio of majority group friends was related to stronger identification with the host society ($B = .21$, $SE = .08$, $p < .01$) but not to ethnic ingroup identification ($B = -.13$, $SE = .10$, $p = .21$) and

fitted the data well (χ^2 (5) = 1.77, p = .88, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.05, $RMSEA$ = .00, $RMSEA\ CI$: .00–.05, $SRMR$ = .01). The superordinate identification model, which tested the indirect effect, also gave similar results: A higher ratio of Dutch friends was related to a stronger identification with the host society (B = .20, SE = .08, p < .05) which was in turn related to outgroup attitudes (B = .31, SE = .08, p < .01). The indirect effect was marginally significant (B = .07, z = 1.88, p = .059) and the model fitted the data well (χ^2 (48) = 63.19, p = .07, CFI = .99, TLI = .98, $RMSEA$ = .04, $RMSEA\ CI$: .00–.06, $SRMR$ = .04).

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