Chapter 6

General conclusion and discussion
GENERAL CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

With increasing ethnic diversity in society, the ethnic composition of school populations changes as well. Ethnically diverse school populations often face challenges of prejudice and discrimination. Research has, however, shown that youth's interethnic relationships and attitudes are important predictors of their interethnic perceptions later in life (Emerson et al., 2002). This calls for the question whether, similar to the society at large, growing ethnic diversity may be reflected in tensions in schools between ethnically diverse peers, that is, may give rise to the possibility that ethnically diverse classrooms become clashrooms. In this dissertation I aimed to gain insights into this issue by studying the broader peer network in school in which youth's interethnic peer relationships, both positive and negative, occur.

In this dissertation I studied the role of two specific processes in the broader peer network in school on youth's interethnic peer relationships. First, I investigated the interplay between multiple peer relationships in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 in which I investigated the relation between youth's aggression and bullying and their interethnic positive (friendship and defending) and negative (rejection) relationships. Second, I investigated the role of similarity in other dimensions, besides ethnicity, in Chapter 4 in which I examined how similarity based on sex and classroom placement influenced the role of ethnicity in youth's defending relationships.

Furthermore, in Chapters 2 and 5 I investigated how youth's interethnic peer relationships differed between ethnic groups. Moreover, in Chapter 5 I investigated how ethnic diversity and interethnic friendships related to youth's interethnic attitudes differently among ethnic groups. Throughout this dissertation, I used a social network perspective, in which relationships were assessed by investigating who is related to whom.

In the following, I will discuss the findings of this dissertation focusing on three main findings: 1) the role of ethnicity in youth's peer relationships, 2) the influence of the broader peer network, and 3) differences between ethnic groups. Subsequently, I will discuss the use of a social network perspective for studying interethnic peer relationships. Next, I will discuss both scientific and practical implications of the findings as well as directions for future research.

6.1 MAIN FINDINGS

INTERETHNIC PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Previous research into interethnic peer relationships has consistently shown that youth have a preference for associating with same-ethnic over cross-ethnic peers (Boda & Néray, 2015; Currarini et al., 2010; Fortuin et al., 2014; Leszczensky & Pink, 2015; Smith et al., 2014a; Stark & Flache, 2012). Most studies on interethnic contact focus on (the lack of) positive relationships, such as friendships, but research on the effects of ethnic diversity on negative relationships, such as bullying, is relatively rare. In this dissertation,
I considered the role of ethnicity in both positive relationships, such as friendships and defending, and negative relationships, such as bullying and rejection.

In two chapters (Chapters 2 and 4), I investigated youth's same- and cross-ethnic peer relationships. In line with previous research, both chapters provided evidence that youth are more likely to have positive peer relationships with their same-ethnic peers than with their cross-ethnic peers. This was found even after controlling for the availability of same- and cross-ethnic peers. Also, using longitudinal social network models in Chapter 4, same ethnic preferences remained after controlling for a number of structural processes influencing children's peer relationships, such as reciprocity, transitivity, and sex homophily.

For negative peer relationships, however, no differences were found between youth's likelihood to form relationships with same- and cross-ethnic peers. In Chapter 2, I found that adolescents were generally not more likely to reject their cross-ethnic than their same-ethnic peers. Similarly, in Chapter 4 I found that cross-ethnic bullying relationships were not more common than same-ethnic bullying relationships.

The findings of these chapters suggest that ethnic boundaries are more important for youth's positive peer relationships than for their negative peer relationships. Although youth from different ethnic groups may vary in the extent to which they have negative peer relationships (Tolsma et al., 2013), they do not differentiate these relationships based on whether their peers are from the same or from a different ethnic background. Moreover, these findings suggest that youth's preferences regarding their positive and negative interethnic ties are not mirror images of each other and that youth's preferences for whom they like or dislike is not mirrored.

These findings do not support arguments based on social identity theory stating that in order to achieve a positive social identity, which is closely linked to individual's group membership, individuals favor their in-group and devaluate out-groups (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Instead, these findings are in line with research arguing that in-group favoritism may result in the absence of relationships, both positive and negative, between ethnic groups (Brewer, 1999; Phinney et al., 2007; Tajfel, 1982).

One explanation could be that, in light of youth's goal pursuit, cross-ethnic peers are less important for youth's social goals than same-ethnic peers. Peers are youth's main source for feeling connected and achieving status (Hawley, 2003; Oldehinkel, Rosmalen, Veenstra, Dijkstra, & Ormel, 2007), but not all peers are equally important for youth's goal pursuit. Especially in-group peers, such as same-ethnic peers, may be important sources of feelings of connectedness and status (Dijkstra et al., 2007). Youth's positive peer relationships are especially important for their goal pursuit. Consequently, whereas youth will be selective in their decisions regarding positive peer relationships, they will be less selective regarding negative peer relationships. Thus, youth may be less likely to direct their positive peer relationships toward cross-ethnic peers but not likely to differentiate their negative peer relationships based on peers' ethnic background.
BROADER PEER NETWORK
Youth’s interethnic peer relationships in schools are embedded in the larger peer network. Consequently, the role of ethnicity in youth’s peer relationship choices as described in the previous section may be affected by multiple social processes within this network at the same time. For example, whether youth befriended a certain peer may depend not only on whether the peer is same- or cross-ethnic, but also on whether they share an already established friend (Echols & Graham, 2018). In this dissertation, I investigated the influence of the interplay between multiple peer relationships and multidimensional similarity on youth’s interethnic peer relationships.

In Chapters 2 and 4 I examined whether youth’s same- and cross-ethnic peer relationships, both positive and negative, were related to their involvement in other peer relationships. On youth’s positive interethnic peer relationships, I found in Chapter 2 that being aggressive toward a specific ethnic group was related to having more friends from other ethnic groups, indicating that aggression might reinforce ethnic boundaries in adolescents’ friendships. Nevertheless, I found this relation irrespective of the ethnic background of the aggressor. For example, a Turkish adolescent who was aggressive toward Turkish peers was not found to be less likely to be befriended by Dutch classmates than Dutch adolescents who were aggressive toward Turkish peers. Although the initial finding that aggression toward a specific group was related to being befriended by other groups might indicate that aggression reinforces ethnic boundaries in adolescents’ friendships, this latter finding might suggest that aggression could also be able to diminish ethnic boundaries in adolescents’ friendships. Similarly, in Chapter 4 I found that children’s position in the bullying network affected the extent to which ethnicity influences children’s defending relationships by making ethnic boundaries less important when children targeted the same victims. When peers bullied the same classmates, same-ethnic defending relationships were not found to be more likely than cross-ethnic defending relationships, which was the case when peers did not bully the same classmates. In contrast, in Chapter 4 I also found that children’s position as victims of the same bullies did not affect ethnic boundaries in defending relationships. Same-ethnic children were more likely to defend each other than cross-ethnic children, irrespective of whether they were bullied by the same classmates or not. Thus, being a bully of the same victims enabled youth to cross ethnic boundaries in positive peer relationships, but being a victim of the same bullies did not.

Regarding youth’s negative interethnic peer relationships, I showed in Chapter 2 that being aggressive toward classmates from a specific ethnic group was related to being rejected by that group, but not by classmates from other ethnic groups. Whereas youth who have the same ethnic background as the victim may be threatened by the aggressor’s behavior, classmates from other ethnic groups are not and therefore did not reject these aggressors. Moreover, youth rejected aggressors of their same-ethnic peers irrespective of whether the aggressor was same- or cross-ethnic. That means, adolescents’ aggressive behavior related to the extent to which they were rejected in general, but aggression did
not relate to the role of ethnicity in rejection.

In Chapter 4, I also examined the role of multidimensional similarity on youth's interethnic defending relationships, examining how similarity in multiple dimensions influence individuals' relationships at the same time. Specifically, I examined how similarity in sex and being in the same classroom affected the role of ethnic homophily in children's defending relationships. I found that whereas cross-ethnic peers from different classrooms were less likely to defend each other than same-ethnic peers from different classrooms, within classrooms same- and cross-ethnic defending was equally likely. Ethnic boundaries were thus less prominent in relationships within classrooms than between classrooms. Although sex-similarity affected the likelihood of defending in general, that is, boys (girls) were more likely to defend other boys (girls), it did not affect ethnic boundaries. Cross-ethnic peers were less likely to defend each other than same-ethnic peers, irrespective of whether peers were same-sex or not.

Overall, the findings in this dissertation showed that the broader peer network in which youth’s peer relationships occur affects and relates to the decisions they make regarding their interethnic peer relationships, especially for positive interethnic peer relationships. This means that the role of ethnicity in the formation of peer relationships is moderated by a number of factors. Although ethnicity seems to be a strong fault line in youth’s positive peer relationships, other processes, such as the interplay with negative relationships or similarity in other dimensions (being in the same classroom), affected the impact of this fault line on youth’s relationship choices. In this dissertation, I found that these other processes, such as being in the same classroom or sharing victims, enabled youth to cross ethnic boundaries in their positive peer relationships.

GROUP DIFFERENCES
Whereas previous research on interethnic peer relationships frequently treated ethnic minority groups as a homogeneous group (Jennissen et al., 2018), ethnic groups may differ in their peer relationships (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). Some ethnic groups are expected to be affiliated more closely than others. More perceived cultural closeness or similarity between groups is associated with more positive intergroup attitudes, less discrimination, and more integration (Beiser et al., 2015; Berry, 2003; Lundborg, 2013; Schiefer et al., 2012; Sortheix & Lönnqvist, 2015). In this dissertation, I focused specifically on differences between minority immigrant groups in their relation to the Dutch societal majority group.

In Chapters 2 and 5, I distinguished between Turkish, Moroccan, and Surinamese immigrant adolescents and their Dutch societal majority peers. I found clear differences in their initial interethnic peer relationships and attitudes. In Chapter 2, I found that Dutch adolescents preferred to be friends with Dutch peers over Turkish or Moroccan peers and vice versa. Similarly, Surinamese adolescents were more likely to be befriended by Surinamese peers than Dutch adolescents. I did not find this the other way around. That is, I did not find that Dutch adolescents were more likely to be befriended by Dutch peers.
than Surinamese adolescents. In Chapter 5, I found that Turkish and Moroccan adolescents were less positive about Dutch than Surinamese adolescents, and that Dutch majority adolescents, in turn, had the least favorable attitudes toward Moroccans, followed by Turkish, Dutch adolescents were least negative about Surinamese.

In the Dutch context, Surinamese immigrants are culturally closer to the societal majority because most of them speak Dutch from origin and share similar religious beliefs as most Dutch majority group members. In contrast, Turkish and Moroccan immigrants' language, religion, and cultural traditions differ more from the Dutch culture. With this smaller cultural distance, Surinamese and Dutch youth are more likely to connect to and be positive about each other, than Turkish and Dutch, and Moroccan and Dutch youth.

Moreover, in this dissertation I showed that ethnic groups do not only differ in their interethnic relationships and attitudes, but also in the mechanisms underlying these relationships and attitudes. Specifically, I found that for culturally distant groups, in this case Turkish and Moroccans versus Dutch, the mechanisms underlying their relationships and attitudes toward their Dutch majority peers reflect typical in-group and out-group processes. For example, in Chapter 5 Surinamese adolescents with Dutch classmates were more positive about Dutch than Surinamese adolescents without Dutch classmates, but having Dutch friends was not found to be related to more positive attitudes. This might be due to the initially positive attitudes Surinamese adolescents hold toward Dutch. In contrast, having Dutch friends was related to more positive attitudes toward Dutch for Turkish over and above the effect of having Dutch classmates. This relates to previous research showing that having out-group friends only improved out-group attitudes for youth with initially relatively unfavorable attitudes (Munniksma et al., 2013). This suggests that youth's interethnic relationships with peers from culturally distant groups, such as Turkish and Moroccan peers for Dutch youth, may cross clearer ethnic boundaries than their peer relationships with peers from culturally less distant groups and thus also have a stronger impact on the interethnic attitudes towards the respective outgroup.

### 6.2 SOCIAL NETWORK PERSPECTIVE IN INTERETHNIC PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout this dissertation, I approached interethnic peer relationships from a social network perspective, meaning that relationships were studied by investigating who is related to whom. A social network perspective on interethnic peer relationships helps to deepen our understanding of these relationships by providing more detailed and precise information on youth’s relationships and by accounting for the interdependence of individuals and their relationships in a network. Without social network data and analysis, I would not have been able to find, for example, that bullying the same classmates enabled cross-ethnic peers to form positive ties and cross ethnic boundaries. Also, social network analysis enabled me to investigate youth’s peer relationships while controlling for other social mechanisms that influence youth's decisions in their relationships, such
as reciprocity and transitivity. It is suggested that ethnic homophily in positive peer relationships may be the by-product of the availability of ethnically diverse peers and other social mechanisms, such as sex or SES homophily (Currarini et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2014a; Stark & Flache, 2012). Using social network analysis in Chapter 4, I was able to show that, even after controlling for mechanisms such as sex homophily and opportunity structure, youth tend to prefer affiliating with same-ethnic peers over cross-ethnic peers.

Furthermore, it was relevant to know not only whether youth had interethnic peer relationships, but also specifically to whom they were related. In Chapter 2, for example, this perspective helped to find that adolescents’ aggressive behavior was related to rejection by classmates if they targeted classmates’ same-ethnic peers, but not if they targeted classmates’ cross-ethnic peers. Moreover, peer nomination data measure more precisely the actual interpersonal contact than questions measuring degree of self-reported interethnic contact, as respondents are not asked about their own or their peers’ ethnic background in relation to the peer nomination questions. For example, when asked specifically about their negative peer relationships to cross-ethnic peers, youth may tend to report lower numbers of these type of relationships, whereas peer nomination data, which are only in a later stage linked to their ethnicity, are not subject to such social desirability. The findings in this dissertation therefore highlight that even when respondents report their negative peer relationships without being subject to social desirability concerning peers’ ethnic background, ethnic fault lines did not seem to affect their negative peer relationships.

### 6.3 Scientific Implications and Directions for Future Research

With this dissertation, I aimed to add to the literature in three ways: 1) provide a more comprehensive perspective on interethnic peer relationships by examining the role of the broader peer network in which these relationships occur, 2) approach interethnic peer relationships from a social network perspective, and 3) differentiate between multiple ethnic groups. Regarding the first aim, the results showed that there is more to youth’s interethnic peer relationships than just their ethnicity. By taking into account the broader peer network in schools and other peer characteristics, I showed that the role of ethnicity in the formation of peer relationships is moderated by a number of social processes in the peer network, such as their involvement in bullying or aggression. Moreover, with this dissertation I added to the comprehensive perspective on interethnic peer relationships by investigating not only positive but also negative peer relationships.

Nevertheless, there is still a lot unknown about the broader peer network in which these interethnic peer relationships occur as well as the influence of ethnic diversity on youth’s negative interethnic peer relationships. For example, why do similarities in different dimensions, in this case sex and being in the same classroom, differ in the extent to which they influence ethnic boundaries in peer relationships? Also, which other
mechanisms in the peer network in schools than those investigated in this dissertation benefit youth’s interethnic peer relationships? For example, how do seating arrangements in classrooms affect ethnic boundaries in youth’s positive peer relationships? Moreover, are ethnic fault lines absent in all negative peer relationships, or do negative peer relationships differ to the extent to which they are influenced by ethnic diversity (see Wittek, Kroneberg, & Lämmermann, 2019)? By touching upon a subset of social mechanisms within the broader peer network which influence youth’s positive and negative interethnic peer relationships, this dissertation provided a first step to gain a more comprehensive perspective of these peer relationships.

Furthermore, taking a social network perspective enabled me to adequately examine the influence of the complex broader peer network on youth’s interethnic peer relationships. In this dissertation I showed that by looking at ethnicity in interethnic peer relationships alone and by focusing on youth’s self-reports only, scholars may overlook important social mechanisms underlying these relationships. Recently, more researchers have acknowledged the benefits of using social network data and methods for studying interethnic peer relationships (e.g., Kisfalusi et al., 2018; Munnikisma et al., 2013; Wittek et al., 2019; Wölfer et al., 2017). In line with the findings from this dissertation, these recent studies have shown the importance of taking into account the interdependence of individuals and their relationships in a network. It has, for example, been shown that whether cross-ethnic peers become friends partially depends on whether they already share a friend (Echols & Graham, 2018), which could only be discovered using social network data. Yet, a social network approach on interethnic peer relationships remains understudied, providing multiple avenues for further research into the influence of ethnic diversity on youth’s peer relationships.

By refraining from combining ethnic minorities into one group and by comparing the separate groups whenever possible, this dissertation provided insights into the differences between ethnic groups. I was able to show that groups differ in their interethnic peer relationships as well as the social mechanisms underlying these peer relationships. This suggests that when combining groups, important nuances may be overlooked. Future research would therefore benefit, whenever possible, from differentiating between ethnic groups. An avenue for future research would be to consider why youth from ethnic groups differ in their peer relationships and whether this is indeed related to cultural differences. In Chapter 5 I proposed that in addition to cultural distance, negative media attention (Bouabid, 2016) may play a critical role in youth’s attitudes toward a particular immigrant group. Negative media attention to high crime rates concerning individuals with a Moroccan background may strengthen some of the negative stereotypes about all Moroccans.

A possible approach to examine why ethnically diverse peers differ in their interethnic peer relationships could be to investigate youth’s interethnic peer relationships across multiple contexts and ethnic groups. Do youth from different ethnic groups in another context differ in the same way as found in this dissertation, that is, by
cultural distance? For example, how do ethnic groups in a country like the US, in which the distinction between ‘native’ inhabitants and immigrants is less clear, differ in their peer relationships (see Wimmer & Lewis, 2010)?

Moreover, future studies could investigate how these differences change across generations of immigrants. Although it could be argued that language and cultural capital are likely pose less challenges to second- and third-generation immigrant youth as they do for first-generation immigrants, I found in Chapter 5 that also second- and third-generation immigrant youth have a preference for their same-ethnic peers over peers from the societal majority group. It remains unclear, however, whether these preferences are weaker than for first-generation immigrants because this was not investigated in this dissertation. Similarly, assuming that the salience of youth’s immigrant background in their social norms and values decreases, future studies could investigate whether differences between Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese youth’s relationships to the societal majority are smaller for third-generation immigrant youth compared to first- and second-generation immigrants. Furthermore, what role does youth’s ethnic-racial identity play in their interethnic peer relationships? Previous research has shown that ethnic homophily is related to youth’s identification with the ethnic group (Leszczensky et al., 2019). Youth born in the host society, however, are likely to identify both with their country of origin and with the host society, called identity multiplicity or complexity (Verkuyten, Wiley, Deaux, & Fleischmann, 2019). How does this influence their interethnic peer relationships?

6.4 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Insights from this dissertation into how the broader peer network in schools influences youth’s decisions on their interethnic peer relationships may be used for practical purposes as well. Despite the finding that youth generally prefer to affiliate with same-ethnic peers over cross-ethnic peers, I also found that there are mechanisms fostering the formation of cross-ethnic peer relationships. Specifically, my findings suggested that awareness of additional similarities, such as similarity in position in the bullying network, between youth of different ethnic backgrounds can be beneficial for positive cross-ethnic relationships. This finding is in line with the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989) which argues that highlighting similarities between peers of different ethnic groups should improve peers’ attitudes toward and relationships with each other. Interventions in schools aiming to promote intergroup contact may therefore benefit from focusing on interests or attributes that cross-ethnic youth have in common in order to diminish youth’s preferences for same-ethnic peers (Stark & Flache, 2012).

Whereas it has been proposed that ethnic diversity may result in discrimination and prejudice, in this dissertation I also show that diversity in school may benefit youth’s interethnic peer relationships and attitudes. Having students from multiple ethnic backgrounds in classrooms is likely to benefit intergroup attitudes. Nevertheless, in
Chapter 5 I also found that, especially for youth with initially negative attitudes, ethnic diversity may not be enough to develop more positive attitudes. Actively promoting cross-group friendships, for example by mixing students in cooperative learning tasks, and actively supporting and creating opportunities for intergroup contact (Berger et al., 2018; Brenick et al., 2018; Gaias et al., 2018), may be necessary to promote positive intergroup contact and attitudes in diverse settings.

6.5 A PERSPECTIVE ON ETHNIC INTEGRATION IN DUTCH SCHOOLS

At the beginning of 2019, 27% of youth under the age of fifteen in the Netherlands had a migration background (Statistics Netherlands, 2019b). Consequently, the issue of integration in schools becomes more prominent. Teachers have indicated that, especially in secondary schools, the difficulties with integration and increasing segregation in society are also reflected in schools (Van Grinsven, Vander Woud, & Elphick, 2017). The integration of migrant youth entails multiple aspects, such as how well they are doing in school, the extent to which they get along with their societal majority peers and the extent to which they adapt to the societal majority’s norms and values.

Statistics show that, compared to Dutch majority youth, youth with a migration background seem to do less well in school. Secondary schools in the Dutch school system are divided into three educational tracks and the decision on which level students go to depends largely on the advice of teachers in elementary school. Students with a non-western background are more likely to go to the lowest educational track, whereas students with a Dutch background are equally likely to go to the lowest educational track as the two highest tracks (Statistics Netherlands, 2018a). Similarly, in all tracks of secondary school, students with a migration background are less likely to graduate and more likely to drop out of school than students with a Dutch background (Statistics Netherlands, 2018a). Regarding immigrant youth’s social integration in schools, studies in the Dutch context find that ethnic segregation remains a persistent characteristic of youth’s social relationships (Fortuin et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2014a; Stark & Flache, 2012). Similarly, in this dissertation, I found that youth have a clear preference for affiliating with same-ethnic peers over cross-ethnic peers. These findings provide a negative perspective on the influence of ethnic diversity on integration in schools.

Nevertheless, there are also statistics showing a more positive view on integration in schools. For example, youth with a migration background are more likely to go to the two highest educational tracks compared to previous years. For example, in 2017, almost one third of the Moroccan students went to the two highest tracks, whereas in 2005, this was only one fifth (Statistics Netherlands, 2018a). Furthermore, migrant students’ graduation grades are overall similar to those of students with a Dutch background (Statistics Netherlands, 2018a).

In this dissertation, I found that although youth have a preference for affiliating with same-ethnic peers, they also have cross-ethnic peer relationships. Furthermore, I found that several mechanisms, such as interethnic exposure in the classroom and
multidimensional similarity, facilitate the formation of these relationships. Moreover, youth’s negative peer relationships are generally not influenced by ethnic fault lines. These findings and statistics show that, although there is a lot to gain in immigrant youth’s integration in Dutch schools, there are also positive aspects and developments to be noted about youth’s integration in schools.

Although in this dissertation I focused specifically on the context of the Netherlands, my findings regarding the influence of ethnic diversity on youth’s integration in schools may apply to other countries dealing with growing ethnically diverse school populations as well. Just as ethnic homophily in youth’s positive peer relationships is found across countries (Boda & Néray, 2015; Fortuin et al., 2014; Leszczensky & Pink, 2015; Stark & Flache, 2012), the absence of ethnic boundaries in negative peer relationships may be universal. Although the broader peer network is likely to influence youth’s interethnic peer relationships across contexts, the extent to which specific mechanisms within the broader peer network are influential may differ. For example, the diminishing effect of classroom placement on ethnic boundaries in youth’s positive peer relationships that I found in the Dutch context may be absent in an educational system in which youth are not placed in the same classroom throughout the school year and change classrooms more regularly. Although most findings in this dissertation may be applicable to other countries as well, contextual differences, especially differences in the educational system, should be taken into account.

6.6 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Overall, the findings from this dissertation provided a comprehensive perspective on youth’s interethnic peer relationships by focusing on the broader peer network in which these relationships occur as well as by considering differences between ethnic groups. Generally, the role of ethnicity in the formation of peer relationships was found to be moderated by a number of factors. Consequently, in this dissertation I showed the importance of considering how multiple social mechanisms influence youth’s choices regarding their interethnic peer relationships at the same time.

The question raised in the introduction of this dissertation was whether growing ethnic diversity in schools may, like in the society at large, be reflected in tensions between ethnic groups, that is, may give rise to the possibility that ethnically diverse classrooms become clashrooms. In this dissertation I provided no evidence for such tensions. Although youth generally preferred to associate with same-ethnic peers over cross-ethnic peers, they did not differentiate in terms of ethnicity in their negative relationships with peers. Negative peer relationships, such as rejection or bullying, were not found to be more likely between cross-ethnic peers than between same-ethnic peers. Still, the limited number of positive cross-ethnic peer relationships hinders opportunities for interethnic contact to decrease youth’s prejudice and benefit their cross-ethnic attitudes. In this dissertation I have shown that a deeper understanding of the broader peer network in schools can be used to foster youth to cross ethnic boundaries in their
peer relationships and prevent the development of *clashrooms*. At the same time, I have demonstrated that in order to fulfill this promise, many open questions need to be answered by future research into interethnic peer networks in schools.