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Friendships Across Race, Ethnicity, and Sexual Orientation

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Racial and ethnic diversity in the United States is rapidly increasing. By 2043, non-Hispanic Whites will be a minority population in the United States (Lichter, 2013). Simultaneously, awareness of diversity concerning sexual orientation become more normative since the legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States in 2015. These changes have profound implications for the sociocultural barriers that separate racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation groups and provide a unique opportunity for the development of friendship across these identities. It is likely that people's desire and ability to form cross-race, ethnic, and sexual orientation friendships will be critical to motivate a transition to a more open and inclusive society. Thus, our knowledge of friendships across these differences will become increasingly important.

In this chapter, we present a selective review of research on friendships across the identities of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. First, barriers to and facilitators of these friendships are described. Next, research on cross-race, ethnic, and sexual orientation friendship across the lifespan is reviewed. The role of gender is also discussed as an important variable affecting cross-identity friendships. Directions for future research are presented as well.

"Crossing the Line" in Friendship

Friendships in the United States typically occur between individuals that are of similar race and ethnicity, as well as homogeneous in terms of age, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and culture (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). They also tend to be based on propinquity, or physical or psychological proximity. This means that cross-race/ethnic friendships require individuals to "cross the color line," that is, to bridge the geographical, physical, or psychological gap between

the groups. Likewise, friendship across sexual orientation requires a metaphorical "crossing of the line" to step over the social and psychological boundary created by homophobia and heterosexism.

Barriers to Friendship Across Race, Ethnicity, and Sexual Orientation

Many barriers impede friendships across race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, including segregation of neighborhoods and schools, prejudice, the expectation that the minority person must assimilate into the majority culture, lack of trust, and peer influences (Rose, 2012).

Segregation

The term "color line" refers to laws mandating the racial segregation of Blacks and Native Americans from Whites and from each other that were enacted in the United States from the colonial period until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Although an official color line between Whites and those of other races no longer exists today, physical and social segregation persists. Individuals are inclined to form relationships with others who share the same social network (Quillian & Campbell, 2003). Such networks frequently are based in neighborhoods, which tend to be segregated even in racially mixed cities (Cable, 2013), and in schools and workplaces, which tend to be stratified by both race/ethnicity and social class (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).

There is no parallel legal precedent in the United States for the segregation of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered (LGBT) people from heterosexuals. However, openly LGBT people as identified by the 2010 US Census tend to congregate in urban areas (O'Connor, 2013). The cities with the highest population of same-sex couples were Ft. Lauderdale, Seattle, San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Portland, Maine, and some specific neighborhoods within these cities are known to have a higher concentration of LGBT people (e.g., Wilton Manors in Ft. Lauderdale and the Castro District of San Francisco). If or how this geographic clustering of LGBT people affects cross-orientation friendship has not been studied to date.

Prejudice

Prejudice against people of other races, ethnicities, or sexual orientation is likely to inhibit the formation of friendship across difference. Prejudices that many White people hold toward those of other races/ethnicities may impede the development of cross-race friendships even when these people live, go to school, or work together. Recent research indicated that a majority of Whites expressed racial bias against Black people (Associated Press, 2012). Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about Black people and how

well they thought certain words, such as "friendly," "hardworking," "violent," and "lazy," described Blacks and Whites. About 51% of Americans expressed explicit anti-Black attitudes in response to these questions.

Negative sentiments of Whites toward Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans are common in the United States, too. In an Associated Press survey done in 2011, 52% of non-Hispanic Whites expressed anti-Hispanic attitudes. One in four Americans surveyed in 2001 had very negative attitudes toward Asian Americans as well. Native Americans still are portrayed in television and movies only as historic figures, perpetuating false—often romanticized—images among non-Natives. The use of Indian mascots for professional sports teams also contributes to the trivializing of Native American cultures (Chaney, Burke, & Burkley, 2011). In sum, these findings indicate that most White Americans are racially prejudiced whether they recognize those feelings or not. White people's beliefs regarding how minorities evaluate them also affect interracial friendships. Research indicates that Whites believe racial minorities evaluate them as being prejudiced, closed minded, arrogant, and selfish (e.g., Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). This may lead White people to avoid interracial contact (Shelton & Richeson, 2005).

Less is known about the prejudices of racial/ethnic minorities toward each other and how that might affect cross-race/ethnic friendships. Confounding the study of cross-race/ethnic friendships even further is the fact that the panethnic terms "Asian" and "Hispanic" (or "Latino") subsume a variety of races and ethnicities (US Census Bureau, 2011). Asian Americans have a common race, but have highly diverse religions, ethnic backgrounds, and languages. Hispanics often report different racial identifications, but share the common language of Spanish and are predominantly Catholic (Kao & Joyner, 2006). As assessed by the 2010 US Census, more than half of the Hispanic population identified as White and no other race (about 27 million), about 40% classified themselves as "other race" or "two or more races," and less than 5% described themselves as only Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (US Census Bureau, 2011).

In terms of sexual orientation, until recently, a majority of heterosexuals exhibited prejudice, or negative attitudes toward LGBT people. From the 1970s until 1993, more than two-thirds of the public considered homosexuality to be "always wrong" as measured by the ongoing General Social Survey (GSS; Herek & McLemore, 2013). By 2010, most respondents said same-sex sexual relations are "never wrong" or wrong "only sometimes." Negative attitudes are more likely to be expressed by heterosexuals who are men, older, or less educated, or who live in rural areas, the Midwest or the southern United States (Herek & McLemore, 2013).

Expectation of Assimilation

The dominant group's expectation for the minority person to assimilate into their social world also poses a barrier to friendship. For example, Asian American women described being accepted as friends into White women's social circles only after

they assimilated into and shared the norms, values, and attitudes of the White group (Serafica, Weng, & Kim, 2000). The norm of heterosexuality likewise means that many heterosexuals expect lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered people to listen to stories about their spouses or families or endorse their family structures, but do not reciprocate an interest in LGBT lifestyles and do not recognize the effort it takes for them to manage their identity in each new interaction. On an almost daily basis, LGBT people are going to encounter new people who do not know their sexual orientation (e.g., the insurance salesman, the doctor, the new neighbors). This creates considerable interactional difficulty for LGBT individuals and may cause them to avoid or limit social interactions with heterosexuals.

Trust

Friends are expected to be trustworthy as well as considerate, affectionate, self-disclosing, and companionable. Failing to meet these expectations can impair friendship (Argyle & Henderson, 1984). Trust may be more difficult to establish in cross-race/ethnic friendships, especially if the minority person anticipates that Whites will be prejudiced, deny that racism exists, treat them as subordinate or inferior, or expect them to assimilate into White culture. Lack of trust may also occur due to racial microaggressions toward the minority group that are unconsciously expressed by the White or majority-group person. Microaggressions are "commonplace verbal or behavioral indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 278). For instance, a White person might ask an Asian American, "Where are you from?" The question implies that the Asian American must be foreign, not American. The concept of microaggressions has been extended to include the discriminatory experiences of other minority groups such as women, LGBT people, and the disabled (e.g., Sue, 2010). Any one incident may not seem significant, but multiple daily experiences with microaggressions have long-term negative effects such as self-doubt, anxiety, helplessness, fear, diminished self-esteem, and feelings of isolation. Individuals with multiple minority identities (e.g., a Black lesbian woman), may experience a compounding effect of microaggressions (Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011), which could cause them, in turn, to avoid interactions with majority group members.

Trust also may be affected by different cultural norms. For instance, Chinese undergraduates in Asian countries, compared with undergraduates in the United States, are more constrained in terms of emotional expression and tend to self-disclose less to their friends across various topics, such as work or opinions (Chen, 1995). Within the United States, Black and Asian women have been found to have lower expectations for emotional support in friendship than White women (Samter, Whaley, Mortenson, & Burleson, 1997). These different cultural expectations for self-disclosure or emotional support could create mistrust or discomfort in cross-race/ethnic friendships.

Establishing trust is also an issue in friendships across sexual orientation. The coming-out process continues to occur throughout the life span—it is not a one-time event. All LGBT individuals have to make decisions regarding self-disclosure with every new social interaction throughout life. Anxiety also may affect trust in interactions across race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Majority group members may feel anxious because they have limited information or contact with minority group members. Minority group members may be anxious because they are wary about possible bias being expressed by members of the majority group. When people are anxious, they may respond with distancing nonverbal behaviors, such as using closed posture or failing to maintain eye contact, which can easily be misinterpreted by members of the other group as a sign of disinterest or disregard.

Peer Influences

Racial integration in schools appears to facilitate cross-race friendships in the early grades but less so among adolescents. For example, across 350 elementary schools, 92% of children reported having cross-race/ethnic friends (Lee, Howes, & Chamberlain, 2007). Patchen (1982) found that cross-race peers from 12 mixed-race schools often did school work together, had friendly talks, and walked together, but interracial contact outside of the school setting was much less frequent. Older children tend to view same-race peers as having both higher status and as being more attractive, leading them to prefer same-race friends (Fishbein, 2002).

In terms of sexual orientation, peer influences play a particularly important role for sexual minority youth. Given that many LGBT youth are estranged from or have not disclosed their sexual orientation to their families, they may rely greatly on their friends for social support. However, peer influences concerning cross-sexual orientation may be at their most negative in adolescence. Rivers, Duncan, and Besag (2007) reported that over 1.6 million public school students are bullied because of either actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Facilitators of Friendship Across Race, Ethnicity, and Sexual Orientation

Three facilitators of friendship across race are also applicable to friendships across ethnicity and sexual orientation: contact, transformative experiences, and becoming an ally (Rose, 2012).

Contact

Contact between members of different races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations is a prerequisite for the development of cross-identity friendships (Jones, Dovidio, & Vietze, 2014). The contact hypothesis proposed by Allport (1954) has been well supported by numerous studies showing that contact reduces prejudice between groups provided that the group members have equal status, common goals,

cooperation, and the support of relevant authorities. For instance, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of 515 studies examining interracial contact that included studies of all age ranges from childhood to adulthood. They concluded that greater intergroup contact is associated with less prejudice even if the conditions for the interaction were not optimal (e.g., the individuals or groups were not of equal status). Furthermore, cross-group friendships reduced prejudice even more than mere contact (Page-Gould, Mendoza Denton, & Tropp, 2008) and promoted self-disclosure and positive intergroup attitudes as well (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011).

Research indicates that certain conditions encourage privileged majority group members, or *in-group* members, to interact with traditionally disadvantaged minority group members, or *out-group* members. For instance, having in-group members engage in a perspective-taking task, such as writing an essay about a person in a photograph who was a member of a negatively stereotyped group, was found to increase in-group members' willingness to meet with the person in the photograph (Wang, Tai, Ku, & Galinsky, 2014). *Extended contact* that occurs via "friends of friends" also has been shown to increase racial tolerance. For example, college students who watched cross-race friends complete a task together became significantly more positive toward the racial group of the friend's friend than did students who watched a neutral or hostile cross-race interaction (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997). *Imagined contact* also may serve to facilitate positive intergroup contact and friendship. Imagined contact is the "mental stimulation of a social interaction with a member or members of an out-group category" (Crisp & Turner, 2009, p. 234). Simply imagining a particular social context can evoke a response similar to those experienced in the context itself. For instance, heterosexual men who imagined talking to a homosexual man subsequently were found to evaluate homosexual men in general more positively, and to stereotype them less, than participants who imagined an outdoor scene (Turner, Crisp, & Lambert, 2007).

Contact is more effective at improving intergroup attitudes for the privileged group than the minority or disadvantaged group. Minority group members experience contact with majority group members differently than majority group members experience contact with minority people (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). This may be partly because minority group members are better at detecting evidence of prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Richeson & Shelton, 2005) and may be mistrustful of majority group members that fail to recognize prejudice (Hall & Rose, 1996).

Transformative Experiences

Chance or deliberately sought events sometimes serve as the catalyst for an individual or group to become aware of prejudice and discrimination and spur them to challenge it. The antiracism trainer and expert Judith H. Katz (2003) described her turning point that occurred during a 6-day residential seminar that was attended

by 85% Black and Puerto Rican and 15% White participants: "For the first time in my life I found myself in a situation that was not white or Jewish dominated. I was confronted both subtly and overtly with my whiteness, my assumptions, and my values. No longer in the majority, I felt the need to seek out the support of other white people—to eat, talk, socialize, and identify with them" (p. viii). The experience of being ~~in~~ a minority and being challenged by people of color to take action to address racism was a motivating force for Katz to uncover racism within herself and to actively combat it.

Educational materials also may provide a means to facilitate transformative experiences. For example, McIntosh's (2009) description of white-skin privilege was a catalyst for Whites to more deeply understand the social role power they had based on skin color—and to dismantle it in the interest of fairness to others. White-skin privileges include (1) knowing that when civilization or culture is mentioned, it is usually about your heritage; (2) being able to be around people that look like you whenever you choose; (3) being fairly sure that if you ask to speak to the person in charge, he or she will look like you; (4) knowing that if your day is going badly, it is not because of your race (McIntosh, 2009). Self-examination or group work concerning these privileges can increase White people's awareness of their unearned social power and may be useful to motivate them to challenge inequities. Similarly, encouraging students to experience empathy and understanding for those of other races through classroom exercises can result in transformative experiences (Rose, 2012).

Becoming an Ally

Members of a dominant group that choose to become an ally of minority groups may become more attractive as a potential friend. An ally is a person who is a member of the dominant or majority group who works as an advocate with and for the oppressed population (Washington & Evans, 1991, p. 95). Katz's experience, described in the previous section, led her to become an ally. Since 1972, she and colleagues have conducted White-on-White antiracism workshops as a way to address White people's responsibility in perpetuating racism and developed a book, *White Awareness*, for facilitators working with all-White groups, (Katz, 2003).

Political activism in some cases has motivated White people to seek ways to become allies to people of color. For instance, racial segregation in the lesbian community influenced some White lesbians to engage in self-examination of their own racism as a starting point for the development of friendships with Black lesbians (Segrest, 1994). Black and White lesbian activists interviewed by Hall and Rose (1996) indicated that racial awareness was the most important criterion for forming cross-race friendships. A racially aware person was described as someone who both recognizes and values cultural differences among races, and also is able to identify and challenge the ways White people actively or passively benefit from and participate in racism.

Social organizations also can serve as allies. The proliferation of Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) has improved the social context for many LGBT youth. The GSAs are student-run clubs in schools that provide LGB youth and heterosexual students a safe place to support one other and socialize. Currently, there are over 4,000 GSA groups in high schools and colleges across the nation (Lamda Legal, n.d.). These GSAs have a positive impact on school climate and have been associated with less hostility toward LGBT youth (Walls, Kane, & Wisneski, 2010).

Friendships Across Race and Ethnicity Over the Life Span

Friends are an important source of social support for youth and provide them with opportunities to develop social skills (Nangle & Erdley, 2001). The availability of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) has provided a wealth of information about youth friendships (Bearman et al., 1997). Add Health is a large-scale, nationally representative longitudinal database that includes interviews with 20,745 adolescents in grades 7 to 12 in the United States in 1994–1995 and also includes peer network data.

One important finding from the Add Health study was that the development of cross-race/ethnic friendships depended on the level of diversity within schools. For example, Quillian and Campbell (2003) found that cross-race/ethnic friendships were more common in schools whose populations were also more diverse. Cross-race/ethnic friendships were more common between Asian and Hispanic students than between White and Black Students. Hispanic students' choice of friends reflected their racial identification: White Hispanic mostly befriended Whites and other White Hispanic students, while Black Hispanic students befriended Black and Black Hispanics students.

Hamm et al. (2005) found that socioeconomic status, as measured by parental education, was influential in the friendship choices of students from seven racially diverse public high schools. For example, White students with higher socioeconomic status were less likely to have cross-race/ethnic friendships. Way and Chen (2000) studied friendship in a racially mixed urban high school and found that most teens from low-income families reported having same-race/ethnic group friends. Kao and Joyner (2004) concluded that those who crossed race/ethnic boundaries faced more challenges; cross-race/ethnic friends engaged in fewer shared activities than same-race friends.

Very little research has examined the friendship networks of Native American youth. In one notable exception, Rees et al. (2014) used the Add Health dataset to examine school-based friendship networks of Native American adolescents and found that they reported less school connectedness and smaller social networks than White students. White youth also derived greater support and influence

from their friendships and held more socially prestigious positions in schools. Native American youth on average reported higher levels of cross-race friendships than White and Black students did. These findings may reflect the fact that Native American youth frequently did not have access to other Native American students (Rees et al., 2014).

Cross-race friendships among youth tend to occur within the context of same-sex friendships. For example, Lee et al. (2007) reported that 92% of children reported cross-race/ethnic peers and as opposed to only 11% reporting cross-gender peers. Boys tend to have friends from other racial/ethnic groups more so than girls (e.g., Lee et al., 2007). In contrast, girls' cross-race friendships tend to decline. Adolescent girls are more closely bonded with their friends than boys, tend to have fewer friends, and prefer same-race friends. In some cases, friends may reject girls who develop cross-race friendships, perhaps out of a concern that interracial dating will occur (Wilson & Russell, 1996). Hispanics girls especially experience more familial pressure to associate with peers from within their own racial/ethnic groups (Clark-Ibáňez & Felmlee, 2004).

In adulthood, cross-race/ethnic friendships are less frequent, especially among adults over age 30. About 40% of White Americans and about 25% of non-White Americans are surrounded exclusively by friends of their own race, according to an ongoing Reuters/Ipsos poll (Dunsmuir, 2013). Among a broader circle that includes acquaintances and coworkers as well as friends and relatives, the poll showed that 30% of Americans do not mix with others of a different race. Mixing with people of other races and ethnicities is more common among Hispanics, among whom only one-tenth do not have friends of a different race. Hispanics are also more likely to have a spouse or partner that is non-Hispanic. About half of Hispanics are in mixed ethnic relationships, compared with one-tenth of Whites and Blacks (Dunsmuir, 2013).

American young adults appear to be less segregated. About one-third of Americans under the age of 30 who have a partner or spouse are in a relation-ship with someone of a different race, compared to one-tenth of Americans over 30. And only one in 10 adults under 30 say no one among their families, friends, or coworkers is of a different race, less than half the rate for Americans as a whole (Dunsmuir, 2013).

Gender poses an additional level of complication to adults' cross-race/ethnic friendships, with cross-sex, cross-race friendships being more difficult to establish than same-sex friendships of any type. For example, Black male professionals inter-viewed by Wingfield (2014) faced a number of challenges to developing critical social networks and friendships in White male–dominated work settings, but were able to succeed at building relationships by bonding with White men around cultur-ally masculinized behaviors, such as shared hobbies and pastimes. The Black men also perceived that male bonding enabled them to establish favorable networks with White men more easily than White women were able to form such networks with

White men. As a result, some Black men took active measures to create interracial, cross-gender networks by befriending and bonding with White women around the parallel challenges they faced in a White male workplace (Wingfield, 2014).

In sum, although cross-race/ethnic contact has substantially increased over time, this has not led to significant increases in cross-race/ethnic friendships (Edmunds & Killen, 2009). The college campus may be the most promising environment for encouraging interracial and interethnic friendships in the future, but this will depend on whether the future demographics of the nation are reflected in the student bodies.

Friendship Across Sexual Orientation

Friendships play a significant role as a source of support for LGBT youth (Savin-Williams, 1998). As previously noted, for many youth who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, parental and familial support is not available. Coming out still has a host of negative consequences for youth, including an increased sense of isolation and elevated rates of suicidality (CDC, 2011). The risk of losing a close friend if one opts to come out often looms heavy over LGBT youth, and they have greater fears about losing friends than do heterosexual youth (Diamond & Lucas, 2004).

Gender also plays a role in LGBT same- and cross-sexual orientation friendships. For adolescent females, passionate intense same-sex friendships are quite common (e.g., Diamond & Lucas, 2004). Friendship among female adolescents often involves characteristics typically associated with heterosexual romantic relationships, including exclusivity, jealousy, companionship, and frequent nonsexual physical affection (Thompson, 2008). Therefore, lesbian and bisexual girls may be able to establish close friendships with heterosexual girls without openly expressing their sexual orientation. In contrast, gender norms for boys emphasize shared activities and are expected to be less intimate and self-disclosing. Teen boys fear being identified as feminine or homosexual if they reveal their emotions (Oransky &Marecek, 2009). Resistance to masculine gender norms (e.g., emotional stoicism) among boys appears to be stronger during the middle school years but decreases as they get older (Way et al., 2014). Thus, gender norms discourage cross-sexual orientation friendships among boys.

The benefits of cross-orientation friendships for LGBT individuals are pronounced. Having friends accept one's coming-out disclosure has a positive impact on LGBT youth. Lesbian and bisexual girls reported increased self-esteem and feelings of acceptance after disclosing their sexual orientation to a supportive heterosexual friend (Galupo & St. John, 2001).

For heterosexual youth, cross-sexual orientation friendships increasingly are associated with more positive attitudes about homosexuality and less tolerance of

unfair treatment of lesbian and gay peers (Heinze & Horn, 2009). Interestingly, Poteat, Espelage, and Koenig (2009) found that heterosexual students who attended more racially diverse schools reported being more open to attending school with lesbian and gay students. Similarly, Gastic (2012) found that although only 13% of a sample of racially diverse urban heterosexual youth reported having a gay or lesbian friend, almost 62% reported that they would stay friends with an openly gay or lesbian peer.

In adulthood, barriers exist to adult cross-sexual orientation friendships that make them more difficult to establish but that also point to their importance as an "intentional family" for LGBT people. Weinstock and Bond (2000) found that each of the young, mostly White women (23 lesbians and 24 heterosexuals) in their sample had at least one close lesbian-heterosexual woman friendship. The challenges they faced included anxiety about sexual attraction to the friend, difficulty understanding the other's reality, the heterosexual friend's "privilege," and mislabeling of the friendships as sexual by others. Benefits included new perspectives that were gained from learning about the other's life, greater awareness of heterosexism and support for coming out, and the opportunity to examine one's own sexuality.

Bisexual women's and lesbians' friendships with heterosexual women were found by Galupo (2007) to provide support and help when needed. However, bisexual women had more cross-orientation friends than lesbians, the bisexual-heterosexual friends were more integrated into each other's social lives, and their dynamic tended to shift depending on the sex of the bisexual woman's partner. Lesbian-heterosexual friendships more often included a feminist or racial political dimension, and the lesbian's identity was more likely to be explicitly acknowledged (Galupo, 2007).

Research on gay men's cross-sexual orientation friendships has focused mostly on their friendships with heterosexual women. Russell, DelPriore, Butterfield, and Hill (2013) hypothesized that friendships between gay men and heterosexual women had potential benefits related to the trustworthiness of the mating advice that the friend could offer. Results from research using an experimental design indicated that straight women perceived mating advice from gay men as being more trustworthy than advice from a straight man or woman. Similarly, gay men perceived the mating advice of straight women to be more trustworthy than that of a lesbian or gay man.

Transgender friendships that bridge gender identity and/or sexual orientation have similar benefits to those described earlier for LGBT cross-orientation friendships (Galupo et al., 2014). Benefits included the following: helps me feel normal or "pass" as my identified gender; validation from the privileged/dominant group; larger population provides more opportunities for friendship; offers more perspectives; trans- issues do not dominate the conversation; and gives me the opportunity to educate about transgender experience.

In sum, cross-sexual orientation friendships are being more openly discussed, sought, and studied, and it is likely that they will become more common in the

future, particularly among young people. Nearly 40% of incoming college students at a large state university indicated that they might like to have a lesbian or gay friend, despite expectations of discomfort (Mohr & Sedlacek, 2000).

Future Directions for Research

Several directions for future research are suggested by the current review. Research to identify naturally occurring facilitators of and barriers to cross-identity friendships, such as might occur in schools, on college campuses, and in the workplace, would expand our understanding of how such friendships are formed. Qualitative research may be especially useful to examine the developmental course of such friendships, including forming, maintaining, and ending them. We know little about how barriers impact the development and quality of friendships. Qualitative methodology can offer opportunities to obtain unexpected information and provide a more complex understanding of these important constructs.

Future research overall also needs to be more inclusive of minority groups with regard to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. There remains a clear need for more nuanced examinations of friendships within and among ethnic minority groups. Future friendship research should move away from broad cross-group comparisons (e.g., comparing Whites and/or heterosexual groups with other nonmajority groups) and the inherent assumptions involved in those types of comparisons (e.g., a focus on deficits among minority groups in comparison with Whites/heterosexuals). The compounding effects of multiple minority status, as well as socioeconomic status, should be central to any future research as well.

More precise measures in future research for self-classifications of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation would allow differences in racial preferences or prejudices within racial and ethnic groups to be identified. For example, Kao and Joyner (2006) found that, as compared with Hispanics, students of Asian descent were more likely to befriend someone from within their own panethnic group (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.). Understanding such differences is critical in gaining a better understanding of individual realities (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez, & Velasco, 2012). There is also wide variation in how sexual orientation is measured, particularly among youth. Many youth who question their sexual orientation do not identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual until later in life, or not at all (Savin-Williams, 2005).

Moreover, future research with immigrant samples should also include acculturation-related variables such ethnic identity, racial identity, biculturalism, generational status, acculturation stress, language preferences, and proficiency. The growing popularity of panethnic terms, while expedient, may mask important intra-group differences that, if explored, could lead to a greater understanding of important cultural dynamics involved in friendship selection.

How college students interact across race and ethnicity is becoming more important to understand in light of current demographic changes and the increasing segregation of K-12 schools (Orfield & Lee, 2006). Young adults spend a significant amount of time in cross-racial interactions and cross-racial friendships during the college years (Saenz, 2010). These interactions provide insights into the dynamics of cross-race friendships as they occur throughout the life course. Current findings suggest that engaging with diversity involves risks and often may be uncomfortable, but that it ultimately proves to be beneficial (Bowman & Brandenburger, 2012).

In addition, most research on friendship does not typically consider sexual orientation or gender identity (Logan, 2013). Expanding our understanding of friendships among youth of diverse backgrounds and sexual orientations is critical. The role of friendships is quite influential for at-risk youth and is particularly important when youth have limited resources at home (Vaquera, 2009).

Conclusion

The value of friendships across race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation will continue to grow as the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States changes and as diverse sexual orientations become more acceptable. Hopefully, the positive effects of such relationships will begin to be recognized publicly. Some favorable representations already may be having an effect. Recent television shows have begun to provide more visibility on the topic of cross-race, cross-sexual orientation friendships among youth (e.g., *Glee, Faking it, Degrassi, Skins*, and *Pretty Little Liars*). The television show *Glee* (2009–present), depicting a racially and sexually diverse high school glee club, has become a pop culture phenomenon in the United States. The show is groundbreaking in its positive portrayal of LGBT relations with heterosexual peers within the glee club.

In conclusion, cross-race, ethnic, and sexual orientation friendships are likely to be increasingly important in the United States and internationally, as awareness of cultural diversity expands. As Martin Luther King affirmed, "Our loyalties must transcend our race, our tribe, our class and our nation" (King, 1967).

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