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"WE ARE HUMAN BEINGS"
A STUDY ON FRIENDSHIP AND ETHNICITY
IN A FINNISH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

ABSTRACT

Finland has traditionally been considered a rather homogeneous country: only about one per cent out of the population is formed by persons with non-Finnish origins. As a consequence, ethnic relations have not been studied much in Finland, and even less do we find research on children's ethnic relations. This research was aimed at studying friendship and ethnicity in a Finnish elementary school classroom. The methods used were sociometric questionnaire, essays written by children as well as thematic interviews. The researcher participated in classroom activities over a period of two weeks during which the data was collected. Research subjects (N=27) were two teachers (the regular classroom teacher and the sports teacher) as well as the 25 pupils of the classroom, nine to ten years of age, including one Estonian boy, one Estonian girl, ten Finnish boys, nine Finnish girls, two Russian girls, one Somali girl and one Vietnamese girl.

The respondents did not give explicitly any importance to ethnicity in friendship. They reported mainly that friends should be nice and helpful, and that they should not bully others. However, the sociometric data revealed that there was an ethnic cleavage in the classroom: four non-Finnish girls and one Finnish girl formed a clear friendship clique with no reciprocal friendship choices with other girls. Only the Somali girl was left outside the clique. Nevertheless, the existence of the ethnic cleavage does not mean that children would be prejudiced; rather, situational and practical factors such as having common Finnish lessons and being new pupils in the class may have contributed greatly to this kind of friendship structure.

When it comes to the class dynamics in terms of attraction and rejection, the sociometric data did not reveal any clear patterns with regard to ethnicity. Even though non-Finnish children were on the average clearly less popular than the Finnish, there were individual differences. For example, the Vietnamese girl was one of the most popular pupils in the class whereas the Somali girl was by far the least liked. Nevertheless, we should not make too hasty conclusions: the Somali girl felt herself that she had some friends and other pupils told in the interviews that she was nice and that they did play sometimes with her, too.

Bullying, whether based on ethnicity or not, is an increasing problem in schools. This research confirmed what has been noted before: non-Finnish children are bullied and called names more often than Finnish. The children were reported to be bullied only by boys. Sometimes name-calling contained racist elements, such as 'nigger' or 'ryssä' (referring to Russian).

Some children were also interviewed in friendship pairs or groups in order to study whether cultural differences occur or interfere with friendship between children of different cultural backgrounds. Children were aware of cultural differences but saw them as a richness: they would learn about different cultures from their friends. Cultural differences did not cause any major conflicts.

This research does not provide simple answers - certainly because simple responses to such complex questions do not exist. We might, though, carefully conclude that ethnicity has a certain role to play in children's peer relations. But what that role is depends on individual children and their particular situations. Ethnicity did indeed have importance for example in the case of the Somali girl who seemed to be rejected almost solely because she was considered as different.

Key words: friendship and ethnicity; ethnic relations; peer relations; sociometry; intercultural contacts; cultural differences.

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1   INTRODUCTION

"Yeah, you can see those blacks walking in the street.
They always wear a thick fur coat and have a mobile phone."
A Finnish boy, eight years

In Finland, there is a growing interest and need to study phenomena related to the non-Finnish population. The number of foreigners, especially immigrants, is growing constantly. In 1995, there were about 63 000 non-Finnish persons living in Finland. They came from over 150 different countries and spoke about 84 different languages. (Jaakkola 1995, 2; 1994, 128; 1991, 22). Thus, foreigners form only about one per cent of the Finnish population which appears to be a very small figure compared to other Nordic and European countries (Liebkind 1988, 108; 1994, 11). During the 1990s Finland was suffering from economic depression and at the same time certain negative trends, such as racism and prejudice, seemed to increase as in other European countries. According to a rather recent study by Jaakkola (1995), the attitudes of Finns toward non-Finnish people are becoming more and more negative - Finns tend to think that the more there are foreigners in Finland, the more there will be crimes, violence and drug use. Also, as much as 76 per cent of Finns believe that many foreigners come to Finland only to take advantage out of the good social benefits the State offers. More than a half would be ready to send some of the foreigners back to their own country in the case unemployment would increase. There is evidence that such deeply-rooted attitudes are adopted in early childhood; children seem to learn these attitudes from their close environment at an early age. It is then very important to study how children position themselves in relation to foreigners i.e. how they perceive foreign people,

what kinds of ideas or attitudes they express toward others and how they behave and deal with foreigners in real life.

As the number of foreign citizens grows, so does the number of non-Finnish children in Finnish schools. In autumn 1992, there were 4945 non-Finnish pupils going to Finnish comprehensive schools (Kosonen 1994, 193). In 1994 it was estimated that there were 7000 to 9000 foreign children in Finnish comprehensive schools and high schools. Most of them lived in Helsinki and its surroundings. They spoke about 60 different native languages and the largest language groups were formed by children speaking Vietnamese, Somali, Albanian, Croatian, Kurdish, Persian and Arabic. Children whose nationality is other than Finnish do not have compulsory education but they have a right to education in Finnish schools. (Ikonen 1994, 76; 85.) It is evident that in the future more and more Finnish children will have contacts with children from different cultures. It is then crucial to study how foreign children are accepted by their Finnish peers. This is important not only for the development and well-being of the foreign children but also for the whole society. The better we can guarantee good conditions for children with non-Finnish origins, the better they will adjust to our society and the better will the future of the country be.

Research on children's friendship relations and ethnicity is not a totally new area. However, the dominant trajectory of friendship research has been mainly a developmental one, assuming children's social relations to be basically similar to but less complex than those of adults. There exists also several popular misconceptions related to children's friendships, such as claims that there is not much left to say about children's friendship relations; that adults always know best when it comes to children's social relations and that children's friendships are common-sense social constructions (Deegan 1996, 2-5). Ethnographic research on children aims at exploring children's world from a child's perspective. Children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, independent on the perspective and concern of adults. Children must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives. (James and Prout 1997, 8.)

This research topic has not been much studied in Finland. There are, on the other hand, some studies on children's general attitudes toward foreigners and on foreign children's adaptation. However, these studies often have some basic methodological weaknesses and do not offer us with a comprehensive understanding of children's social relations. Parents and teachers are often considered as being more

capable of giving reliable information on children's social relationships than children themselves. Children may have had the possibility to tell about their own opinions about foreigners in interviews. The results have been mainly promising; children seem to have very positive attitudes and they would be ready to take as many refugees in Finland as needed. But we cannot rely too much on these results. First of all, interviewing children is a very delicate task and particularly so when talking about difficult issues. Children easily accommodate their answers into the general opinion or then they may answer like they think they are expected to. Even a small child knows what kind of attitudes are socially desirable. Secondly, most of the children studied did not have any personal contacts with foreign people before, much less with foreign children of their own age. How, then, could they possibly imagine how it would be like to meet a foreigner or to have one as a friend? Thirdly, little attention has been paid to children's actual behaviour although expressed attitudes do not always necessarily correspond to their behaviour.

In this study children are seen as their own subjects. This kind of research tradition based on child perspective is rather novel and can be referred to as new studies on childhood. According to this thinking, children have their own culture which is of value in itself, not compared with the adult culture. There is trust in children's own views and in their capacity to tell themselves about their subjective world and thoughts. Children are not expected to answer like adults and their responses are not compared to those that adults would give.

It is necessary that even the Finnish society will have to face the changing world and shift from monoculturalism to multiculturalism. As yet, there is not a single country that would be entirely free from multiculturalism (CERI 1989, 23). There is therefore reason to ask, why to waste energy in fighting against the unavoidable? We should rather try to figure out how we could best profit from the presence of other cultures which can potentially enrich ours and open new perspectives both on personal and cultural levels.

2 CHILDREN'S ETHNIC AWARENESS

2.1 Theoretical and Terminological Considerations

There are a few essential questions and critical issues which should be taken into account when considering literature on the development of ethnic awareness, ethnic attitudes and other related phenomena. First of all, the most widely used approach seems to be the one that bears focus on development. The emphasis is accorded on the *normality* and the *progress* of development. This approach makes a risk to lead people to think that all children are supposed to follow a rigorous pattern of development and pass from one stage to another at a certain age. Whenever a child does not reach the required stages at the 'normal' ages in the 'normal' order, she/he must naturally have some problems. This kind of approach does not provide us with many possibilities to understand individual processes nor does it respect the unique personalities of individual children.

Secondly, there is often an assumption of *universality*. For example, Western researchers tend to think that the developmental patterns found in Western populations are the same in all world populations. This tendency can be observed particularly in developmental psychology in which children are assumed to mature in the same way regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. Whenever differences are identified, patterns other than Western are considered as deviant or unnatural. The Western normality is regarded as the ideal. There is rarely discussion on why developmental patterns may differ.

Thirdly, *children's own points of view* are not always valued. Children's conceptions and ideas are often compared with those of adults. Adults' conceptions are seen as norms, as ideals, at the top of the evolution, whereas children's own ideas are seen as imperfect and in need of development. Thus, children are somehow considered as incapable of thinking themselves even though their ideas might even be better or more humanistic than the often too rigid adult standards. The latter are rarely questioned. One of the most important aims of this research is to study, respect and value children's own ideas and thoughts: each generation has its own unique culture which should be respected as such.

There are also some problems of terminology. For example, 'race' and 'ethnicity' have often been used as synonyms. Many authors have argued that race is not at all an objective fact. Still, there are many researchers who continue to employ the term 'race' in their discourses. The notion of race seems to be an empirically pragmatic concept (Toivonen 1990, 25). Also, when reviewing literature on children's attitudes toward foreigners, one can note that the term is continuously used. Usually the term 'race' serves in the differentiation between whites and blacks, although sometimes American Indians and Asians are also considered as different races. Toivonen defines race as a social group of people based partly on physical and cultural criteria. According to this definition, race is a subgroup of ethnicity. Examples of race may thus be Gypsies or Jews. (Toivonen 1990, 27.) According to Lasonen (1981, 36), if race is a biological concept, ethnicity is more or less socially and culturally bound. Some authors have suggested that the notion of race should be totally replaced by that of ethnicity. *The notion of ethnicity is more useful for the purposes of this research than that of race*, and it will be used as one of the key terms of the study. However, the notion of race will be used in the theoretical background as it has appeared widely in relevant literature. For the same reason it is not possible to avoid the distinction between whites and blacks even though cultural differences between people are here seen as learned and subjective rather than having a biological basis.[1]

The concept of 'culture' is sometimes confused with that of ethnicity. These concepts indeed overlap and complement each other. In this study the attributes 'cultural' and 'ethnic' are used as follows: the terms are considered as two different sides of the same coin with the difference that, whereas ethnicity refers to a sense of

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[1] This is to note that this kind of distinction is neither a product of, nor accepted by the researcher. Perceived differences in skin colour are only differences in degree and do not justify the categorization of people on this basis.

belonging to a certain group, culture refers to the products and organisation of the group. A further elaboration of the concept of culture will be provided later (see chapter 4.1).

Despite all these limitations, basic literature on children's ethnic awareness and attitudes will be briefly introduced in the theoretical background of the study since there is little or no other type of literature available on the topic. The following chapters will present the main lines of research on the development of ethnic awareness and provide readers some common definitions of the basic psychological and social phenomena related to ethnicity.

2.2   The Development of Ethnic Awareness

The research tradition of children's understanding of ethnicity is strongly based on the idea of development and consequently the research findings are usually introduced by employing such terms as 'age-related functioning', less or more 'mature' forms of ethnic awareness, or 'accuracy' of ethnic identifications. All these refer to an underlying assumption of universal and ideal patterns of development. Authors use mostly the word 'race' instead of 'ethnicity', and a clear distinction is made, for example, between white and black children. A frequently used method in these studies is showing children pictures of people of different ethnic backgrounds, and then asking them whether these persons are similar to or different from themselves. However, *the method itself produces the separation between ethnic groups* which is a built-in characteristic of the method - it does not tell us whether the children consider this distinction as essential when dealing with other people in real life.

Ethnic awareness, or ethnic self-identification, refers to a realisation that one is a member of an ethnic group. Identification of one's own ethnic background is closely related to the awareness of other person's ethnicity but it is not clear which comes first. A child's understanding of ethnic groupings takes the form of perceiving certain similarities between members of the same group and perceiving differences between members of different groups. (Aboud 1988, 7; 51; 47.) Ethnic identity refers to one's sense of membership in an ethnic group (Rotheram and Phinney 1987b, 13). It may be understood as part of an individual's self-concept which derives from her or his knowledge of her or his membership of a social group (Tajfel 1981, 255).

According to Katz, we have little knowledge on the development of racial awareness during the first three years of life but it seems that the underlying developmental processes of racial awareness occur during the early childhood. Some children are already aware of ethnic differences at the age of three years. (Katz 1983, 51; Lasonen 1981, 55.) However, at this age racial identifications seem to be rather inaccurate for most children. Racial awareness increases towards the fourth or fifth years of age, and by the age of six or seven children reach close to 100 per cent accuracy when identifying ethnic groups, especially whites and blacks. (Aboud 1988, 46; 57.) Katz has also noted that ethnic group differences based on more subtle cues than skin colour are not readily perceived by children until much later. She also claims that between the ages of three and six years, children appear to be particularly active in learning to understand gender and racial differences. (Katz 1983, 51; 67.) Black and Asian children seem to identify themselves with their own ethnic group later than white children. By the age of six or seven years, the amount of black children identifying themselves with blacks is less than 80 per cent (Aboud 1988, 53; 55).

Racial awareness is often overused when it is first acquired (Aboud 1988, 47). This is usually explained by children's cognitive development: at an early age children are capable of focusing on only one attribute at the time (Ramsey 1987, 68). Racial attributes may then lose their salience later on when other types of awareness become more useful. A more mature form of ethnic awareness involves, for example, the understanding that race and ethnicity are tied to something deeper than just superficial features or understanding the physical basis of skin colour and the constant nature of ethnicity. (Aboud 1988, 47-51; 56.) Lambert and Klineberg (1967, 103; 152) confirm that when describing both their own groups and foreign peoples, references children make to physical features, such as clothing and language, decrease in importance as the children grow older while other aspects of personality such as personality traits, political issues and habits, become more important.

2.3 Psychological and Social Phenomena Related to Ethnic Relations

Awareness of one's own and other's ethnicity is naturally a prerequisite for entertaining attitudes toward or opinions about people of different ethnic groups. The term 'attitude' refers to an evaluation or a judgement about any object (Deaux et al 1993, 144). Although the main aim of this study is not to identify children's attitudes

nor to observe racist behaviour in children, it is essential to illustrate some basic positions in relation to ethnicity since they are indeed *an inseparable part of interpersonal contacts*. Attitudes may influence behaviour and help shape a person's conceptions about others. People may have different kinds of beliefs about persons belonging to different ethnic groups. Attitudes vary all the way from tolerance to racism - they may therefore be either positive or negative. It should be pointed out that nowadays the assumption that children will automatically entertain 'racial' attitudes has become a controversial issue (Deegan 1996, 29).

2.3.1 Ethnocentrism

By ethnocentrism, we may refer to the tendency to think that the values of one's own ethnic group are naturally better than those of other groups (Kupiainen 1994, 41). However, it is not always a question of giving more value to one's own group compared to others, but of evaluating other groups from the framework and scale of one's own culture. It has been argued that all cultures are more or less ethnocentric. (Opetushallitus 1994, 8; 11.) Also, Triandis doubts that there are any humans who are not ethnocentric; we see the world necessarily through the categories provided by our own culture. When we come in contact with other cultures we may realise that we are ethnocentric, and we may become less ethnocentric but our perspective cannot change completely. (Triandis 1995, 145.)

Tajfel claims that there is a general consensus on evidence that children prefer their own country over others well before they are able to understand the concepts 'country' and 'nation' (Tajfel 1981, 187). White children as young as three years old have expressed negative attitudes towards blacks (Aboud 1988, 29). Also, Katz mentions that a sizeable portion of three-year-old and most of four-year-old children exhibit both racial awareness and preferential patters for their own ethnic group (Katz 1983, 51).

2.3.2 Stereotypes

Stereotyping and prejudice are very close to each other - stereotypes are commonly, but not necessarily, accompanied by prejudice. Thus we may think that stereotypes

serve as a basis for prejudice. If the individual does nothing to prevent the formation of negative stereotypes, prejudicial responses will occur (Deaux et al 1993, 355). Aboud makes the distinction between stereotypes and prejudice as follows: *"stereotypes are rigid, overgeneralised beliefs about the attributes of ethnic group members whereas prejudice is a negative attitude"* (Aboud 1988, 5). There is consensus on the fact that stereotypes are basically generalisations and categorisations (e.g. Taylor 1981; Pettigrew 1981). They may be considered as schemas[2] that help people organise social knowledge (Deaux et al 1993, 92). According to Tajfel (1981, 115), a social stereotype consists of assigning certain traits in common to individuals who are members of a group and also of attributing to them certain differences in common from members of other groups. Stereotypes can then be defined as the attribution of general psychological characteristics to large human groups. As long as we have little specific knowledge about an individual, we may attribute to him characteristics we derive from our knowledge of his class membership, or his category (Tajfel 1981, 132-133).

Stereotypes of young children are typically very general ones, and completely positive or negative. With age they become more specific and more similar to those entertained by adults. Lambert and Klineberg claim also that six-year-old children have stereotyped modes only about their own people, and that it is not until about ten years of age when they start using stereotyped thinking concerning others. (Lambert and Klineberg 1967, 7; 104; 152; 224.) According to Toivonen, learning racial stereotypes is not necessarily affective: stereotypes may give the child objective information about his environment and thus help him build his worldview (Toivonen 1990, 98-99).

2.3.3   Prejudice

Awareness of one's own and other persons' ethnicity is a prerequisite for prejudice (Toivonen 1990, 99) but does not necessarily lead to prejudice: one may be aware of it but still react to it positively (Aboud 1988, 7). Toivonen (1990, 101-103) has also noted that school children's ethnocentric attitudes are not significantly related to racial prejudice. Aboud (1988, 4) claims that there are three components that must be present for us to know that a person is prejudiced. These components are:

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[2]The concept of schema is used by most social cognition theorists. It refers to an organized body of knowledge which is used to interpret present experiences (Deaux et al 1993, 16).

1) The person makes negative judgements about some ethnic group;

2) She/he has an organised predisposition to feel negatively towards different people; and,

3) the negativity is directed toward other people because of their ethnic or racial group memberships.

Tajfel writes about accentuation of judged differences between in-group and out-group. He estimates that prejudiced persons are more likely than less prejudiced persons to use perceptual over-estimation. This means that they may, for example, over-exaggerate the difference in skin colour between blacks and whites. (Tajfel 1981, 76-77.)

When we encounter prejudice in children, we tend to attribute it to their innocent imitation of adults. However, according to current research, this attribution is unjustified: children do not just simply repeat adults' prejudice and do not always adopt their parents' attitudes. Aboud claims that prejudice is rather a reflection of age-related level of functioning. (Aboud 1988, 2.) Ramsey writes that generalisations made by children should not be considered as prejudice but rather as reflections of their cognitive abilities. There is a great difference between adults who willingly and consciously generalise and children who can process only one attribute at the time. Yet, Ramsey claims that child prejudice may sometimes only reflect environmental adult attitudes and thus the child may not express prejudice in his actual behaviour. (Ramsey 1987, 62- 68.)

It seems that attitudes related to prejudice develop drastically during the early years of childhood (Toivonen 1990, 96; Ramsey 1987, 67). Prejudice seems to increase between the ages of four and seven years and then declines at the age of seven or eight - older children are more willing to see positive qualities in blacks along with the negative (Aboud 1988, 29-30; 38). This may be explained by the fact that children learn to make differentiations between events in their environment before comprehending similarities. Hence, for young children, similarities are more difficult to grasp than differences (Lambert and Klineberg 1967, 184; 217). It has been claimed that very young children are colour-blind with respect to people because they simply do not perceive colour differences. However, there is research evidence that even new-born children are sensitive to colour cues. Also, an interesting study in South Africa by Bhana (1977) has shown that visibility may not be a necessary precondition for prejudice to occur. Blind white children were found to hold negative attitudes toward

blacks (see Katz 1983, 51; 52) which may indicate that prejudice is a result of social learning.

Racial attitudes seem to crystallise by about ten or eleven years of age, and adult type prejudice in children has been observed at the age of eleven or twelve (Katz 1983, 69; Toivonen 1990, 100). Black children also appear to form attitudes around three or four years of age but there is no typical pattern before the age of seven. Some studies show that children of all races, including black children under seven years of age, prefer white children - they may score high in self-identification but still prefer whites. According to a classic study by Clark and Clark (1939), black children indicated a high preference for white dolls even when racial identification was demonstrated. Black children also tend to be rather heterogeneous in their ethnic group preferences. After seven years of age, black children are more attached to their own group and more negative toward others. Same-race preference seems to become more pronounced in minority children at grade school and secondary school levels. (see Aboud 1988, 55; 37; Hall and Jose 1983, 258; Katz 1983, 68.) Hispanics and Native Indian children seem to follow somewhat the same pattern as black children (Aboud 1988, 42-43). The findings of Lambert and Klineberg (1967) confirm that black children would prefer being white and attribute more positive characteristics to whites than to blacks, and that Japanese children are not satisfied with what they are either.

Research on ethnic self-identification and ethnic preference patterns has provided interesting results but very important conclusions cannot be drawn on the basis of studies in which dolls have been used to indicate ethnic identifications, as in the study by Clark and Clark. Dolls do not necessarily represent real people for children. However, the above-mentioned cross-cultural study of Lambert and Klineberg on children from several different parts of the world was based on interviews, and the same questions were posed to all children. Children's negative feelings and stereotypes about black and Asian people may be a reflection of general attitudes in society: white children seem to be all together satisfied by being white. Aboud proposes that ethnic minority children reflect social values of which race is more dominant than the physical reality of who they are (Aboud 1988, 41).

Finnish children seem to have mainly positive attitudes toward refugees (Ahokainen and Kurki 1990; Knookala 1990). Children have reported, for example, that it is 'nice' to have refugees coming to Finland and that they would like to become friends with them (Knookala 1990, 74; 62). It must, however, be noted that many of

these children did not have any personal contacts with refugees. Thus, it may be difficult for them to imagine how they would behave when actually meeting a refugee. According to a study by Toivonen (1990), 9 to 15-year-old school children in Northern Finland have negative stereotypes and racial prejudices, especially toward Gypsies. On the other hand, they seem to have only positive stereotypes about Lapps and no consistent opinion about Jews. Toivonen compares the attitudes toward Gypsies to the situation in the United States in 1943 when American schoolchildren had the same type of attitudes toward blacks (Toivonen 1990, 201).

2.3.4 Racial Discrimination

Racism is essentially a doctrine and an ideology (Toivonen 1990, 42; Essed 1991, 43). It is not only a matter of individual attitudes and choices. Laws and practices of a society may enforce discrimination, and it may sometimes be latent in society's economic, political and ideological structures (Deaux et al 1993, 359; Ofstad 1981, 34; Tajfel 1981, 186; Essed 1991, 28). As racism is understood as an ideology, the point of view adopted here is that *children are not in any case racist* although children's behaviour and attitudes may sometimes reflect racist values of their environment.

Discrimination is a manifest behaviour which may or may not be based on racial prejudice (Toivonen 1990, 42; Ofstad 1981, 36). Hence, intentionality is not a necessary component of discrimination. A person may also have internalised some racist notions although he has not internalised other racist notions, and she/he may thus sometimes express prejudicial opinions about blacks and still be friendly with them in another situation (Essed 1991, 45; 157). Discrimination refers to specific behaviours toward the members of a certain group that are unfair in comparison with behaviour toward members of other groups. One form of discrimination might then be avoiding to share your class notes with a member of another race or more violent discrimination may occur in the form of hate crimes. (Deaux et al 1993, 355.) Racial discrimination may be direct or indirect and it includes all acts - verbal, non-verbal and paraverbal - that have intentional or unintentional negative consequences on racially or ethnically dominated groups. So-called every day racism may also take the shape of rejection, exclusion, problematisation, underestimation, humiliation, intimidation, rudeness, patronising, ignoring, discouragement, inflexibility, harassment, threats, and name-calling. (Essed 1991, 46; 45; 146; 172; 173; 230; 242; 250.)

When it comes to studies on children and racial discrimination, there is some research conducted in a school environment. The term 'racism' is used here for the sake of clarity and because it appears frequently in literature. Racism at school may be clearly observable and take the form of harassment or bullying (Troyna 1993, 97). Whenever bullying occurs, it may sometimes be acceptable or even valued if it is expressed as daring behaviour toward the out-group (Allen 1981, 188). However, racism may not always be explicit but it can take various implicit forms, such as mimicry, tone of voice, exclusion and body language. Children have also been victims of racist name-calling. Racist name-calling may occur in many different kinds of social situations which can be defined by a number of criteria, for example, by high or low level of friendship and motivation in terms of harassment or self-defence. Name-calling may in certain situations occur between children who are otherwise friendly with each other. It may also be casual or repeated. (Troyna 1993, 97-98; 130.)

Moran et al (1993) have studied ethnic differences in experiences of bullying on the basis of self-reporting. They have noted that there were no differences by ethnicity between Asian and white children with regard to enjoying school, having friends at school, or being bullied. There was found, however, a significant difference with regard to racial name-calling. The Asian children reported that they were called names referring to their skin colour whereas none of the white children had been made reference to his or her skin colour. (Moran et al 1993, 431-436.)

In Finland, Kosonen (1994) has noted that Vietnamese children are more often bullied at school than Finnish children. The more non-Finnish children there are in a school, the less likely the Finnish children are to accept and be friendly with them. Kosonen (1994, 217) has interpreted this observation by explaining that large amounts of foreign children may have come to the school within a rather short period of time and this has caused a negative reaction and fear in Finnish children. It is also possible that the more there are foreign pupils in a school, the more easily they form their own in-groups and may become more distinctive than others.

Toivonen (1990, 42) claims that having racial prejudices is not the same thing as prejudiced behaviour - there is only a tenuous relationship between attitudes and the actual behaviour. For example, there may be verbal acceptance together with behavioural rejection (Lambert and Klineberg 1967, 12). Hall and Hall have studied small groups working in classroom and they have noted that although racial differences are important, they are rarely discussed openly; the group may claim that a

member's race or colour is unimportant but their non-verbal behaviour contradicts this. (Hall and Hall 1988, 234.) Troyna has also demonstrated differences in attitudes and behaviour very explicitly (see figure 1). There may be a combination of attitudes and behaviours ranging from children who hold racist beliefs but do not express them in behaviour to children who hold racially egalitarian beliefs but use for example racist name-calling in some situations. (Troyna 1993, 100; 130.)

Troyna criticises studies on school racism in general for their methodological weaknesses. For example, data has often been gathered from parents and not from children themselves even though parental views cannot be accepted as a valid and reliable portrayal of racism in schools (Troyna 1993, 97-98).

FIGURE 1. A model for locating racist name-calling.

THEMATIC
Racist

	Use of racist name-calling which expresses racist attitudes	Non-use of racist name-calling by children who have racist attitudes	
INTER-ACTIONAL			
Racist			Non-racist
	Use of racist name-calling by children who hold racially egalitarian beliefs	Non-use of racist name-calling by children who hold racially egalitarian beliefs	

Non-racist

3 FRIENDSHIP AND ETHNICITY

3.1 Attribution and Social Attraction

Although mostly based on research on adults, a general framework of studies on social attraction, attribution, and forming friendships will be presented in the following in order to clarify the terminology. An attribution is usually understood as an inference about why an event occurred or about a person's disposition or other psychological states. Thus, attributions may be perceptions or inferences about others. (Weary et al 1989, 3-4.) Attributions have often been related essentially to the causality or responsibility of events but in this research a more simplified understanding of attributions is applied. Attribution refers here to *attributing certain characteristics to another person*. This includes such phenomena as how one feels about another person, how one perceives another, and how one reacts to the actions of another.

The other serves as a potential stimulus for the perceiver; the perceiver may or may not notice the other. After having been perceived, the other has millions of characteristics, such as dress, physical characteristics, behaviour patterns, voice quality, and so on, which act as cues for the perceiver. The perceiver notices only some of these characteristics - her or his own cultural background defines what cues are considered as important. (Triandis 1977, 94-97.)

Attributions give meaning to what is perceived. The perceiver makes attributions about the characteristics of the other on the basis of different kinds of

information she/he has about the other. Information may include the other person's membership in a group, such as a sex, age or race group. Attribution may be strongly influenced by stereotypes people entertain about group members. Attributions and interpersonal attraction are closely related: the perception of the other influences whether the latter is liked or not, and vice-versa: liking or not liking the other person influences what kind of attributes are given to him or her. However, research on stereotypes and attribution should not be considered as research on attraction: liking is unrelated to many dimensions of attribution (Triandis 1977, 96; 135; 165).

In *impression formation* liking for a person is inferred on the basis of personality adjectives describing him or her. Hence, likeability of a person is related to perceived personality traits. Impression formation may be an unconscious process; we are not always totally aware of which characteristics of the other contribute to liking or disliking him or her. Sometimes a person's estimate of liking another person is mediated by, if not based upon, his or her subjective affective reaction to this person; liking someone may be based on the feelings one recalls evoking in the presence of the other. For example, a person who stands closer to or who gazes at others more intensively than is usual may cause others feel uneasy. We may, nevertheless, attribute the uneasiness to certain characteristics of the person that have actually nothing to do with the feeling of uneasiness. One's own internal emotional state may also influence judgements made about the other person. (Wyer and Carlston 1979, 157; 290; 205; 191.)

Studies on social attraction, or interpersonal attraction, focus on finding out why we are attracted to certain individuals but not to others. Triandis (1977) has put together a number of social attraction factors in adults. These include similarity, especially similarity in attitudes, economic status, task performance, emotional states and personal characteristics; racial membership; dissimilarity in certain personality characteristics, like in the case of dominance and submissiveness; compatibility; physical attractiveness; behaviour; physical environment; and, opportunities for interaction, referred to as 'propinquity'. Also, the personal characteristics of the perceiver affect how the other is perceived and how the other's behaviour is interpreted.

One of the obvious consequences of attraction is the increased tendency to approach another person (Triandis 1977, 182). When two persons are in physical proximity, they may or may not interact. *Interaction potential* refers to the probability

that their interaction will take place. The interaction potential between two persons depends on how attracted these persons are to each other. The interaction potential increases when the relationship is rewarding i.e. when a person finds it enjoyable to be with another, interaction potential increases and the friendship may continue to develop. (Triandis 1977, 40-41; 122.) Hargreaves (1967, 7-8) refers to the same phenomenon in children: interactions will begin with a few conventional remarks and then progress either to a deeper relationship or then to a rapid termination of the interaction. Levinger's theory (1974) of social relations contains three levels of interaction: 1) unilateral awareness: at this level, there is no actual interaction between persons but a momentary impression formation; 2) surface contact: interaction is transitory and many relationships stay on this level; 3) mutuality: this level is characterised by self-disclosure, trust and empathy, behavioural co-ordination and emotional investment, and shared awareness. In addition to these three levels, there may be a zero point where no contact exists: this may be the case in ethnic stereotyping when one is aware of the existence of an ethnic group but has no contact with it. (See Duck et al 1980, 118-119.)

A lot of research in the field of social attraction have been based on studies conducted in artificially constructed and controlled test situations. Studies are structured in a way which obliges people to react to certain stimuli although they might not pay attention to them in real life situations. The choice usually has to be made between two opposites concerning a few characteristics, and no other information is available for research subjects. These studies do not tell us whether the above-mentioned factors have actually significance in people's every-day lives. The same problem is found in many studies on children: social attraction between children has been studied mainly by using the sociometric technique which will be described and discussed further in detail[3].

3.2 Peer Perception and Friendship in Children

An important part of friendship studies on children concentrates on defining what different forms and functions friendship relations may adopt and what meanings children give to them. However, this aspect is irrelevant to our discussion since the aim is not to study what children do with friends and how they understand friendship but

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[3]See chapter 3.3.

rather *on what basis children choose friends and what kinds of characteristics children attribute to their friends*. Foster et al (1996) write that children's evaluations of peers are affected by how they process information from the environment, most often referred to as their 'social cognition'. Children's perceptions of peers may vary on the basis of their sociocultural and ethnic background. (Foster et al 1996, 145.)

Although adults' and children's personal relationships differ, there have been found certain similarities in the way in which acquaintances are made in time and on the basis of which friendships are formed. Both start with the influence of the objective characteristics of the partner, like physical attractiveness and status, and are thereon influenced by behavioural style, become centred on the understanding of motives behind the observed behaviour, and, ultimately, focus on the character that lies behind the motives, such as understanding another's personality traits (Duck et al 1980, 90). However, these authors also claim that children have imperfect skills and limits in social interaction. This view clearly underestimates children's capacity to create their own friendship culture and communication. Adult behaviour is considered as the ideal and the only 'real' one. This approach does not take into account the fact that each generation has already produced its own culture when it comes to the adult age. However, we do agree with Duck et al in the sense that children's friendship is seen essentially as a communicative process (Duck et al 1980, 93).

A study by Rubin (1980) is a typical example of traditional research on children's friendship relations based on the Piagetian view[4] of development. Socialisation is seen as a process of becoming more and more adult-like. According to this view, children pass through certain stages, from stage 0 to stage 4, at a certain age and finally reach the ultimate goal, that is, being adult - as if being a child had no value in itself. Rubin has observed that the initial encounters take place at a very early age: babies may already show initial interest in another baby. The earliest interactions consist of exploring the other baby as a physical object. Even young babies usually react more positively to unfamiliar peers than to unfamiliar adults. From an initial interest, however, there is still a considerable jump to actual social interchanges between peers. A more mature awareness of social interaction emerges and develops through the second and the early part of the third year. Even though familiarity influences children's early friendships, toddlers may exhibit strong preferences for

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[4]Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was a Swiss child psychologist who based his theory of children's cognitive development on the idea that children pass the stages of development at a certain age and in a certain order. (Ginsburg and Opper 1988.)

certain playmates over others. As in adults' friendships, similarity seems to lie at heart of the attraction to the peers. By the time children are two years old, children seem to have an initial concept of what is a 'friend'. (Rubin 1980, 24; 27; 32-35.)

One clear influence on the likelihood of relationship formation in children is simple opportunity: the more certain one is of encountering another person again, the more one is likely to invest in establishing a relationship. We may thereby assume that such things as closeness of parental domicile, frequency of interaction, equivalence of age or intelligence and spatial distance in the classroom can be constraints upon or facilitators of children's friendship choice. However, the choice to interact again and to continue to interact more intensively is based on other cues, such as physical attractiveness and behaviour. (Duck et al 1980, 96-98.) Another approach is offered by Foster et al (1996): when encountering peers, the child first forms different attributions about others' behaviours. Secondly, she/he may form expectations of others on the basis of social stereotypes and ethnic attitudes. Thirdly, she/he may judge peers' behaviour differently as a function of their own or on the peers' race or ethnicity. This process may be referred to as ethnicity-specific *social cognition*. (Foster et al 1996, 146.)

Children distinguish between peer relations and friendship; in friendship, there is an added dimension of advanced co-operation. Children usually differentiate between friends by using certain properties of individuals, such as personality traits, momentary states within the individual, talents, skills, feelings, thoughts, and values. (Youniss 1983, 167; 175.) However, a young child, about three to five years of age, characteristically views friends as momentary physical playmates. She/he reflects on physical attributes and activities rather than on psychological attributes such as personal needs, interests, or character traits. Older children are aware of other sorts of qualifications for friendship: they are more likely to emphasise the need for psychological compatibility. (Rubin 1980, 38-39.)

The skills for friendship include not only the ability to gain entry into group activities but also the ability to be a friend - an attentive, approving, and helpful playmate and associate. Already in the first years of life, children have distinctive styles of interaction which may make them agreeable or disagreeable to their peers. (Rubin 1980, 54.) Further, it is not enough only to be likeable for others but skills for friendship also include the capacity to appreciate that certain attributes of others can give information about their characteristics. The child needs to construct his or her own

characteristic style of detecting personality information from others' physique, behaviour, attitudes and so on. She/he should also learn the skills of reciprocal communication: the child must learn not only to deduce things form others' behaviour but also to transmit information about his or her own personality. (Duck et al 1980, 99-100.)

There have been few detailed ethnographies of children's peer relations. This fact is partly due to theoretical reasons: major approaches to human learning and development view socialisation as the process by which the child becomes an adult, as we already have seen above. One problem we face with previous research is that data has been interpreted from an adult perspective. (Corsaro 1985, 2.) Also, children's peer relations have not been considered as significant as child-adult relationships (Rubin 1980, 13) although a great deal of social learning occurs during interaction with peers.

Kantor et al (1993) have conducted an ethnographic study on cultural knowledge and social competence within a pre-school peer culture group. In this context, 'culture' does not refer to any other but the common, constructed culture of the particular group studied. The used methods were videotaping, daily field-note taking, and analysing teacher retrospective notes. They concluded that successful participation requires children to access and to display cultural knowledge; to determine implicit rules for membership; and, to adapt their behaviour to fit the existing theme and social context. All aspects of children's social competence have unique cultural interpretations and may contribute to success or failure within a certain group. Children's personality and behaviour; ability to access and interpret culture and ability to produce and reproduce cultural knowledge through interactional strategies. It is not, therefore, said that a child who did not succeed in entering one peer group culture could not adapt well in another. (Kantor et al 1993, 133; 142; 145.)

3.3   Sociometric Studies on Friendship and Ethnicity

3.3.1   Contact Hypothesis

A lot of research in the field of inter-group behaviour as well as on children's friendship relations has been based on the so-called contact hypothesis which was originally proposed by Allport in 1954 (see Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 203). The basic idea of the contact hypothesis is that the more a person has contacts with people from other ethnic groups, the more tolerant she/he will become. Troyna (1993,

102) criticises the contact hypothesis of being an over-simplified interpretation of inter-group relations. It seems, however, that Troyna's critique itself is based on an over-simplification of the contact hypothesis. He claims the contact hypothesis to assume that interpersonal contact across ethnic lines in itself brings about better relations by attenuating individual racial prejudice. In fact, it has been proven that *contact in itself does not decrease prejudice* or, in the worst case, contacts may maintain or even produce negative attitudes (Toivonen 1990, 85; 93; Amir et al 1984, 10; Schofield 1981, 53; Deaux et al 1993, 378; Lasonen 1981, 49; Allen 1981, 189).

Actually the contact hypothesis does not suggest that any contact increases favourable attitudes, but rather that it is the *nature* of the contact that influences attitudes (e.g. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 204; Lasonen 1981, 48; Toivonen 1990, 315). It has also been found that an attitude shift from negative to positive is possible even in the absence of face-to-face interaction between groups (Rose 1981, 266). This finding is somewhat contradictory to the contact hypothesis. However, it should be kept in mind that direct contact between members of different groups does provide an opportunity for different social-psychological processes to occur. People who were previously thought as different can be seen more similar to one's own group (Amir et al 1984, 9). According to Gronlund (1959, 252), as pupils experience a larger number of social interactions with their classmates when working in small groups, they tend to express more feelings of acceptance and fewer feelings of rejection toward them.

It seems that several conditions must be met in order to maintain or produce positive attitudes (Deaux et al 1993, 378):

> 1) the possibility to interact with one another, not only superficially or casually;
> 2) interaction must provide disconfirming information about the negative traits believed to be the characteristics of the other group;
> 3) the same status or level of power of participants; and,
> 4) institutional support for inter-group contact, for example, from school authorities.

The organisation of schools affects the frequency of interracial contacts. Damico and Sparks believe that positive interracial attitudes are developed through experiencing positive, sustained interracial contact, for example in the form of co-operation between children. (Damico and Sparks 1986, 114.) The size of groups may also exert influence on attitudes. Similar status between in-group and out-group seems to decrease

prejudice. However, personal characteristics of a person may maintain others' prejudice even though situational factors were favourable. (Lasonen 1981, 154; 49.) According to Hewitt (1986, 2), research on interracial contacts based on the idea of contact hypothesis generally lacks in theoretical or empirical concern for the interactive dimension and qualities of contact; ethnic minority parties are seen as passive whereas the main concern has been the majority's reaction to them.

3.3.2   What Is Sociometry?

There is no consistent theory on interaction between the pupils of the same class (Lasonen 1981, 28) but a great deal of research has been done applying Moreno's theory of sociogenetic law and his sociometric method. The social construction of classrooms and the sociometric status of ethnic minority children have been studied using the sociometry especially in the United States, and in Great Britain since the 1960s (Toivonen 1990, 317; Lasonen 1981, 54). The main concern has been the interaction between white and black children. The method has often been used to test the contact hypothesis. Many sociometric studies have attempted to define factors and conditions which may have significance in inter-ethnic contacts.

The term 'sociometry' may refer to a research method, or, it can be used to describe the study of social relations in general (Hallinan 1981, 91). The sociometric method was originally devised by Moreno (1934) in his basic work *Who Shall Survive* (see Hargreaves 1967, 6; Lappalainen 1988, 7; Renshaw 1981, 1; Asher and Renshaw 1981, 274). Lasonen (1981, 66) has defined the sociometric method as follows: in a sociometric questionnaire children express their *current spontaneous wishes for friendship* in certain activities in the class that the researcher has selected. According to the law of social gravitation, or sociodynamics, the choices of individuals are based on affective factors and they are always distributed unevenly within every group. (Lappalainen 1988, 7.) Moreno supposed that social gravitation takes expression in attraction, rejection or indifference (Lasonen 1981, 16). The principle of sociometry is simple: children are, for example, asked to nominate their three best friends in school, whom they would like to sit or play with or some variant (Troyna 1993, 101). It is possible to make questions about preferred or actual friends (Hargreaves 1967, 6). Sometimes it is difficult or impossible to differentiate between children's actual friends

and their wishes about them. Children may also be asked to nominate peers with whom they do not want to co-operate or play. (Lasonen 1981, 66; 87.)

In every group and classroom there is usually a so-called *sociometric star*. Sociometric star is a person who has gained more options than would be statistically expected. Negative pupil profiles that may be found in the class are the *rejected* pupils, *social isolates* and *neglectees*. The rejected have got most of the negative choices. The isolates are totally ignored, and the neglectees get only a few mentions. (Lappalainen 1988, 8-10; Asher and Renshaw 1981, 274; Hallinan 1981, 91.) There may also be found *controversial* pupils who are liked by many and disliked by many (Foster et al 1996, 152). Popular students usually seem to possess many valued resources such as physical attractiveness, a high level of intelligence, athletic ability and high social class (Hallinan 1981, 92). Unpopular children, on the other hand, seem to possess less and different kind of social skills than popular children (Putallaz and Gottman 1981, 120). According to Asher and Renshaw (1981, 271), research over the past four decades indicates that about 5 to 10 per cent of elementary school children are named as a friend by no one in their class. Sociometric cleavage refers to a situation where there is a clear separation between some subgroups, which may be based, for example, on gender or ethnicity. In this situation there are no or very few choices made across the groups. (Gronlund 1959, 6.)

3.3.3 The Role of Ethnicity in Friendship Choices

Classroom structure is formed by social interaction between pupils (Lasonen 1981, 16). Usually pupils form small friendship groups, or *cliques*, within the class. Pupils are normally conscious of who is in the group and who is not. Group members are not equivalent. Within the groups there is an informal status hierarchy. (Hargreaves 1967, 8-9.) It is assumed that friendship groups are held together by common values and that the groups develop their own norms, even their own culture (e.g. Ball 1984, 40; Hargreaves 1967, 8). Hallinan (1981, 99) claims that cliques are the most powerful agents of peer influences. Friendship among members of a group is also strongly influenced by the relationship that exists with an out-group (Allen 1981, 188); the membership of an in-group is reinforced by differentiating themselves clearly from the out-group.

There are many factors that may affect interaction and formation of friendship groups between pupils in a classroom. These factors are often referred to as status characteristics because children tend to use these characteristics to identify classmates who hold a higher rank or status than themselves; people prefer choosing as friends persons of a higher status. (Hallinan 1981, 94; Hallinan and Williams 1990, 124.) Status characteristics can be related to pupils' psychological or physical characteristics. Here one can find similarities with studies on social attraction. Some of these status characteristics are also known to be agents influencing interpersonal attraction between adults.

Gender has been noted to be usually the strongest barrier to friendship. However, race seems to have equally a strong influence, and the split between whites and blacks is of fundamental nature (Schofield 1981, 54; 55; 63). Interestingly enough, while gender seems to loose its importance with age, race becomes even a more important grouping factor in older age; the cleavage between blacks and whites is often minimal in the early school years but becomes extremely clear by preadolescence (Shrum et al 1988, 231-232; Schofield 1981, 53). Thus, elementary school pupils tend to make more out-group choices than older pupils (Lappalainen 1988, 16). Moreno has noted that race seems to become an important factor in friendship choices beginning from the age of ten (Toivonen 1990, 96). By the junior high school years over 90 per cent of expected cross-race links may be missing (Shrum et al 1988, 231).

It is possible that some prejudiced children may avoid interaction with peers who come from a less-liked out-group (Lasonen 1981, 36). According to Troyna (1993, 102), ethnicity may or may not be a significant variable in school based friendship groups. There is, however, evidence that race affects interaction in classroom. In several studies conducted in the United States there has been found clear correlation between race and the formation of social relationships (Lasonen 1981, 36). In a sociometric study of more than 2000 school children conducted by Shrum et al (1988), there was found evidence that children prefer choosing as friends persons within their own gender and racial group. However, a Zimbabwean sociometric study showed only some evidence of in-group preference and the results were not statistically significant (Wilson and Lavelle 1990, 113). This raises once more the question on the social nature of racial prejudice and discrimination. The white children attending Zimbabwean schools have probably not learned that black children could have a lower status or value, as they might learn if living in a Western country.

Howes and Wu (1990) noted in their study on peer interactions and friendships in an ethnically diverse school setting that the social status of a child was independent on ethnicity. Third grade pupils made more cross-ethnic choices than kindergarten children. Asian-American children were the most likely and Euro-American children the least likely to engage in positive interaction with cross-ethnic peers. Also, Euro-American children were less likely and minority children more likely to attempt to enter cross-ethnic peer groups and to have cross-ethnic friends. The results were in general encouraging. The children were interacting and forming friendships with interethnic as well as intraethnic peers. Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that the studied school was a laboratory school which does not necessarily reflect the reality of an average American school. (Howes and Wu 1990, 537-540.)

Lasonen has noted in his sociometric study that Finnish migrant children in Sweden were less popular than Swedish children. Finnish children were less often chosen for friendship and leadership than their Swedish peers. The time spent in Sweden was not correlated with sociometric data but teachers' evaluation about Finnish children's adaptation, language skills and school achievements were significantly correlated with their sociometric status. However, the differences between Swedish and Finnish children were not as remarkable as racial differences found in American studies. (Lasonen 1981.)

Taylor uses the term 'solo status' to describe the situation in which there is only one member of a different race, sex or ethnicity in a group which is otherwise homogeneous. In such situation, the solo's behaviour is usually considered to be some index of how well the group the solo represents will do in a new group. Solos seem thus to be particularly subject to stereotyping. Especially the solo black in a group is distinctive by virtue of his physical appearance. Sometimes the solo situation may, however, lead to a rather positive evaluation of the solo. (Taylor 1981, 89-91.) What seems most striking in many studies is that black children often prefer whites in their friendship choices (Tajfel 1981, 197). This may be a reflection of the social reality and values (Aboud 1988, 41) or, then, an expression of ethnic self-hatred.

Race may also affect friendship choices indirectly: race and school performance tend to be significantly related in such a manner that white children seem to perform better at school than black children (e.g. Kuo and Hauser 1995; Mickelson 1990) and other ethnic minority children (e.g. Warren 1996; Mehan 1992; Clifton et al

1991). Then, as school performance seems to be related to children's friendship choices, the racial cleavage may be partly a result of differences in academic achievement (Hallinan 1981, 94). Other research indicates that acceptance is behaviour-related rather than race-related: behaviour resulting from the frustration of non-achievement in the classroom reduces acceptance (Carter et al 1980, 128).

3.3.4 Other Status Characteristics

Race is naturally not the only factor which has importance in children's friendship choices. Physical and psychological characteristics such as gender, race, intelligence, age, ethnic group, religion, social class, language, socio-economic position, skills, and academic achievement also contribute to liking or disliking others (Asher and Renshaw 1981, 271; Lasonen 1981, 36; Hallinan 1981, 93; Allen 1981, 188; Gronlund 1959). According to most studies, gender seems to be the most important factor defining children's friendship choices (Schofield 1981, 54; Lasonen 1981, 32). Gender cleavage seems to be well-established by the age of nine years. Different research findings support that 62 to 97 per cent of children's friendship choices follow the division between sexes. (Lappalainen 1988, 19.)

According to Ball (1984, 40), pupils tend to choose for friends the persons with whom they have most contact and whom they know best. Random physical proximity seems then to have importance, but only in the beginning of friendship. Later it is the personal factors that will lead either to liking the person or then giving up the friendship (Allen 1981, 191; Lasonen 1981, 28). Situational factors, such as the opportunity for participation in activities and the mobility of peer groups, may also influence friendship formation (Asher and Renshaw 1981, 271). It is suggested that close friendships develop as a result of frequent contacts with other persons who are similar in some way (Allen 1981, 183). Indeed, similarity, especially physical similarity, seems to be one of the most important bases for friendship (Ramsey 1987, 65; Hallinan 1981, 94). Also, similarity in attitudes, interests and values has been noticed to be related to attraction between individuals (Hallinan and Williams 1990, 124; Wyer and Carlston 1979, 299; Gronlund 1959, 201; Jaakkola 1995, 53). Similarity has importance especially when considering relevant characteristics such as gender, race and achievement (Hallinan 1981, 94; Ball 1984, 40). Sometimes it may be assumed that persons who are similar to oneself in gender and race are also similar in

values and attitudes. Similarity seems to exert a great influence especially on the stability of friendship. (Hallinan and Williams 1990, 124; 1981, 94.)

One of the first things people notice about others is their physical appearance (Snyder 1981, 193). Physical attractiveness may affect a child's social status because children who are not attractive are often thought to be unpleasant and asocial (Asher and Renshaw 1981, 271; Putallaz and Gottman 1981, 117; Lappalainen 1988, 20) and, on the other hand, physically attractive persons are assumed to possess more socially desirable personalities (Snyder 1981, 193). The importance of physical attractiveness seems to be more apparent in the case of girls (Gronlund 1959, 200). Even the commonness of the child's first name has been shown to affect the popularity of a child (Putallaz and Gottman 1981, 117). At least on the basis of these kinds of results, one should question the accuracy of this type of correlation studies. Although a correlation has been found there is no evidence of causal relations of any kind.

School achievement is related to social acceptance up to a certain point; it seems that pupils of high performance may be respected by their classmates but still they are not necessarily highly desired as friends (Gronlund 1959, 195). Cohen (1984) has noted that among elementary school students, a perceived reading ability has been shown to function as a status characteristic in group work situations. Intelligence, emotional stability and sociability have been shown to correlate to popularity in classroom (Lasonen 1981, 29-31). However, when it comes to the importance of intelligence, there seem to be significant differences in social status between individuals only when comparing persons with extremely high or extremely low intelligence (Gronlund 1959, 190). Lasonen (1981, 141) has also noted the importance of language skills of ethnic minority and immigrant children. Mastering the host language will facilitate adaptation to school and interaction with other pupils.

Characteristics such as kindness, co-operativeness, generosity, loyalty, agreeableness, sincerity, helpfulness, and friendliness are frequently mentioned as determinants of social acceptance (Gronlund 1959, 203). Popular and unpopular pupils seem to differ in their social skill repertoire, that is, in their knowledge of how to make friends. Popular pupils are also more active in initiating interactions and resolving conflicts (Putallaz and Gottman 1981, 120; Asher and Renshaw 1981, 271; 292). It seems that no single personal factor can entirely determine the sociometric status of an individual; highly popular pupils possess a range of many positive personal characteristics (Gronlund 1959, 204-206).

In addition to personal factors, there are certain social factors which may influence the social patterns of a classroom. These factors include, for example, socio-economic status, family background, residential proximity in the community. Pupils with high socio-economic status seem to have an equally high sociometric status, and vice versa. Family size, child's position in the family, family mobility, broken homes, and family experiences seem to be more or less related to a child's sociometric status. A child's actual friends are limited by parental restrictions regarding both the socio-economic status of companions and the distance a child can go from home in search of playmates. Urban children tend to be more popular than children from rural settings. (Gronlund 1959, 210-213; 215; 217-219; 206-207.)

Class size may affect friendship choices in many ways: children may be expected to have more friends in large classes than in small ones but, on the other hand, there is evidence that social isolation increases with class size (Hallinan 1981, 97). Putallaz and Gottman (1981, 117) and Hallinan (1981, 108-109) claim, however, that both large school and classroom sizes influence peer acceptance in a positive way because of increased opportunities of participation in activities. Hallinan also mentions the importance of the classroom type. In traditional classrooms pupils have less possibilities for interaction than in so-called open classrooms. In the middle of these two types of class there may be so-called semi-open classrooms. (Hallinan 1981, 107.) The teacher may exert some impact on the class atmosphere and, thus, on what kind of groups form within the class (Allen 1981, 187; 127; Hallinan 1981, 108; Damico and Sparks 1986, 122). Lasonen claims that the teacher's attitudes and behaviour influence children and the classroom atmosphere even on an unconscious level (Lasonen 1981, 54; 216).

3.3.5   Critiques on Sociometry

The sociometric method has naturally its own limitations. First of all, sociometry has been claimed to be a distorted and simplified version of social relations. One may, for example, ask why ethnicity seems to be so important in determining children's friendship choices although the social reality may differ considerably from the 'sociometric reality'. Denscombe et al (1986) have noticed a dissonance between teacher's perceptions and the results of sociometric studies. The sociometric data revealed ethnicity-based biases in children's friendship choices but field observations

showed the primary school to be *"a place of racial innocence if not racial harmony"* (Denscombe et al 1986, 231). The dissonance between sociometric testing and field observations may be explained as follows: the sociometric method is designed to reveal social structures of interaction that are not apparent to the observer. Thus, it may be thought that this method is an excellent tool for proving the existence of biased interaction patterns that are not visible for observers. On the other hand, we may think that the method reveals structures which it has produced itself at the moment of testing: pupils are forced to make choices - preferences or rejections - out of their peers although they might not do these choices naturally in every-day school life. Sociometric testing could then be totally condemned as being simplistic and inaccurate. Children's friendships seem to be far more flexible and complex than a sociometric test can allow for (Denscombe et al 1986, 232).

Troyna claims that the sociometric method is oversimplified and distorted because it does not consider the factor of interpersonal attraction. Choosing one's friends within one's own ethnic group does not necessarily indicate that the person has negative attitudes toward other ethnic groups. (Troyna 1993, 102.) In many sociometric studies, in-group choices are explained only by ethnicity, but one should keep in mind that the choosing process has more than one dimension (Lappalainen 1988, 15). One of the most important critiques concerns the fact that the sociometric theory fails to explain why some individuals are always more popular than others and why someone else is always rejected by others (Lasonen 1981, 14; Putallaz and Gottman 1981, 117). Sociometry may help identify popular and unpopular pupils but it does not take into account which traits make them more or less popular, neither does it tell us on what basis positive or negative choices are made. Furlong criticises the sociometric method for not examining how pupils themselves see their social relationships and how they actually interact. Also, it is usually assumed that social interaction is best understood by using the concept of informal groups. Friends will interact more frequently than pupils who are not friends. Furlong claims though that pupil interaction in classroom does not always necessarily take place in friendship groups. (Furlong 1984, 146.) On the basis of sociometric studies, we may find significant correlation between popularity and certain personality characteristics. However, these results do not give us any information about whether children truly consider those characteristics as important. Hence, sociometric testing in itself fails to understand or explain the actual process of choosing friends.

There has been some criticism of asking for negative choices, or rejections, and in some cases teachers have asked children not to answer these questions (e.g. Lasonen 1981) in fear of producing negative attitudes, or on the basis of ethical questions. However, as Lasonen (1981, 87) writes, rejections and refusals are part of every day life, and in order to help rejected children it is essential to identify them. Only by asking about negative choices it is possible to recognise both isolated and rejected children. Despite all the critique and problems concerning the use of the sociometric method, sociometric studies have usually proved to be reliable (Lasonen 1981, 205). Gronlund (1959, 183) claims that in general, studies have shown that sociometric results are significantly related to the actual behaviour of pupils, to teachers' judgements of pupils' social acceptance, to adults' ratings of pupils' social adjustment, and to personal problems of adjustment. The method may then provide us with a useful framework to study classroom interaction.

3.4   Ethnographic Research on Friendship and Ethnicity

Although childhood researchers have in recent years started to recognise the value of qualitative research and the use of a more comprehensive field methodology, studies on ethnicity and friendship are still scarce within this rather recent research tradition. Thompson (1996) has studied children's social networking in a multilingual kindergarten in England by using the method of social network analysis. 'Social network' refers here to informal social relationships. These relationships may be loose when one may speak about pupils networks, or intense when it is a question of friendship network. According to Thompson, there are certain markers of ethnicity which may indeed act as attraction factors for pupils. The markers of ethnicity, such as physical features, provenance, language, family descent or race, nationality, culture, traditions and religion, help individuals identify themselves and each other as same group members. Social networking functions on the basis of 'preferred participants' who have access to a friendship network. The emerging patterns in Thompson's study suggest that friendship choices in young children are not random but often based on ethnicity: preferred participants are mostly chosen within one's own ethnic group. (Thompson 1996, 50; 64-65.)

As mentioned earlier, ethnographies of children's peer relations are few, and there are even less ethnographic studies on children's friendships in culturally

diverse environments. However, it can be claimed that ethnographic research provides us with a rich understanding of the phenomenon from a unique *insider viewpoint*. Deegan (1996) has conducted a comprehensive study on children's friendships in culturally diverse classrooms. His ethnographic research was carried out in a culturally diverse fifth-grade, elementary school classroom. The methodology included observations, interviews, sociograms, and physical-trace documents. In his study, two major themes emerged: consonance and dissonance. Consonance refers to characteristics or traits valued by the class as a whole. Consonant negotiation of friendships involved strategic adaptation to the parameters of encounter, togetherness, niceness, and fighting. Two social categories of dissonance emerged in the study: immigrant dissonance and life-situational dissonance. Dissonance refers to children's characteristics or traits which were not valued by the majority of the class. (Deegan 1996, 39-50.)

The parameter of encounter was critical for the promotion of friendships with new students. These encounters essentially took place at recess. The children attempted to overcome cultural barriers in their situations through friendship bids. Togetherness seemed to be present for a same-sex friend and it cut across racial, ethnic and socio-economic factors. Sharing was considered as an important dimension of togetherness. The parameter of niceness was equated with sharing and respect among children. Being nice emerged repeatedly as a response when asked 'What is a friend?'. Fighting emerged as a manoeuvre in the way that several children negotiated their friendships by fighting. Fights between friends occurred infrequently and the children's popular perception was that only non-friends fought. (Deegan 1996, 44-46.)

When it comes to dissonant parameters, immigrant children experienced popular misconceptions about their culture. These included derogatory comments on the status of their health, difficulties with language, physical appearance, and name-calling. Although language difficulties were readily acknowledged, both immigrant and non-immigrant children were slow to admit that children from other countries were often objects of name-calling and insults. For example, even though interviews indicated that an Asian boy had many friends in the class, he was not an exception from racist comments. Immigrant children also wrestled with acculturation, assimilation, and accommodation concerns. (Deegan 1996, 46-48.)

Deegan presents three cases which reflected life-situational dissonance. These children exhibited traits or characteristics not valued by the majority of children

in the study but in their case the experiences were more intense. All these children were African-American and each of them had rather particular life situations. Two of them responded to socially promising situations in a negative way and one was so often absent from school that potential friendships were affected by the absences. (Deegan 1996, 48-50.)

4 CHILDREN AND CULTURE

4.1 Intercultural Encounters

Research in the field of intercultural communication aims at understanding and explaining encounters and interactions between persons coming from different cultures. Intercultural communication studies are interested in such phenomena as person perception, attribution and attraction, values and norms, non-verbal and verbal aspects of communication, and, acculturation and adaptation. This chapter introduces some cultural differences as well as factors influencing intercultural contacts, based on research on adults. For the purposes of this study, there is no need to get into details but only to present some main findings and hypotheses. The second chapter will examine more closely cultural differences and contacts between children from different ethnic groups.

Nevertheless, before proceeding any further, there is a need to define what is meant by 'culture' and 'cultural differences' in this study. Also, we need to state clearly what we understand by the relation between culture and ethnicity. The UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies held in Mexico in 1982, adopted a widely used definition of culture: *"In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group. It includes not only arts but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs."* This definition of culture was again reaffirmed by the Intergovernmental Conference

on Cultural Policies for Development held in Stockholm in 1998.[5] We do sign the definition of culture in the large sense but it raises an essential question: what or who are the 'social groups' producing culture?

We often associate 'multiculturalism' with the presence of foreign people among the locals (Abdallah-Pretceille and Porcher, 1996, 14); however, cultural pluralism may be based on different gender cultures, professional cultures, generational cultures, regional cultures, and so on. National and ethnic cultures are fairly general while others may be seen as more specific cultures (Porter and Samovar 1994, 38). We may even go further by claiming that each person has his or her own individual culture. Then, since according to Andersen (1994, 229), intercultural communication occurs when two or more individuals with different cultural backgrounds interact, we might claim that any interpersonal contact is also an intercultural one. But from the point of view of the present study, we cannot be satisfied with such a facilitative explanation. Were we to believe that ethnic or national background had no role to play in personal cultures, we would not need to conduct this study at all, or we might as well study cultural differences and intercultural contacts between only Finnish pupils.

There is yet no willingness from the researcher's side to consider individual persons as being powerless and passive victims of their ethnic or national environment. First of all, each culture is seen as constructed by several subcultures (Abdallah-Pretceille and Porcher, 1996, 14). The prefix 'sub' is not meant to have any decreasing connotation: it refers to the fact that subcultures are usually smaller in size, but not less valuable. Secondly, culture is seen only as one of the four main sources of interpersonal behaviour, along with traits, situations and states. Although culture influences strongly the social environment as well as the behaviour of individual persons, one should not confuse cultural traits with the personality traits of a person: only some of the personality traits of a person are the result of culture (Andersen 1994, 231). Also, we should note that there are individuals who are more strongly influenced by their cultural environment than others. People who have frequent contacts with people coming from other cultures or who live in a country other than their country of origin are more likely to have several cultural influences than those who only meet

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[5] Final Report of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, held in Stockholm March - April 1998.

people sharing the same cultural background. Finally, there is no contradiction in accepting the existence of both personal and collective cultures.

'Ethnicity' defines a group of people who share one or many common cultural backgrounds, national origins, languages, values, and practices (Foster et al 1996, 135). Ethnicity does not necessarily mean nationality; a person may be a citizen of a certain nation but still feel that she/he is rather part of another ethnic group. Ethnic groups usually originate from an area outside of or preceding the creation of their present nation-state residence (Porter and Samovar 1994, 38). Thus, when there are several people who share the same country of origin, we tend to consider them as an *ethnic minority* within the host country. This is also the approach adopted here: even though we know, for example, that the Somali people living in Finland do not actually consider themselves as being a unified ethnic group since their concept of belonging to a social group is based on clans or on the division between English-speaking and Italian-speaking Somalis (Alitolppa-Niitamo 1994b, 11; 14). We will talk about Somali people as only one ethnic group for the sake of clarity, with all respect to their own conceptions. The Finnish people are in this study the host country people and, as such, considered as forming their own *national* group.

What is, then, the role of ethnicity with regard to culture? As we have already seen, culture and ethnicity may be seen as two different sides of the same coin. As ethnicity refers to subjective feelings of belonging to a group, culture refers to the outcomes and organisation of the group i.e. language, values, behaviour, traditions, and so forth. Culture provides the human elements that bind ethnic groups together (Foster et al 1996, 135). When in this study we talk about 'cultural differences', we refer essentially to the *differences in behaviour and personality which occur between individuals coming from different ethnic or national groups and which can be seen as resulting from culture*. It is not always easy to distinguish between personal and cultural influences in behaviour, and that is, indeed, one of the factors contributing to the ambitions of this research.

Let us now examine what happens when people of different cultural backgrounds meet. It might be suggested that a higher level of attraction is necessary to call someone from another culture an acquaintance than is necessary when the person comes from the same culture (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 213). When choosing a friend or meeting new people, one may have a feeling of unfamiliarity toward a person from a very different culture than one's own and this may influence

friendship choices or interaction (Ofstad 1981, 26-27; Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 204). The more the members of some ethnic group differ from each other, for example, by the colour of skin, the stronger is the prejudice toward them, or the more difficult is the adjustment (Lasonen 1981, 40; Triandis 1995, 122). Triandis has also listed a number of cultural distance factors which influence inter-group contacts and may increase prejudice, such as differences in physical and behavioural features, dress, status, religion, ideology, and aesthetic standards (Triandis 1995, 127). Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey claim that group memberships have a differential impact on relationships on different levels of intimacy. It seems that once interpersonal relationships between people from different cultures reach the friendship stage, group memberships have little effect on the relationship. The majority of interaction has then a personalistic, not a culturalistic focus. (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 209.)

Acculturation refers to a process during which a person adapts to live in a new country: she/he must learn new ways to think, feel, and behave. In varying degrees, the person must also go through the further process of deculturation or unlearning some of their childhood cultural patterns. (Kim 1994, 393.) Alitolppa-Niitamo (1994a) has listed several factors which may influence the adaptation process: capacity of adaptation, cultural similarity or dissimilarity, host country hostility or receptivity, age, educational background and personality. Kim (1994) has also put together many factors, such as communication skills, ethnic group strength, preparedness and ethnicity. Second language or host language competence seems to be an important factor in inter-group communication (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 211; Hall and Hall 1988, 234). According to Kim, cross-cultural adaptation is, in essence, about change in individuals. The adaptation process is seen as an interactive joint venture between the conditions of the old and the new environment. Out of this dynamic interface arises a psychological movement of stress, adaptation, and growth. (Kim 1994, 394-402.) The degree of acculturation naturally plays an important role in interaction with the host country people.

Barna (1994) has identified a number of frequent stumbling blocks in intercultural contacts. These factors may interfere with communication between persons of different backgrounds: assumption of similarities, language differences, non-verbal misinterpretations, preconceptions and stereotypes, tendency to evaluate and high anxiety or tension. All these factors may affect negatively or even prevent the establishment of communication between individuals coming from different cultures.

Triandis (1977, 147) states that much intercultural behaviour leads to interpersonal difficulties because the perceiver makes the wrong attributions concerning the other person's behaviour and character. There seems to be little evidence on whether these critical factors play a role in intercultural contacts between children from different cultures.

Sometimes cultural differences may cause difficulties in interaction. It seems that cultural similarity or dissimilarity interacts with the type of relationship a person has with people from other groups and that cultural misunderstandings are very common (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 210; 212; Triandis 1995, 145). Cultures may be classified according to a number of criteria related to cultural and behavioural patterns. These classifications may be based, for example, on personal attributes (Triandis 1995) or on value orientations (Hofstede 1988). An *ethnic profile* is a description of an ethnic group in terms of its position on different cultural dimensions. The relationship between any two groups within a culture depends to some extent on the degree of match between their profiles. (Rotheram and Phinney 1987a, 201-208.) However, there is some evidence that sometimes a cultural match is not necessary even for an above-average adjustment (Triandis 1995, 123).

Hofstede (1988) has created a four-dimensional model for explaining cultural differences. He found four main dimensions on the basis of work-related value orientations:

1) Individualism vs. Collectivism
2) High Power Distance vs. Small Power Distance
3) Weak Uncertainty Avoidance vs. Strong Uncertainty Avoidance
4) Masculinity vs. Femininity

Finland seems to have a highly individualistic culture with small power distance between people with different status. Also, Finland stands for high femininity and for strong uncertainty avoidance. The latter refers to strict codes of behaviour and cultural homogeneity. Strong uncertainty avoidance is also related to intolerance. (Hofstede 1988.) Triandis has especially studied differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures, and their influence on prejudice. He has noted that the collectivists are more likely to identify with their own cultural group and thus be more ethnocentric. He also claims that so-called horizontal individualists, like the Dutch and Scandinavians, are least likely to be prejudiced. (Triandis 1995, 125-126.) It also seems that generally strangers establish relationships with members of in-groups more

easily in individualistic than in collectivistic cultures (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 206).

In addition to Hofstede's four dimensions, there has sometimes been used the concept of 'immediacy behaviours' which refers to actions that simultaneously communicate warmth, closeness, and availability of communication. Examples of these behaviours may be touching, smiling, eye contact, close distances and vocal animation. Andersen (1994) has put together a considerable amount of research findings. It seems that contact cultures - those in which immediacy behaviours occur frequently and are encouraged - include most Arab countries, the Mediterranean region including France, Greece and Italy, Jewish people from both Europe and the Middle East, Eastern Europeans and Russians, and Indonesians and Hispanics. Low contact cultures include most of Northern Europe, including Scandinavia, Germany and England, British-Americans, white Anglo-Saxons (referred to as the primary culture of the United States), and the Japanese. Explanations for these variations have been found in energy level, climate and metabolism. Cultures in cool climate tend to be task-oriented and interpersonally cold, while in warm climate cultures tend to be interpersonally oriented and interpersonally warm. (Andersen 1994, 232.)

However, it is important to remember that these classifications are artificial and that no culture is, for example, completely individualistic or collectivistic: cultures are rather situated at slightly different degrees within a cultural continuum. It should also be kept in mind that there is variation within the groups: many individuals may show behaviour patterns typical of their ethnic group but others not.

4.2   Cultural Differences in Children

There is not much literature available on children's intercultural communication, that is, how children communicate with their peers coming from other cultures and which factors may influence their interaction. However, there is some research evidence suggesting that behavioural differences among children from different ethnic groups are related to children's identities (Rotheram and Phinney 1987a, 201). In this study it is assumed that these behaviour patterns may also have an impact on how children from different ethnic groups perceive each others. Some behaviours which are considered as normal in one culture may be thought as strange in another, and

sometimes this may influence perception of and attitude toward others. One cause of friction in inter-group relations is indeed the fact that members of different cultures interpret specific behaviours differently and, thus, someone's behaviour may mystify, irritate or annoy someone else (Schofield and Anderson 1987, 255).

Rotheram and Phinney (1987a, 201-207) have undertaken an interesting task in putting together cultural variations on four different dimensions and comparing different cultures, focusing on research with children. They claim that cultural patterns can be seen rather clearly in children's behaviour. The four dimensions are:

1) group versus individual orientation: focus of behaviour may be either on social co-operation or on individual accomplishment;
2) active versus passive coping style: active style is associated with doing, passive with being or becoming;
3) attitude towards authority; and,
4) open and expressive versus restrained and private; for example, black children are openly and freely expressive in many situations and this tendency may sometimes be interpreted as aggressiveness or negativity by their white peers.

In certain cultures, as in that of the mainstream American, educational achievements are highly valued while in others, like within the Indians of the American Southwest, co-operation rather than competition is valued. As children's friendship relations often reflect the norms of adult society, it may be supposed that Indian children of Southwest accept more easily their low-performing peers because the emphasis is not so much on intellectual competence. (Allen 1981, 190-191.) In collectivistic cultures, dependence of children on others is seen as natural and even desirable whereas individualistic cultures support self-reliance and independence. Conflicts may develop when children raised by collectivistic parents must interact with children raised by individualistic parents. (Triandis 1995, 64.)

The term 'simple culture' is used by Triandis (1977). It refers to the degree of complexity of culture indexed by the number of different occupations, differentiation in settlement patterns, political centralisation, degree of social stratification, and degree of religious specialisation. The use of this kind of term is somewhat questionable since it produces negative associations and leads to thinking that some cultures are less complex and, thus, inferior to others. However, according to Triandis, in so-called simple cultures children have to participate more in child-rearing responsibilities than in complex ones because mothers in simple cultures are usually busier and do not have so much time to take care of their children. As a result,

children in simple cultures learn and are more likely to give than to take resources such as love and status. Children reared in cultures with nuclear families have been observed to engage in more intimate interactions than children raised in other kinds of families. It is possible to relate these two dimensions, taking-giving and intimate - non-intimate, to children's behaviour in different cultures. This is illustrated in figure 2.

FIGURE 2. Dimensions of giving and taking intimate or non-intimate resources in some cultures.

	Intimate resources	Non-intimate resources
Take	U.S.A	Northern India
Give	Mexico, Philippines	East Africa

For example, American culture is characterised by complexity and by a large proportion of nuclear families, and hence, American children are likely to take intimate resources, that is, to act sociably, seek dominance, and seek help. Taking non-intimate resources refers to seeking attention and reprimanding. Giving intimate resources reflects in children's behaviour so that Mexican children are likely to touch others. Children from East Africa seem to be likely to give non-intimate resources, that is, to suggest responsibility or assault. (Triandis 1977, 229.)

There is evidence that black children may dislike their white peers because of their different value orientations. Some research based on the social identity theory has shown that children may give themselves and others different kinds of identities and characteristics according to their ethnic background. Sometimes black children may not like white children because of the better school achievements of the latter. White children may be seen as arrogant, and as wanting to please the teacher and humiliate black children. Also, white children may be afraid of black children because the latter are considered as tough and aggressive. Black children sometimes seem to purposely annoy or provoke white children. The fear of and the hassling by black children may lead to avoidance of interracial contacts, and this impedes the development of positive relations between the two groups. (Schofield 1981, 78; 76; 80; 82.)

Laihiala-Kankainen (1997) is involved in a presently undergoing pilot study on Russian pupils' adaptation in Finnish schools. Five Finnish teachers have been interviewed for this study. They have reported that there are significant differences in educational and pedagogical cultures of Finland and Russia. Russian children seem to have problems of adaptation to classrooms. Adaptation seems to be easier for girls but the lack of social contacts is problematic for all. Power relationships appear to be particularly difficult to grasp. In Russia, teachers are respected and children are polite and cultivated, while in Finland there is emphasis on the idea of an 'active learner'. Russian children experience the need to be accepted and liked by the teacher and they expect the teacher to initiate action in the classroom. They often find the absence of external control as well as the use of two-way communication rather confusing. Mikkola and Heino (1997, 208) support these findings: in Finnish schools, individualism and personal responsibility are emphasised while in the schools of former Soviet Union countries the emphasis is on collectivism and collective responsibility.

Mikkola and Heino (1997) interviewed 120 teachers of 80 immigrant children for their case studies on immigrant children's adaptation. The children came mainly from former Soviet Union countries, Estonia, former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Iran, and Vietnam. Most children had some problems related either to their behaviour or cultural background. The researchers do not reflect upon how many of these behavioural problems might be related to cultural differences. The major problem for all immigrant children, except for Estonian pupils, was learning the Finnish language which proved to be an important factor in children's adjustment to Finnish schools.

The children from the former Soviet Union countries did not seem to have major problems related to culture. The children did seem to want to become friends with Finnish children but they found it difficult to approach the Finns - the latter were considered as cold. Culture shock seemed to reflect in children's behaviour. They felt lonely and cried often. Some children behaved aggressively. When it comes to Estonian children, there seemed to be few problems related to cultural differences. Teachers reported, however, that these children often lacked independence. The problems of the children from former Yugoslavia seemed to be rather individual and not related to cultural differences. Major difficulties were related to the low educational level of these children as well as to the fact that

parents did not seem to understand the importance of schooling. (Mikkola and Heino 1997, 201-203; 212-213; 220-221.)

Somali children were reported to have a lot of problems related both to their behaviour and to their cultural background. Aggressiveness related to fear, lack of motivation, stealing and breaking the norms of the school community seemed to be major problems. Somali children often fought with others and many Finnish children were afraid of them. It may be thought that these children simply looked for contacts with their Finnish peers but did not know any better ways than threatening and aggressive behaviour. Cultural and religious differences also led to disrespect for female teachers and to difficulties in relation to the concept of time, food, clothing, and sports classes. (Mikkola and Heino 1997, 227-230.)

The teachers described Iranian children as being aggressive, demanding much attention and having a short temper. They were bullied and they also bullied other children themselves. They had problems of concentration as well as a strong need to talk and get attention. The cultural background was clearly present in the case of one boy. His family was very cultivated and ambitious, and they had set a lot of hope on their son. When the father made a trip to the United States, the son had to take care of the whole family, as required by the Iranian culture, and he was deeply depressed. (Mikkola and Heino 1997, 239-240.)

Vietnamese children were described mainly as being quiet and moderate. If problems occurred, they mostly occurred only in the beginning. Vietnamese children had fights with their peers as well as with their friends - they seemed to be rather jealous of their friends. In some cases, the negative reactions of Finnish children made it difficult for Vietnamese children to find friends. The educational culture of Finland and Vietnam differ from each other significantly. The father is the most important member of the family. For most children, father represented the highest authority. It seemed to be difficult to obey a female teacher. The children seemed to be under pressure all the time. Especially the girls were expected to help at home and they did not have much time to meet their friends. Good school achievements were expected by the parents. Parents also seemed to be very strict and authoritarian with their children. (Mikkola and Heino 1997, 249-256.)

Although the results of the study by Mikkola and Heino (1997) were most interesting and gave a rather comprehensive overview on foreign children's adaptation, the findings would have more value if several perspectives, not solely

that of teachers, had been used. As it comes out clearly from the previous study, culture is not naturally the only relevant factor in children's behaviour. The age and gender of a child, and the status of the target of the social action are also important for certain kinds of behaviour (Triandis 1977, 229-230). As already mentioned, sometimes it may be difficult to distinguish between personal and cultural influences in behaviour.

5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This is a research on friendship and ethnicity in Finnish schools. The aim of the study is to find out what kinds of thoughts Finnish children express about their non-Finnish peers and how well they accept their non-Finnish peers as friends at school. The criteria for defining a 'non-Finnish' child used here are: a child who was born in another country than Finland and whose native tongue is other than Finnish. The theme will be approached from a child-centred perspective: how children themselves understand friendship, and whether ethnicity has importance in children's friendship choices at school.

As this research is qualitative, it is not meant to calculate correlation between children's opinions and their family background, geographical location, age, gender, or any other variables. That would require a totally different approach and a larger sample. Hopefully, this study will give us new, more complex and complete information on Finnish children's friendship relations and the role of ethnicity in them. Although quantitative studies are also valuable, they do not always offer us with a full understanding of underlying motivations and interpretations.

This study is not about measuring general attitudes but rather charting out what kind of thoughts and feelings children have about their peers. The main research questions are:

1) Is ethnicity a significant factor in children's friendship choices?
2) How are non-Finnish children received by their Finnish peers?
3) How are non-Finnish children perceived by their Finnish peers?
4) Do cultural differences interfere with the friendship between a Finnish and a non-Finnish child?

The main focus will be on children's own perceptions, interpretations and explications. There are no particular hypotheses to be tested. As indicated in the theoretical background of the research, there are contradictory findings and it would be very difficult to pose any presuppositions on this basis. The most important results of the research will come out from the children's answers. It will be interesting to compare whether the attributes expressed by children correspond the social attraction attributes, status characteristics or cultural differences presented in the theoretical background, or whether this research will come about with some completely new attributes.

Friendship, in the sense that it matters here, is what a child makes it out to be. This means that what is a 'friend' will be left for children to decide as the notion of and feelings about friendship are very subjective. Children may use many criteria for defining whether another person is a friend (Rubin 1980, 72) and these criteria may vary according to age, personality and other variables. If we are interested in understanding a child's friendships, we should try to understand them in children's own terms. It would be most interesting to study how children understand ethnicity and how they feel about their own cultural background but it is not possible in the framework of this study - the main focus will be on whether ethnicity emerges from the data as being an essential factor in friendship choices and relations.

6   DATA COLLECTION

6.1   Research Design

Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood. It allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is possible for example through experimental or survey styles of research (James and Prout 1997, 8). Ethnography means basically that research is conducted in the field without manipulating the actual scene. This study may be considered as semi-ethnographic on the basis of the following criteria: *participation* in the classroom activities by the researcher over a certain period; the classroom *context seen as unique*; the researcher as a *reflective practitioner*; any *spontaneous situations* related to the research problems may be used or referred to in interviews; *no specific hypotheses* to start with; and, respect for *actors' own voices*. Active participation in every-day activities of the class allows us to develop a more holistic picture of the situation and to familiarise the children with the researcher. However, there are certain criteria of ethnographic research which are not met here: participant observation is not used as a research method and the period over which research is conducted is not long enough i.e. several months (Borg and Gall 1989, 389).

The task of the researcher in ethnographic research on children is not simple. The adult must attempt to free her/himself from adult conceptions of children's activities and enter the child's world (Corsaro 1985, 3). The role of the researcher might be referred to as that of a 'friendly cultural stranger' (Deegan 1996, 43). However, while in pure ethnographic research the researcher integrates in the studied

group, it is not possible that the researcher fully integrates into the children's social world. In this study, children were right at the beginning informed about the real task of the researcher who participated in school activities as an assistant teacher. The researcher is seen as part of the research situation. It is evident that the presence of the researcher somehow influences classroom activities and the children's behaviour, and this should be taken into account in data analysis. However, it is not probable that the presence of the researcher essentially affected children's behaviour with regard to the research topic.

In ethnographic research, every social group and every social situation are seen as unique. Particular contexts produce particular situations, discourses, and each person gives his or her own meanings to particular events. There is no one truth; all human beings have their own realities. This is also what phenomenography is about. In phenomenography, people are not expected to have a schema which would correspond the reality. Essential is how people experience and interpret different phenomena themselves (Gröhn 1989). This approach is well adapted to and nowadays frequently used in studying children (Knookala 1990, 23; 44).

Each generation has created its own culture, and so have children. But there is no such thing as a stable or mainstream child culture. It can therefore be thought that each classroom has its own culture. Certainly so, but then we face the question of generalisability of the results of this study. One should always be careful in generalising research results and perhaps generalising is not, after all, the ultimate goal of research. Science at this stage serves in providing us with new information and for developing tools for further research. Although this research has produced data on solely one classroom, it gives valuable information on children's thinking processes and interpretations. We can also get some clues about how non-Finnish children may operate in Finnish classrooms and which factors influence children's interaction.

Triangulation refers to using several different kinds of data-collection instruments, such as tests, direct observations, interviews, and content analysis to explore a single problem or issue. This contributes greatly to our confidence in research findings. (Borg and Gall 1989, 393.) In this research triangulation was carried out by using three main methods: sociometry, essays and interviewing. Each method has its advantages and weaknesses. The sociometric questionnaire and children's short essays provide us with a general overview whereas personal interviews give a deeper understanding of motivations and perceptions behind children's choices and opinions

with regard to individual peers. Interviewing in itself would not have constituted a sufficient research method. It has been noted that expressed attitudes do not always correspond the actual behaviour (Troyna 1993, 100; Deaux et al 1993, 154). In interviews some persons may give a cleaner or prettier picture of their behaviour if they suspect that telling the truth would put them into a bad light (Alasuutari 1993, 80). Children may also know or guess what kinds of opinions or attitudes are socially desired and give the kind of answers they think they are expected to give.

Studies on children always raise the question of researcher's ethical responsibility (Corsaro 1985, 7). In the new child research paradigm, children are considered as their own subjects (James and Prout 1997, 8) - no child should be studied against his or her own will. A total anonymity of research subjects is to be respected, as should be the case in all research. The researcher should also be aware of keeping moralistic judgements in the minimum, especially in cases of possible racist or sexist talk (Deegan 1996, 43). It is also important to inform the children's parents about the study, as was done in his research. Both parents and children themselves were asked permission for interviews. All in all, one child did not return the consent signed by his parents, five children did not get permission from their parents, often accompanied by the explication *"she/he does not want to be interviewed"*. However, three of these children changed their minds during the research period.

The data was collected over a two-week period during which the researcher was present in regular classroom activities partly as an assistant teacher, partly as an observer. Even though systematic observation was not used in main methodology, it was possible to profit from certain situations which occurred during the data collection. For example, whenever there was a conflict between children, there was a good opportunity to discuss it in interviews.

6.2 Research Subjects

Research subjects (N=27) of the study were the pupils of an elementary school class situated in Southern Finland, nearby Helsinki, as well as their regular classroom teacher and the sports teacher. It was not hard to find a culturally diverse class in this area. As many as 2700 non-Finnish pupils go to school in Helsinki (Kajanne 1999). The class was not chosen randomly since the researcher already had connections to the school but this had no importance in the present study since the aim is not to generalise

or compare research findings with other classrooms or schools. The pupils of this third-year elementary school class were nine and ten years old. The class consisted of 25 pupils, eleven boys and fourteen girls, the majority of whom were Finnish:

- one Estonian boy
- one Estonian girl (speaks Russian as her native tongue)
- ten Finnish boys
- nine Finnish girls
- two Russian girls
- one Somali girl
- one Vietnamese girl.

6.3 Methodology

6.3.1 Short Essays

Sometimes it is easier to deal with certain questions by writing than by talking to a stranger. Children were asked to write a short essay describing what a good classmate is like. It was not mentioned before-hand that the aim was to study friendship relations particularly with regard to ethnicity - this was the best way of finding out whether ethnicity had spontaneously importance for children themselves.

6.3.2 Sociometry

Sociometry is a useful tool when studying children's friendship relations. In this research, it greatly facilitated entering the topic. The interview questions were partly based on the answers given in the sociometric questionnaire. As discussed before, the sociometric data does not necessarily correspond the reality of the classroom in the sense that children are obliged to name friends and non-friends out of their peers even though they might not do it naturally. But their choices do show some direction of their preferences. It should also be kept in mind that there may be instability in children's social relationships (Lasonen 1981, 86). One's best friend may not be a friend anymore the next day because of a small disagreement. For these reasons it is important to confirm the research findings of the sociometric questionnaire by triangulation. Interviews were also used to assure that sociometric data would not be interpreted in a wrong way.

The risk of measuring something that does not exist was at least partly avoided by using questions referring to concrete every-day situations. In this way, children could more easily relate the questions to their own life. The number of questions of the sociometric questionnaire is to be chosen by the researcher, and the questions may be general or specific. The formulation of questions should be adapted to the age of research subjects so that the questions are understandable. The formulation of sociometric questions was, however, problematic. First of all, it had to be decided whether one wanted to study actual friendships or children's wishes for friendship. Secondly, there was a difficulty of finding a wording precise enough but which would at the same time provide us with all the information needed.

As friendship is a subjective matter, children could decide themselves what they meant by a 'friend' in this study. Each child was asked to name one person who she/he considered as his or her best friend in the class. It was assumed that recreational activities, rather than classroom activities, take place between friends. Thus, the children were then asked with whom they played the most often during recess. However, whenever someone did not have a best friend in the class or if someone did not play with many pupils, she/he would write down the names of the pupils she/he would like to be friends with.

Asking for negative choices has often been considered as problematic from the ethical point of view (e.g. Lasonen 1981, 87). Negative questions were here softened by a right kind of wording. The children were not directly asked with whom they did not want to play but with whom they played the least often. This does not, of course, make disappear the fact that there are always children with whom the others do not want to play even though this kind of wording makes it sound less cruel. In this study the use of sociometry differed from its traditional use: the questions of the sociometric questionnaire did not only concern children's personal friendship choices but the method also served for giving information about bullying. Thus, the fourth question was: if bullying or name-calling occurs, which of the children of the class are bullied or called names?

In order to avoid biased answers, the children were not informed about the purpose of the study beforehand - they might have named their non-Finnish peers more frequently than they would do otherwise. The children were advised not to discuss with others during the filling up of the questionnaire and not to look at others' papers.

Three girls were absent and filled up the questionnaire later. They were given the same instructions as other children.

6.3.3   Interviews

Even though there are claims that children may not always be able to express their motivations verbally, in this study there is trust in children's capacity to speak for themselves. Interrogating children about their own interpretations and motivations gives valuable information about their subjective experiences of classroom interaction. The interviews were so-called thematic interviews. Thematic interviews should not be too structured but defining the main themes beforehand assures that the essential topics will be covered and that the data from all interviewees will be comparable. Even in pure ethnographic interviews the researcher gradually introduces certain elements in order to gain the information sought (Borg and Gall 1989, 397). There was some variation in themes and questions depending on the situation of a particular child and the answers she/he had given in the sociometric questionnaire.

Both Finnish (N=12) and non-Finnish (N=6) children were interviewed. Interviews were individual, pair and group interviews. Some children were interviewed several times, first individually, then in pairs or groups. Two out of the six non-Finnish children were not interviewed individually. Interviewing non-Finnish children assured us that the results would not be based only on a one-sided Finnish perspective. Pair and group interviews were used for studying the fourth research problem: several non-Finnish - Finnish friendship pairs or groups were identified and chosen to discuss possible cultural differences. In some interviews two drawings of bullying situations were used in order to facilitate discussion on a difficult issue.

Interviewing the teacher is a useful tool for studying children's relationships. She/he has important inside information about the stability of the classroom structure, general atmosphere, and adaptation of foreign pupils. The teacher's perspective also brings continuity to the data. The teacher's reality may be very different from that of the children: she/he has a different perspective and surely does not, and cannot, notice everything that is going on in the classroom. Also, personal and affective factors may interfere with objective observations of pupils. When it comes to sociometric studies, teachers have been noted to overrate those pupils whom they prefer and to underrate those they dislike (Gronlund 1959, 166). In

this study, both the regular classroom teacher and the sports teacher were interviewed. They were not informed about the results of the sociometric questionnaire before interviewing.

The first interviews took place at the end of the first week but most were conducted during the second week. The situation was very flexible and the teacher's wishes were respected. There were lessons where it was important to have all children present, some children who were weak in mathematics were not interviewed during maths lesson and since children clearly enjoyed lessons where they had the possibility to use computers, they were not interviewed during those classes. The interviews lasted 10 to 30 minutes, the average length being around 15 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in detail. The interview data consisted of about six hours of tape and about 60 pages of text.

7   DATA ANALYSIS

7.1   Classroom Context

The studied class consisted of 25 pupils the majority of which had already been in the same class since the first grade. Also, many of them had already met in pre-school. Three out of the six non-Finnish children had been in the class from the first grade and the others had arrived in the beginning of the present, third-grade school year in August 1998. There were also several Finnish children who had arrived in the class at the same time. The reason for these changes had been the need to break up certain disturbing friendship cliques by changing classroom structures. The regular classroom teacher had started to work with this class in autumn 1998. Despite these rather recent changes – the data collection was conducted during March 1999 – the classroom structure seemed to be rather well established and the findings from different methods were rather consistent. Children's responses also reflected great stability in their friendship relations. Most interviewed children had kept the same friends since pre-school or first grade.

According to both the regular classroom teacher and the sports teacher, the class did not differ essentially from other classes they had worked with, with the exception that the class was estimated to be very multicultural and sometimes particularly restless (these two observations are not connected). There seemed to be, indeed, good days and very bad days. Major problems of the classroom dynamics were not found in any ethnic conflicts, discrimination, or behaviour or adjustment problems

of non-Finnish children: the most visible problems were caused mainly by three Finnish boys who had diverse problems varying from social and emotional problems to learning difficulties. One of these boys was queuing for a special needs class. He used to have a personal assistant sitting next to him during almost every lesson. Also, there were several pupils who had clearly weaker school achievements than any of the non-Finnish children.

7.2   What Matters in Friendship

The children (N=24[6]) were asked to write what kind of a classmate is or should be a good classmate. Their task was facilitated by referring to concrete actions: what a good classmate does and does not, how a good classmate behaves and does not behave. They had one lesson of 45 minutes to complete the task but most children wrote their text in 20 to 30 minutes. The children were told not to talk to anyone during the task and not to look at others' papers in order to preserve the authenticity and spontaneity of the ideas expressed. Most children produced a full page of text which was a fairly good achievement from nine-year-olds.

Several children interpreted that 'a good classmate' meant a friend since they wrote about their friendship relations and often used the word 'friend' instead of 'classmate'. However, this does not essentially change or diminish the value of the data. The question is still the same: what characteristics are valued in peers? As shown in the table 1, children appreciate those classmates who do not bully or behave in any other bad ways. A good classmate is supposed to be nice and help others whenever help is needed. Children also value reliable classmates who do not lie or steal or use bad language. The responses did not differ essentially by gender: both boys and girls had similar types of responses. Some differences may be found in that girls seemed to give more importance to reliability.

In addition to the identified main categories there were individual responses, figuring in the category 'other', which only occurred once or twice, such as "does not depress", "is polite", "goes home with a friend", "goes to swim", "does not play with anyone [else]", "sometimes argues", "does not follow", and so forth. These separate responses, however enriching and numerous, were not taken into

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[6] One boy was absent during the lesson. He was not asked to write the essay later since his school achievements were weak and thus it was more important for him to participate in regular lessons.

account when defining the main categories as the focus is on what is considered as being important in general and whether ethnicity comes up spontaneously in the data.

TABLE 1. The most frequent responses for 'a good classmate'

Response category	Boys N=10	Girls N=14	All N=24
Does not bully, call names, kick, hit or push	7	14	21
Nice and helpful	8	12	20
Reliable	4	10	14
Does not argue, steal, lie or swear	4	7	11
Whom you can play with	4	7	11
Takes others into play	2	6	8
Other	8	11	19
Total	37	67	104

Ethnicity was clearly mentioned in only one essay written by a Finnish girl. She wrote[7]:

> "A classmate must be friendly and help others. A classmate must not bully or take others' things. [...] A classmate must accept you into the play and not discriminate others. A classmate must not call names at those who have come from other worlds."[8]

The girl surely referred to people coming from different countries, not from different worlds.

The essays were mostly written on a general level. However, one Finnish and two Russian girls had written who their friends were and what they were like. Four out of the six pupils mentioned in these essays were non-Finnish. This does not, however, yet tell us whether ethnicity has importance for the children themselves. It may, indeed, have been easier for them, especially to those whose native tongue is other than Finnish, to express their ideas in a concrete form rather than to write on an abstract level.

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[7] Citations of essays and interviews are not original but translated from Finnish to English by the researcher. This fact may, unfortunately, somehow impoverish the language used by children.
[8] Appendice 9: Copy of the original essay in Finnish.

The essays of Finnish and non-Finnish children were much alike both in form and content, except for the paper written by the Somali girl, Myryam[9]:

> **"A Good Classmate**
> A classmate must not tease you or call you names. A classmate must be patient. A friend must not deceive or forbid you. You must not leave your friend alone. If you leave your friend you will have to suffer. What is experienced by a friend is experienced by others too. You should not think that you are lonely. Later you will find a friend. A friend must not be angry. A friend must help and must not laugh at bad things."[10]

Loneliness is a pervasive idea in Myryam's essay since it is mentioned several times. There is no doubt that the writing is based on her own experiences. She must have felt herself lonely, at least in the beginning of her school year. This assumption was later confirmed by both the sociometric data and interviews.

When it comes to the interviews (N=18), the above-mentioned themes came up again repeatedly in children's answers when talking about friendship. It was considered important that a friend is kind and that she/he does not refuse to play with you. A friend does not fight or bully and one can do many nice things with him or her. Some children (n=3) appreciated especially funny and laughing peers. Most of the children interviewed (n=12) had already known each others and been friends in pre-school which shows great stability in their friendship relations. Some children (n=4) told that they lived near each others and walked to school together but this did not seem to be essential in friendship. Some of them only walked to school and home together, or had common hobbies, but still were not friends at school. Also, most children told that they lived far away from their friends and did not meet with them after school. Ethnicity did not come up in any way in the interviews as having importance in friendship choices.

Fights and disagreements may occur in friendship. Only three Finnish girls and one Finnish boy reported that they had never had fights with their friends. Whenever fights occurred, they did not appear frequently and only lasted from one recess to a maximum of one day. Approximately half of the children could not recall any particular reasons for fights or disagreements. The most frequent reasons mentioned were: *"she called me names"*, *"she did not want to play with me"*, and *"he gets angry without any reason"*. The last comment was common when talking about

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[9] All used names are pseudonyms.
[10] Appendice 10: Copy of the original essay in Finnish.

the Estonian boy. Sometimes there was disagreement on a concrete object, such as a toy or game. Fights or disagreements between Finnish and non-Finnish children were similar to those which occurred between only Finnish children or only non-Finnish children.

Only one source of disagreement was, somewhat indirectly, related to cultural differences. One Finnish girl reported that she had had a disagreement with Myryam, the Somali girl, in the school canteen. Myryam is a Moslem and she is forbidden to eat pork, so she has to get her food from a different place than others. The Finnish girl had asked Myryam why she went to get her food in a wrong place. Myryam had answered but the girl had not had time to listen and then Myryam had got angry. The Finnish girl reported that the same kind of situation had occurred several times. The disagreement had not lasted longer than one recess, and Myryam and the Finnish girl were friends again. Cultural differences did not interfere in the sense that children from different cultures would have incompatible personalities or so.

7.3　An Overview of the Sociometric Data

7.3.1　Classroom Structure in Terms of Attraction and Rejection

The use of the sociometric method in this research has already been explained in detail in the chapter 6.3.2 but there may be a need to recall some basic issues. The two first questions of the questionnaire concerning children's choices for friends and classmates (with whom they played) were directed to find out pupils' positions with regard to attraction whereas the third question (with whom one did not play) was aimed to examine children's relations in terms of rejection. The sociometric data provides us essentially answers to two research questions: how non-Finnish children are received by their Finnish peers and whether ethnicity influences friendship choices.

Sociometric data is very rich in information. One may examine the same data from many perspectives, for instance, from a general one and from the viewpoint of individual children. It is possible to analyse sociometric data statistically by using for example the method of Bronfenbrenner (e.g. Lasonen 1981; Lappalainen 1988) but as the sample of this research is small (N=25) and the focus is on qualitative analysis, the statistical method is not applicable. In this chapter the sociometric data is introduced in general terms with regard to the classroom structure as well as to ethnic

positions. Later the data will be used to consider the situation of four non-Finnish children individually.

Let us first examine the distribution of positive choices only (see figure 3). The number figuring in the middle of each symbol indicates the number of choices received by the child. The more positive choices a child has received, the closer she/he is to the centre and the more attracted other pupils have been to her or him. The position of each child within a sphere is random. Whether a child is more on the left or on the right in the figure has no importance.

One can note that in this classroom there is no one sociometric star. Sociometric star is the person who is clearly more popular than any other person of the group. There were two Finnish boys, one Finnish girl and one non-Finnish girl who were all chosen as friends or playmates seven times (f=7). Two Finnish boys and one non-Finnish girl did not get any positive choices - they are figuring outside the target. As expected, gender cleavage is outstanding. None of the boys chose a girl to play with, and vice-versa (this does not show in the present figure). The mean of all the positive choices made is m=3,7. Deviations from the average are not very significant. The average of the positive choices received by non-Finnish children is slightly above the general average, m=4,0. The average was the same for non-Finnish boys and girls. It should, however, be noted that more than a half, that is, 54 percent, of the positive choices they received also came from other non-Finnish children.

What comes to the negative choices (see figure 4), the variations are more prominent. The range of received choices varies from zero to eleven. This figure is opposite to the figure of positive choices. The closer a child is with regard to the centre, the more she/he has been rejected by her or his peers. Two Finnish girls did not get any negative choices but this may be explained by the fact that they were not at school the day when the sociometric questionnaire was filled up and the other pupils may have sort of forgotten about them. However, this was not the case with one Finnish boy who also was absent but still mentioned seven times. As we can clearly observe, the non-Finnish children were refused more often than the Finnish. While the average of negative choices for all children is m=3,5, the average for non-Finnish children is m=6,7. The pattern is even clearer when it comes to girls. The average of negative choices received by Finnish girls is m=3,2, it is of m=7,4 for non-Finnish girls. One non-Finnish girl received the most, that is, eleven negative choices (f=11). Four out of the six non-Finnish children are positioned clearly above average which

means that most non-Finnish children received negative choices more frequently than children did on the average. More than a half, that is, 62,5 percent of all choices received by non-Finnish children were negative.

It is conceivable that a younger child is liked because she/he displays those qualities esteemed by the peer group while a disliked peer is low on those characteristics (Mannarino 1980, 57). The most popular children were described in the interviews as being nice, funny, helpful, beautiful and as accepting others into play. This finding is indeed in concordance with both previous research on social attraction as well as with children's own descriptions of a good classmate (see chapter 7.2).

It has been noted that there are mainly two major types of rejected children: aggressive and submissive (Smith et al 1998, 120). In this research, the children explained the most frequently that they did not want to play with certain pupils because these were aggressive and bullied others, were not helpful or refused to play with them. These answers were perfectly consistent with the descriptions of a good classmate. For example, Riku, a Finnish boy who received seven negative choices was described by others as a disturbing, swearing and aggressive boy with whom nobody liked to play. One unpopular Finnish boy was described to kick and hit others all the time and another one was reported not wanting to play with others.

Interestingly enough, there was no major dissonance between the desired peer characteristics and the descriptions of the three non-Finnish girls who still received the most negative choices. They were described as being nice and not to bully others. Only one girl mentioned that Myryam, the Somali girl, had not once helped her. The Russian-speaking girls were sometimes reported to refuse to play with the Finnish girls. These girls were not reported nor did they seem to be particularly aggressive or submissive. This would indicate that if personal characteristics or behaviour of the non-Finnish children were not disturbing and they still were refused, the negative choices were indeed made at least partly on the basis of a different ethnic background.
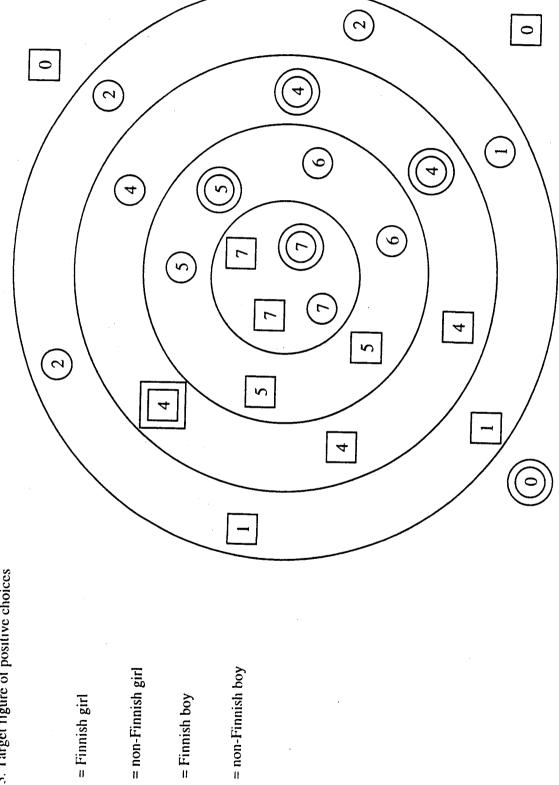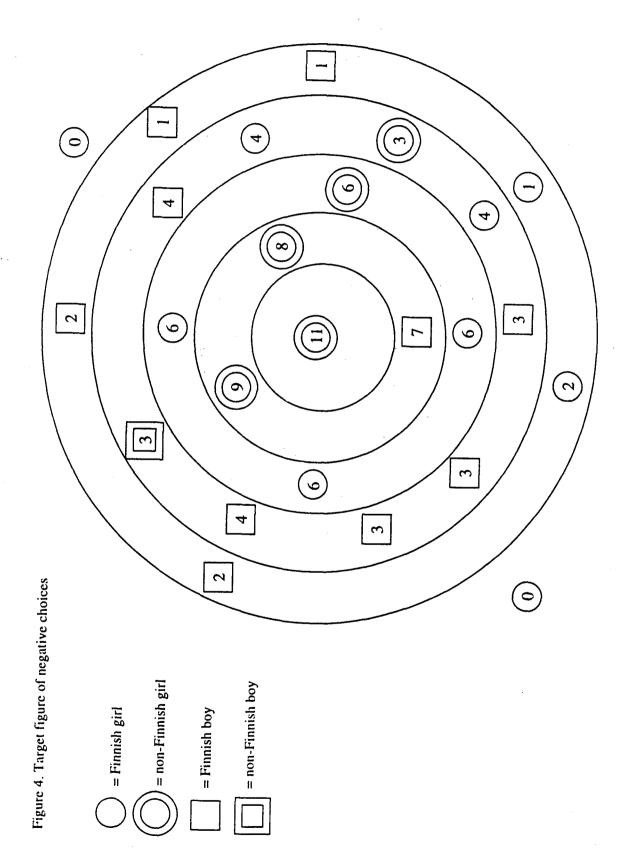
Figure 3. Target figure of positive choices

◯ = Finnish girl

◎ = non-Finnish girl

▢ = Finnish boy

▣ = non-Finnish boy

Figure 4. Target figure of negative choices

○ = Finnish girl

◎ = non-Finnish girl

□ = Finnish boy

▣ = non-Finnish boy

When we put together both the positive and negative choices, we get a more holistic picture of the classroom situation (see figure 5). This has been carried out by counting for each child the average of the positive and negative choices she/he received. If a child received five positive choices and three negative choices, her or his overall position was calculated by reducing three from five. In this case, the child's position would then be +2. The average position for all children is m= -0,2. Four out of the six non-Finnish children are situated below average. The situation of one non-Finnish girl seems to be rather critical. Her position deviates clearly from the general pattern and on the basis of the sociometric data she can be classified as a rejected child. It is the question of Myryam, the Somali girl. Even though the Estonian girl as well as one Russian girl received more negative than positive choices, they are not considered as merely rejected pupils as they received equally positive choices. The other Russian girl can be considered as a controversial pupil. She received almost the same amount of both positive and negative choices. She can thus be considered as both liked and disliked by many. On the contrary, Kim, the Vietnamese girl, seems to do very well since she is the second most popular girl in the class.

All in all, each child was mentioned on the average about eight times (m=7,6). Three Finnish girls were mentioned only two times each and one boy three times but it is difficult to say whether these children can be considered as neglectees or isolates since three of them were absent during the filling up of the questionnaire. They may simply have been 'forgotten' by their peers. None of the non-Finnish children can be considered as a neglectee or an isolate since they all received from seven to thirteen mentions (m=10,7).

We can conclude that ethnicity does have importance in children's friendship choices since most non-Finnish children received fewer positive than negative choices from their Finnish peers. Ethnicity in itself may sometimes be a significant determinant of friendship. However, there are individual differences. Ethnic background alone is not a sufficient determinant for rejection or attraction.
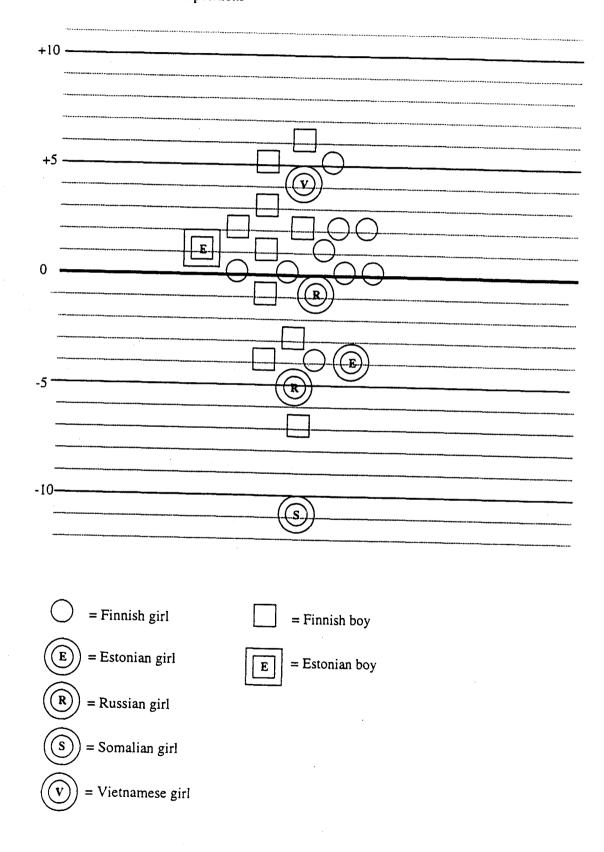
Figure 5. Children 's overall positions

○ = Finnish girl

Ⓔ = Estonian girl

Ⓡ = Russian girl

Ⓢ = Somalian girl

Ⓥ = Vietnamese girl

□ = Finnish boy

[E] = Estonian boy

7.3.2   Who Is Bullied

The fourth question of the sociometric questionnaire was not a usual one: while normally the sociometric questionnaire is used uniquely to discover the classroom structure, it served here also to get information on bullying and name-calling. The children were told to write down the names of the pupils bullied. They were also advised to write down their own name if they felt they had been subjected to bullying. Self-reporting has been noted to be the most satisfactory assessment instrument for bullying (Moran et al 1990, 431). Five children (n=5) reported that no child in the class was bullied or called names. Each child was mentioned to be bullied or called names on the average m=2,8 times. Four pupils - two Finnish boys, one Estonian boy and one Finnish girl - were mentioned six times. The Finnish girl who was reported to be bullied the most often (f=6) was Iida, a Finnish girl who played the most often with the non-Finnish children (see figure 6: reciprocal friendship choices). There were four children who were not mentioned at all. Every non-Finnish child was mentioned at least twice. As shown in the table 2, non-Finnish children seem to be bullied on the average about two times more often than the Finnish. One should however keep in mind that as the sample is small, even one or two responses may change the results in a critical manner. Nevertheless, the figures shown below do indicate that there is reason to believe that non-Finnish children are subjects of bullying more frequently than the Finnish.

TABLE 2. Who is bullied?   Table 2. Who is bullied?

Average of times mentioned	Girls m	Boys m	All M
Finnish	2,0	3,1	2,6
Non-Finnish	3,6	6,0	4,0
Total	2,5	3,4	2,8

When the issue of bullying was elaborated in the interviews, it became more evident that the non-Finnish children were indeed bullied and called names. They were mostly bullied in the same ways and by the same pupils as Finnish children. They were kicked, hit and pushed by mainly two boys in the class, Riku and Tomi. The

differences occurred in name-calling. The non-Finnish children were often called names by Riku as well as by children from other classes. Only boys were mentioned to bully or call names. The most frequent words used for name-calling were 'Chinese', 'Indo-Chinese', 'nigger', and 'ryssä' which is a belittling Finnish word for a Russian. Some non-Finnish pupils had also been called 'sausage', 'stupid' or 'pisshead' but these words do not embody any direct allusion to the ethnic background.

However, one should be careful not to make too fast conclusions concerning the racist contents of name-calling. The teacher described that Riku, the Finnish boy who was reported to bully and call names the most often, did not bully only non-Finnish children. He did use belittling words referring to ethnicity, such as 'ryssä', but also employed words 'handicapped' and 'gay' in order to call names at any children in the class. There had been a period during which he had called everyone Russian and was now having a period when he called everyone handicapped. It would have been most interesting to apply the model of Troyna (see chapter 2.3.4): even though Riku used racist name-calling, it does not necessarily mean that he held racist attitudes. But although the boy expressed himself that he was willing to be interviewed, he did not bring back the consent signed by his parents and, thus, it was not possible to interrogate him.

The word 'nigger' was observed to be used two times during the research period with no meaning of name-calling. When Kim, the Vietnamese girl, was told to describe what happened in a picture (see appendice 8a), she explained that three boys bullied the fourth one because he was a nigger. Apparently she did not understand that the term was belittling. Another situation occurred during the arts lesson when children were doing clay works. The clay coloured children's hands brown and some boys were joking about it, saying that they were now like niggers. These boys did not express any prejudiced attitudes in the interviews. For example, when they were asked what they thought about foreign people coming to Finland, they said it was a good thing.

It seems that especially those non-Finnish children who differed from others physically were subjects of bullying and name-calling. The Somali girl was mentioned five times (f=5) and the Vietnamese girl four times (f=4). The Vietnamese girl described that when she and other non-Finnish girls gathered together during recess 'in the big pupils' side', waiting to go to their Finnish language lessons, only she and the Somali girl were called names. When both Finnish and non-Finnish

children were asked possible reasons for bullying and name-calling, the most frequent responses were different skin colour or different appearance.

The non-Finnish child who was reported to be bullied the most often was however the Estonian boy, Lennart, whose appearance did not differ radically from Finnish children. He was mentioned six times (f=6) as being the subject of bullying. However, it is not certain whether this indication corresponds to the reality: Lennart was described by other children and the teacher as being susceptible and to over-react often. Thus, the situations where he had felt bullied may have been more easily noticed by others. It may also be so that as he easily got irritated and reacted to any stimuli, other pupils preferred choosing him to be bullied. In this case, bullying cannot be considered as being based on ethnicity. Of course, any indication of bullying and subjective feelings of being object of bullying should always be taken most seriously. Some children did tell that Lennart was often irritated, kicked and bullied by some second-grade pupils. A Finnish girl reported that Lennart did not bully others but that he was often the subject of bullying. Lennart had also had some major problems with Riku but according to the teacher one cannot really say whether it was actually a question of bullying or other type of disagreement.

7.4   Does Ethnicity Matter?

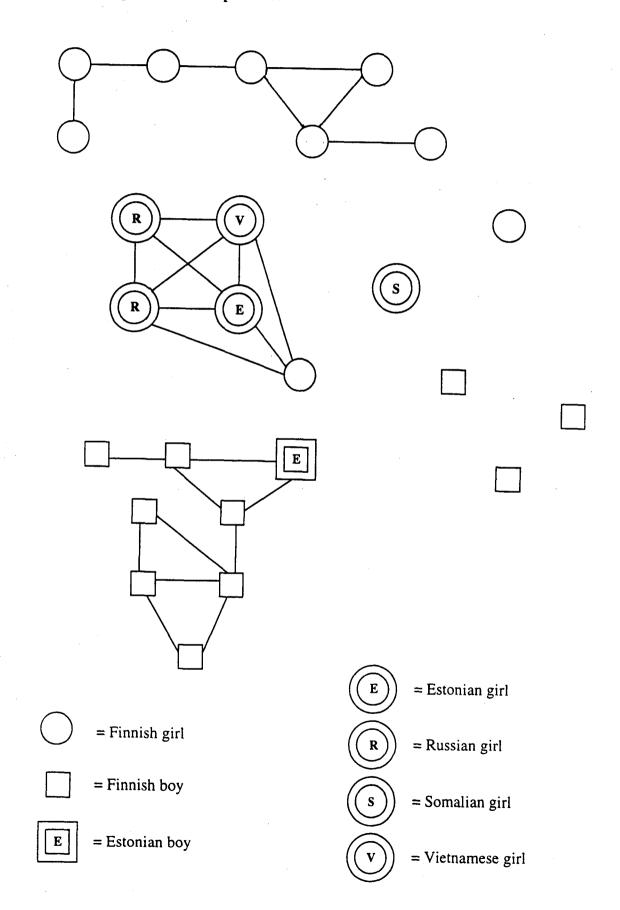### 7.4.1   Ethnic Cleavage in the Classroom

There is clear evidence of the existence of an ethnic cleavage in this classroom, at least when it comes to the girls. We do not know what the situation would look like were there more than only one non-Finnish boy. That is also the reason why only girls' choices have been taken into account in the following table (see table 3). One non-Finnish boy does not naturally form a group by himself and there is no possibility for him to make any in-group choices. What is therefore meant by an in-group and out-group? A rather artificial definition has been used here for the sake of clarity: the in-group for Finnish children is that of Finnish pupils and those who are not Finnish are in the position of out-group and vice versa. This means that those Finnish girls who chose Finnish classmates as friends made the corresponding number of positive in-group choices. Whenever a Finnish girl reported that she did not play with non-Finnish girls, we consider these answers as negative out-group choices. The same goes the

other way around: when a non-Finnish girl had chosen non-Finnish friends, she had made the corresponding number of positive in-group choices, and so forth.

As one can see in the table 3, the majority of positive choices (78 percent) were in-group choices whereas most negative choices (70 percent) were out-group choices. This proves that there exists a strong ethnic cleavage in the class: children would choose more likely friends and playmates within their own group whereas they would reject children belonging to an out-group. The fact that the number of non-Finnish girls (N=5) was smaller than that of the Finnish (N=9) does not change the direction of choices: even though the probability to choose a non-Finnish child as a friend is smaller than that of choosing a Finnish one, at the same time it is also less probable to make a negative choice. Theoretically, the number of both non-Finnish and Finnish girls would be sufficient to create a situation where the choices would follow the ethnic line up to 100 percent since the number of choices made was four, that is, less than the size of the smaller group. Thus, taking into account both the positive and negative choices allows us to have confidence in these results.

TABLE 3. Girls' in-group and out-group choices.

Number of choices	Positive f	%	Negative f	%
In-group	42	78	17	30
Out-group	12	22	39	70
Total	54	100	56	100

These findings are confirmed by the analysis of reciprocal friendship choices (see figure 6). Even though a certain number of both Finnish and non-Finnish girls made positive choices from both the in-group and the out-group, the choices were only one-way choices. This refers to the fact that there are no clear friendship patterns across the ethnic line of Finnish and non-Finnish girls, except for one Finnish girl who is part of the clearly identifiable non-Finnish clique. When the girls' patterns are compared with the corresponding figure of boys' friendship choices, one can see that such clear cliques, whether based on ethnicity or other, do not occur. Only, three boys (those who were seen as unsociable or aggressive) were excluded from the 'major clique'. We may think that boys do not have such clear patterns because they socialise more with each other whereas girls prefer spending more time with their best friends. It

Figure 6. Reciprocal friendship choices

○ = Finnish girl

□ = Finnish boy

□E = Estonian boy

Ⓔ = Estonian girl

Ⓡ = Russian girl

Ⓢ = Somalian girl

Ⓥ = Vietnamese girl

might then be supposed that even though there were more non-Finnish boys in the class, ethnic patterns would not necessarily be as predominant as is the case with the girls. However, in this class, there are no clear friendship cliques between the Finnish girls either. Rather, they seemed to have only one larger, common network.

The girls did not, however, play only within the friendship cliques: most girls as well as the teacher reported that all the girls often played together. It seems that the cliques became more visible in particular occasions, like during conflicts. Several girls recalled situations where all the girls of the class had had a fight. Each girl had been told to take a position: non-Finnish girls and some Finnish girls against only Finnish girls. It seems that fights essentially occurred first between Kim, the Vietnamese girl, and Niina, a Finnish girl, who did not seem to get along very well. This came up spontaneously in many interviews when interrogating about disagreements in the class. Both girls also clearly stated in the interviews that they did not like each other.

Also, the cliques were observable during sports lessons when the children had the possibility for free placement. The sports teacher reported that the three Russian girls mainly gathered together when they could choose to do exercises in pairs or small groups. The Somali girl seemed to choose and to be chosen as a pair randomly by Finnish girls. As one can observe in the figure 6, she was not included in any friendship clique within the class.

7.4.2   Peer Perception with Regard to Ethnicity

Usually non-Finnish children are distinguished from others concretely as they often have their own religious instruction or native tongue lessons several times a week. Both teachers described that the non-Finnish children of the studied class were essentially distinctive with regard to concrete issues, such as having different lessons and speaking different language. However, there were also several Finnish children who regularly spent a couple of hours a week in special education classes, and other children did not seem to pay any particular attention to the fact that some of them were often absent from regular classes. This was confirmed by observations in the classroom. The ethnicity of a non-Finnish peer was clearly stated only once during the two-week period. In this illustrative situation, the teacher was checking which of the pupils were absent. She noted that Kim, the Vietnamese girl, was not in the classroom

and mentioned it. A Finnish boy corrected: *"No, she is not absent, she is having her Vietnamese class!"* This observation was quite natural and did not carry any more meaning than to note that someone was visiting the dentist.

An interesting contradiction was found between children's ethnicity-based friendship choices and their observations of other children. Even though friendship choices followed ethnic lines, confusions concerning the ethnicity of *opposite-sex classmates* were surprisingly frequent. Some children did not know which of the children of the class were Finnish and which were not. A Finnish girl thought that one Finnish boy was not Finnish since he was orthodox and had different religious instruction. Several children failed to identify the number of non-Finnish children in the class or confused their country of origin. For instance Sonja, the Russian girl, was once stated to be Vietnamese. Myryam and Kim, the two girls who differed the most from others physically, were mainly identified as non-Finnish whereas the Russian and Estonian children were sometimes thought to be Finnish. This was rather unexpected since the three Russian-speaking girls were reported by several children to speak often Russian with each others.

Not only Finnish children had confusions with regard to ethnicity. Even though all the non-Finnish children identified their non-Finnish peers, the Estonian girl, Katarina, confused between being Russian and Estonian. Since her mother tongue was Russian, she identified herself with the Russian girls' group. When Katarina was asked how she could explain the fact that she and Lennart both came from Estonia but did not speak the same language, she answered: *"Because Lennart does not dare to talk to me!"* Sonja, the Russian girl, understood that there was a confusion and asked Katarina if she could speak Estonian. Katarina answered that she did not and Sonja laughed.

The question which was particularly formulated in order to find out whether ethnicity would occur as an important attribute in peers was as follows: "Would you tell me something about **[11]?" When it comes to the attributes given to non-Finnish classmates, less than a half of the respondents (n=7), six Finnish children and the Estonian boy, mentioned right at first the nationality of the person or stated that she/he was not Finnish. Six Finnish children and three non-Finnish children (n=9) did not give spontaneously importance to ethnicity. These responses did not have any

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[11] ** = the name of a classsmate. The children were asked to describe both Finnish and non-Finnish peers.

relation with gender, neither with whether the respondents played with non-Finnish children or not. This indicates strongly that ethnic background is not always considered as a primary attribute in peers nor is the perception of a different ethnic background a dominant factor in friendship.

When asked whether non-Finnish peers were similar to or different from the Finnish, several Finnish children answered that they were both similar and different (n=5). Those who found that non-Finnish children were similar to the Finnish (n=3) explained that they had the same manners and that they also spoke Finnish. The children who found that non-Finnish peers were different from the Finnish (n=4) described that non-Finnish children did not read very well and that they spoke in a different way. They did not stay on their seats in the classroom, they spoke and laughed more than the Finnish children, they had different skin colour and different clothes, they had their own games and that some of them were shyer than the Finnish children.

The descriptions of non-Finnish peers were not always in concordance. Even though most children saw that non-Finnish children spoke, laughed and moved around in the classroom more than the Finnish, one respondent (a Finnish boy) thought that they were shyer than Finns. As we have seen in the chapter 4.1, Finland has been described as a country with strict codes of behaviour and cultural homogeneity. Also, Finnish culture is distinctive in low contacts which refers to the low frequency of such actions as touching, smiling, eye contact, and vocal animation. Perhaps what the Finnish children have observed has been some degree of cultural differences. Finnish people do not search contacts with others as actively as some non-Finnish persons may do.

We should be critical about children's observations and about the interpretations we make based on them. First of all, when it comes to moving around in the classroom, both teacher and researcher observations do not confirm the claim that non-Finnish children would stay less on their seats than the Finnish. The non-Finnish children actually behaved very well in the classroom. Secondly, we know that already existing stereotypes that we entertain about other people may well direct our perception: we see what we want or expect to see. Children may have learned cultural stereotypes from their parents or from any other source of social learning and thus, base their perceptions on subjective expectations rather than on objective observations.

However, many pupils recalled a Somali boy who had been in their class only during the first grade. This boy was described as aggressive and disturbing. The Estonian boy referred to the Somali boy as being like Riku[12] but having a different skin colour. However, the children noted that Myryam, the Somali girl, was totally different. She was described as calm and nice. This would indicate that the children did not have strong stereotypes or prejudice about Somali people on the basis of their previous contacts with the disturbing Somali boy.

It is very interesting that Iida, the Finnish girl who played the most often with non-Finnish children, was frequently described by others as 'loud', 'nosy' and 'stubborn'. She was also reported to talk much and to forget often her homework. This girl was often bullied but she was still rather popular. The personality qualities and behaviour of this girl would not support the hypothesis that the Finnish people have strict codes of behaviour and that they are not expressive. We may believe that this girl just was not typically Finnish and that for this reason she got so well along with her non-Finnish peers or, then, we may think that any generalisations or classifications of cultures are artificial and that each human being should be seen as unique instead of trying to brush her or him by force into a category. We let the readers decide for themselves which view they prefer.

All the non-Finnish respondents (N=6) found that non-Finnish and Finnish children were different from each others. Although the Estonian boy considered himself as being similar to the Finnish, except for the fact that he spoke *"in a different voice"*, he mentioned several differences between other non-Finnish children and the Finnish, such as different appearance and different language. Kim, the Vietnamese girl, told that the Finnish children had different kind of hair and that they grew up fast, that they had a different religion and that they behaved badly at school. Myryam, the Somali girl, described that many Somali people were nicer than the Finnish and that in Somalia there was no bullying at school. She also listed a number of differences with regard to manners, culture, language, skin colour and feelings. She also told that Kim was different from the Finnish because she often started bossing around. The three Russian-speaking girls reported that the non-Finnish and Finnish children had different hair and different eyes, that they played different kinds of games and, that in Russia they would learn things at an earlier age than they do in Finland. They were also

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[12] The Finnish boy of the class who was queuing for a special needs class and who was the least popular boy because of his aggressiveness.

unanimous on the fact that Finnish children behaved badly at school. The girls told, for example, that in Russia you are not allowed to shout at school.

The non-Finnish children seemed to be somewhat more aware of and attentive toward ethnic background and cultural differences. This may be based on their personal and family experience. The fact that all non-Finnish children except the Estonian boy reported that Finnish children behaved badly at school confirms previous research. For example, Russian and Vietnamese children have learned to respect authority and they often feel that Finnish children do not obey teachers (Laihiala-Kankainen 1997; Mikkola and Heino 1997). We should however be aware of the fact that these children were very young when they came to Finland and they have not gone to school in their country of origin. So, their ideas about school in other countries may be at least partly based on what they have been told by their parents. It is difficult to know whether life in school has essentially changed since their schooling.

As one can note, the children seemed to pay mainly attention on concrete and visible signs of ethnicity. Nevertheless, the children's answers give us reason to believe that even though differences in skin colour and language are perceived, they do not interfere in an important way with children's perception of others. Many children recognised both similarities and differences and the perception of differences did not prevent children from making friends with those perceived different.

7.4.3   Conclusions: Why Does the Ethnic Cleavage Occur?

Given the contradictory nature of the two parameters, ethnic cleavage and peer perception, we face the question: if ethnicity is not, as the interview data would lead us to think, a predominant factor in peer perception, why then does the ethnicity-based friendship clique occur? Firstly, we need to consider the fact that friendship cliques, whether based on ethnicity or not, occur naturally within classrooms; so there is nothing surprising in the realisation that cliques appear also in this particular classroom. However, the presence of only one clique and at the same time the absence of others is an interesting phenomenon and highlights the importance of ethnicity within this class.

When we go back to the beginning where the children wrote and told about friendship, we recall that ethnicity did not seem to have importance for children themselves. What seemed to be by far the most significant determinant of friendship

was the time aspect. Most children had been friends with the same peers for several years. This aspect also had importance in the non-Finnish friendship clique (see figure 6): Victoria, the Russian girl, and Katarina, the Estonian girl, had already met in pre-school at the age of six. Sonja, the other Russian girl, had become friends with Victoria during the first grade because her grandmother lived next to Victoria's house, and then all the three girls had started to play together. The only Finnish girl figuring in this friendship clique, Iida, had always been in the same class with Katarina and Victoria. Sonja and Kim, the Vietnamese girl, had met in the first grade in school and been friends since then. They both came to the present class in the beginning of the school year and were thus already friends. Nevertheless, there had been a third girl, the Finnish Piia, who had played with Sonja and Kim before and who had changed class at the same time with them, but who now seemed to be both unnoticed by her new Finnish peers and unwanted by the non-Finnish girls. If one really wants to know why these children had started to play together in the first place, we should get back to their pre-school times or first grade experiences, which was not possible in this research. However, we may always speculate with the idea and consider factors which may have facilitated and constantly reinforce the clique.

First of all, we might examine the situation of the three Russian-speaking girls. They reported that it was easier for them to speak Russian than Finnish together. Especially Victoria had difficulties in expressing herself in Finnish. Also, the idea of telling secrets in another language was found fascinating. The girls told that they would sometimes speak Russian when they did not want others to understand what they talked about. This seemed to disturb the Finnish children. Several of them reported that the Russian girls spoke Russian particularly during the handicrafts lessons. The Finnish children did not like it since they did not know whether the girls said some bad things about others. Also, the girls were reported to refuse to translate in Finnish when asked to. Only one Finnish girl, Iida, who was herself part of the 'group of five' told that she did not mind even though she did not understand, except when the girls talked "too much in Russian". Then she would ask them to talk Finnish which they usually did.

The non-Finnish clique was certainly reinforced by practical arrangements: they had common Finnish language lessons and the Russian-speaking girls had their Russian language lessons. This influenced the children's behaviour so that they used to gather and play together particularly when waiting to go for these classes which were

held in another building. The Russian-speaking girls had one Russian lesson at the same time with the first hour of the double sports lesson, and when they came to the sports lesson in the middle of action, it was natural that they would stay in their own group.

Let us now consider the attitudes of Finnish children and their impact on the formation of the present ethnic cleavage. Can one speak about prejudice or racial discrimination? We can note that there was no clear relation between expressed attitudes and behaviour. Some Finnish children expressed positive attitudes toward foreigners in general but did not play with the non-Finnish children of their class and vice versa. Most children (n=6) did not take any clear position with regard to immigration. When asked whether it was a good or bad thing that there were foreign people coming to Finland, they often answered either that they could not tell, or that it is a good thing if ... "you get to know them", or "they are nice". Only one answer was mainly negative: a boy told that some of the foreigners were "really irritating". However, this boy played a lot with Lennart, the Estonian boy, so he cannot be really considered as prejudiced. He based his opinion on the disturbing Somali boy whom he had known in the first grade. It seems that personal attributes were more important than the ethnic background. Of course, it is impossible to know the unconscious motivations behind friendship choices. Although someone may claim that she/he does not like the other person on the basis of a certain personal characteristic, there may be unconscious motivations related to the fear of difference.

When the Finnish children were asked why they did not play or want to play with certain non-Finnish children, several Finnish children (as well as the Somali girl) told that the Russian girls refused to play with them. The non-Finnish girls, except for the Somali girl, said that the Finnish girls accepted to take them into play when they wanted to. Thus, instead of thinking automatically that host country people entertain prejudices and do not want to establish contacts with new arrivals, we may have a situation where ethnic minority people strongly stick together and positive contacts cannot be established because of the behaviour of the latter.

The existence of an ethnic cleavage is not necessarily a bad thing in itself. One should keep in mind that a strong ethnic group may provide its members with a strong subculture and offer some vital services to its members. Consequently, it is likely to facilitate the cross-cultural adaptation during the initial phase. In the long run,

however, a strong ethnic community is likely to discourage their adaptation to the host society. (Kim 1994, 398.)

It is very probable that the situation would be very different if there were not so many non-Finnish girls in the classroom but would be difficult to draw any hypothesis on the basis of the present or previous research. There are basically two possibilities: either the non-Finnish children would have more Finnish friends than they do now, or then, they would have no friends. In any case, on the basis of the present research, we would question the accuracy of the contact hypothesis. Positive contacts with peers from different ethnic groups did not automatically increase inter-group contacts.

7.5 Cases

We have seen that ethnicity does influence friendship choices to a certain degree. Let us now consider the situation from the point of view of four non-Finnish children individually. These case studies help us understand more profoundly how the personal characteristics and situations of children from different ethnic groups interact with their social relations. The children have been chosen in such wise that all the four ethnicities – Estonian, Russian, Somali and Vietnamese – are represented. The choice between the two Russian girls was made on the basis of several facts. First of all, Victoria, one of the girls, first said that she did not want to be interviewed. However, she later changed her mind when she had the possibility to be interviewed at the same time with her friends. Secondly, during the first interviews it became clear that children had stronger opinions concerning the other Russian girl, Sonja, which made the data more enriching. The Estonian boy was chosen for a case study instead of the Estonian girl since he was the only non-Finnish boy in the class.

7.5.1 Kim

"She is Vietnamese but she is still a nice friend."
Finnish girl, nine years

Kim is a ten-year-old Vietnamese girl who was born in Finland. Actually her mother was pregnant when the family came to Finland. She speaks excellent Finnish even though her parents and elder siblings do not speak Finnish very well. The language

spoken at her home is Vietnamese. The teacher described Kim as a sweet, positive and helpful girl. However, she appeared to be only selectively helpful and she sometimes chose to work alone even though there would have been a possibility to work in pairs or groups. Although other children often paid attention to her different hair colour, she seems to be very well adapted and is one of the most popular children in the class. Her school achievements are around average. She reported that she enjoyed living in Finland and enjoyed school. Her best friend is a Russian girl, Sonja, with whom she has been in the same class already in the first grade. They both have come to the studied class in the beginning of the present school year. Kim reported that she had sometimes been bullied by one boy, Riku, in the class. He had mostly kicked her. Also, in the first grade, there had been some older boys who had called her 'Chinese' during recess.

According to the sociometric data (see figures 3, 4 and 5), Kim's situation looks very positive. She was one of the four children to receive seven positive choices (f=7). She received the least negative choices of all the non-Finnish girls (f=3). All in all, she can be considered as being the second most popular girl in the class. This finding was confirmed by the teacher who said that if she would have to name those pupils who contribute the most to a positive class atmosphere, Kim would certainly be one of them.

Kim was described by her classmates mostly as being nice (n=5). She was reported to laugh often, to try to catch others, to have black hair, to speak differently and to shout always a lot. Also, she was seen as a person who does not want bad things to happen to other people. Even those pupils who did not play with her described her as a friendly classmate. Many pupils had already known her in ethics classes during the first and second grades. In contrast to the general lack of contacts between girls and boys, Kim liked and was liked both by girls and boys even though the sociometric data spoke for the existence of gender cleavage and the lack of opposite-sex contacts. Here is an extract of an interview of a ten-year-old Finnish boy (R=researcher, B=the boy):

R: Could you tell me something about Kim?
B: Well, she is nice and calm. But sometimes she starts to follow me.
R: What happens then?
B: When she catches me then it's like...help! [laughs]
R: What does she do then?
B: She takes my bag or then she hits me and I try to run away or then she goes and gets other girls.

R: But she does not hurt you, does she?
B: No, she's a girl. [laughs]

Kim reported that she had sometimes disagreements with some other girls, Finnish and Russian, because she refused to play with them. She clearly stated that she did not want to play with certain peers because she found them stupid. There was some contradiction in children's responses. Although most girls told that Kim refused to play with some pupils, Myryam, the Somali girl, said that Kim agreed to play with everyone. This may be explained by the fact that Myryam herself was the least popular girl in the class. Perhaps she felt that if someone, in this case Kim, played with her, it had to mean that Kim would play with everyone. However, Kim reported on her behalf that she did not play with Myryam and did not like her because she was stupid.

When Kim was asked what characteristics she appreciated in friends, the theme which was repeatedly mentioned was smile or laughter. She described all those pupils she liked as laughing persons with dimples. She felt that Finnish and non-Finnish people were different. She had noted that Finnish people had blond hair and that they grew up very fast. She also told that Finnish people always talked about Jesus during religious instruction: *"In every word there is Jesus."* When asked whether she had ever visited a Finnish friend's home, she said *"yes, Sonja's"*. This is very interesting since Sonja is not Finnish but Russian – perhaps she made a distinction between herself and the Finnish on the basis of physical dissimilarity and had noted the same difference between herself and Sonja.

7.5.2   Lennart

"He is sort of susceptible.[13]"
Finnish boy, ten years

Lennart is a nine-year-old Estonian boy who has lived in Finland since the age of two. Physically he does not differ much from Finnish children – he has a rather blond hair and blue eyes. He has some problems in Finnish writing since he only takes Estonian courses. As Finnish and Estonian are quite close, he easily confuses the two languages. His school achievements are of average and he is particularly talented in mathematics. The teacher described him as a nice and pleasant but rather shy boy. Lennart has been

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[13] The word used by Finnish children was 'herkkä' which may be translated either as *sensitive* or *susceptible*. The latter translation was chosen since the children made reference to the fact that Lennart would easily get angry or annoyed.

part of a friendship group of three boys since pre-school. He plays sometimes with other boys too but he and two Finnish boys form a sort of core group. As mentioned earlier, Lennart seems to be bullied quite often.

When examining the sociometric figures (see figures 3, 4 and 5), we can observe that Lennart is practically without exception situated around the average. This means that he is not particularly popular, nor unwanted. When both positive and negative choices are taken into account, he is slightly above the average of boys (m=0.45) with his position of +1. The group of three can be identified in the figure of reciprocal friendship choices (see figure 6) but as stated before, boys seemed to socialise more than girls outside friendship cliques.

Other children described Lennart as being susceptible (n=6) and nice (n=3). One of his friends reported that he talks all the time about ice hockey. Lennart was described to get angry or offended very easily; *"you just push him a little and he starts to cry"* (a Finnish boy), or *"I only put my book on his desk and he started shouting at me"* (a Finnish girl). Kim, the Vietnamese girl, told that Lennart is stupid because he always cheats. Lennart was mainly considered similar to Finnish children. Some children did not even know that he was not Finnish. One boy who first told in the interview that Lennart was Estonian, suddenly got upset during the discussion and exclaimed: *"But how come he then speaks Finnish?"* The following extract of the interview of a ten-year-old Finnish boy reflects well his personal reflection on the subject (R=researcher, B=the boy):

> *R: You have chosen Lennart, Harri and Jani as your playmates. Would you tell something, for example, about Lennart?*
> B: Well, we are friends since pre-school. He was born in Estonia and he came to Finland and he is...about two years ago he got the Finnish nationality. Actually he already speaks Finnish. That's why he has to take lessons in Estonian because he does not remember it a lot anymore.
> *R: What could you tell about him as a friend?*
> B: He is nice but I've got this...that he is sort of susceptible.
> *R: You mean that he gets angry easily?*
> B: Yeah. [...] Sometimes he just gets angry without reason.

When talking about other non-Finnish pupils, Lennart counted himself as being one of the Finns. For example, when he was asked what he could tell about Kim, the Vietnamese girl, he answered: *"Well, she is a foreigner. And she looks just like one. And she talks differently."* The only difference he made between himself and the

Finnish was that he spoke in a different voice than the Finns. Overall, Lennart can be considered very well adapted to life in Finland.

7.5.3   Myryam

"She does not like to play with others or so...or then she always
just walks around. It's not nice to play with her."
Russian girl, ten years

Myryam is a nine-year-old Somali girl. Her family came to Finland when she was three years old. She came to the present school in autumn 1998 and she was then the only totally new face for other pupils in the class. Even though there had been other new pupils in autumn, Myryam was the only one who had come from another school. According to the teacher, Myryam is a joyful and pleasant girl. She takes school seriously and enjoys both school and living in Finland. Her Finnish language skills are excellent and she is an average pupil. She is obviously bullied and called names rather frequently, probably because her appearance and clothing differs quite a lot from those of her Finnish peers. She has been called, for example, 'sausage' and 'nigger'. She has also been often bullied outside school when she has walked home. She told that sometimes other people would help her and sometimes not.

The sociometric figures (see figures 3, 4 and 5) illustrate us a dark reality: Myryam did not receive any positive choices (f=0) but made the record of negative choices (f=11), being the least popular child in the class. She was also left outside with no reciprocal friendship choices (see figure 6). However, the situation may not be as critical as it looks. Myryam herself reported that she had some friends ("but not many") and that other children, except for one Russian girl, accepted to play with her. There is evidence that the situation had already changed since the beginning of the school year and was improving all the time. Both teachers, several children and Myryam herself described that she had had no friends before but that gradually she started to socialise more with others. The sports teacher reported that Myryam had not participated actively in sports classes in the beginning but had apparently started to enjoy herself. She did indeed tell in the interview that sports was one of her favourite subjects at school.

Myryam was described by other children as being lonely and not having real friends. She would play randomly with anyone. Several children reported that others did not play with Myryam because of her different skin colour. It seems

however that some evolution took place even during the research period: Iida, the Finnish girl whom Myryam had chosen as her best friend (but who had not chosen Myryam at all) started playing more with Myryam. When the two girls were interviewed together, they told that the day before the interview they had played all the time together. Before they had told that they only played occasionally. Iida also reported that Myryam did have friends and enumerated the non-Finnish girls of the class. Nevertheless, there is evidence that Myryam and Sonja, a Russian girl, did not get along very well. Myryam told that she did not like Sonja because she deceived her the most often, and Sonja described that she did not like to play with Myryam. Sonja had tried to play with Myryam in the beginning of the school year but then had noted that it was not nice to play with her. Myryam also told that her friends were *"the Vietnamese, not the Russian"*.

When we put together all the information we have, we can suppose that the reality is probably not as dark as indicated by the sociometric data. Myryam does not feel lonely herself anymore, and there are children who seem to accept her as a playmate. Perhaps she had not yet developed the needed social skills to enter the social world of other children since she had not played much with her peers during the first school years. The teachers of her previous school had informed that during the first two grades she had spent the recesses mostly with teachers. However, this hypothesis is contradicted by Myryam's own words. She told that in the first grade all the children in the class had liked her but not here. One might also think that Myryam was rejected by others because she was a rather new pupil in the class. Nevertheless, there was one Finnish girl who had been in the class only for a couple of weeks but who still was not rejected by others and who had already found herself a reciprocal best friend.

When it comes to other descriptions concerning Myryam, she was seen as calm and rather nice but somehow different from others. She was described to eat different food and wear different kind of clothes, to have a different skin colour and to play the same games as other but in a different way. One Finnish girl explained that Myryam was susceptible. If someone stepped accidentally on her toes, she would cry out loud that she was hurt. In the following we have an illustrating extract of the interview of another Finnish girl, nine years (R=researcher, G=the girl):

> R: *What could you tell me about Myryam?*
> G: She is from Somalia and sometimes she sort of acts. That sometimes she takes out someone's dog and then she starts to act.
> R: *What do you mean by that?*

G: Well, she goes with the dog everywhere where there are a lot of people and then she holds the dog in front of her to show it to everyone.
R: And you don't like that?
G: No!
R: What else could you tell about her?
G: She is rather normal. A little strange, though.
R: In what way?
G: I don't know.

Mikkola-Heino (1997) have reported a number of cultural difficulties Somali children may confront in Finland, related to clothing, sports classes, food, religion and stealing. All of these were also mentioned in Myryam's case. For example, she recalled a situation in the second grade when the teachers had 'tried to force' the Somali children to sing Finnish Christmas songs. The Somali mothers had refused to bring their children to school that day. Other children paid attention to her different clothing. She always wore a *hijab* on her head as well as a long skirt. The sports teacher reported that her clothing sometimes posed particular problems. She did not, however, wear the hijab during sports classes. When she was asked in the interview whether she had the permission of her parents not to use hijab in sports classes, she clearly felt uneasy but finally, after a pause, said 'yes'.

Myryam also lied about swimming. Both teachers told that usually she did not swim with other children since she always had to wear the hijab in the presence of boys or men, but that once she had gone swimming with other children. However, in the interview Myryam emphasised that she *never* went swimming with the class. Then she rapidly changed the subject. Myryam had also once been caught on theft in a supermarket. Since then, her parents had not allowed her to walk home alone and she always had to wait for her elder sister to go home with her.

Myryam seemed to suffer from a conflict of two cultures. She obviously felt very different from others and wanted to be similar but did not yet know how. She liked living in Finland but expressed that it might also be nice to go back to Africa since people did not bully others there. She told that her mother did not like at all living in Finland and that the family would return to Africa, Ethiopia, next summer.

There is evidence that Myryam was rejected because of her different ethnic/cultural background. Even such a small thing as clothing may be a concrete obstacle. Rope-jumping was clearly girls' 'number one' recess activity and it must not have been easy for Myryam to jump in a long skirt. Although Myryam was considered

as nice and friendly, she had not met the reception she would have needed in order to feel at ease in a strange environment.

7.5.4   Sonja

"Sometimes she bosses around. But she is the nicest."
Finnish girl, nine years

Sonja is a ten-year-old Russian girl who was four years old when her family came to Finland. According to the teacher, she is well adapted to school although she is a little bit shy when using Finnish. She speaks Finnish fluently but has some problems with more complicated words. However, the teacher told that in contrast to other non-Finnish pupils, Sonja has the courage to ask when she does not understand certain words – she wants to learn and understand everything as well as possible. Sonja has many friends but the teacher estimated her as being the most selective of the girls - she carefully chooses with whom she wants to play. Sonja was reported to be bullied or called names two times (f=2). She was reported to be bullied or called names two times (x=2), once by the Somali girl and once by herself.

According to the sociometric data (figures 3, 4 and 5), Sonja is both rather popular and unpopular i.e. a controversial pupil. She got five positive choices (f=5) and six negative choices (f=6). In total, she is rated slightly below average (m= -0.2) with the sum of –1. She is however clearly the most popular out of the three Russian-speaking girls. Victoria and Katarina both received four positive choices but the double of negative choices (f=9 and f=8).

Sonja was described by her peers as being rather 'bossy' (n=3) and nice (n=2). Two children reported that she did not speak Finnish very well (n=2). Niina, the Finnish girl who was reported not to get along with Kim and Sonja, said that sometimes Sonja was stupid because she did not want to play with others and said bad things about others. Three girls mentioned (n=3) that Sonja would often cause trouble or conflicts even though she was usually nice. According to Myryam, Sonja deceived her the most often. She referred to a situation where Sonja had promised to give her two objects if she took her side in a fight but had not later kept her promise. This had annoyed Myryam a lot. In the following there is an extract of the interview of a nine-year-old Finnish girl (R=researcher, G=the girl):

R: *You do not play often with Sonja. Would you tell me what she is like?You do not play often with Sonja. Would you tell me what she is like?*

G: [Silence].

R: *You do remember that I am not going to tell anybody what you say here, don't you?*

G: Oh, okay. Well...she is sort of...sometimes when I'm rope-jumping with Iida, she sort of bosses around.

R: *Aha.*

G: She always bosses around. And always when she---when she came to our class there started being always a lot of fights and so. They always want to own everything.

The reference 'they' was made with regard to both Sonja and Kim who had come to this class at the same time.

Sonja's best friend was Kim, the Vietnamese girl, whom she had known since the first grade. She mostly plays with other non-Finnish children. She had only chosen one Finnish girl to play with. Although Sonja told herself in the interview that she never refused to play with other Finnish girls, there were many indications of contradictory behaviour. Sonja seemed to have a rather dominant character and she would decide things for the two other Russian-speaking girls. All in all, she did not seem to have problems of adaptation and enjoyed living in Finland.

7.6   Examples of Intercultural Friendship

We have now seen how ethnicity may affect friendship choices and how children from different ethnic groups are perceived by their peers. This chapter examines whether cultural differences between children of different ethnic or national backgrounds interfere with friendship and if it does, how? Friendship pairs and groups were partly identified on the basis of best friend choices (see appendice 11: figure 7), reciprocal choices (see figure 6), and the answers given during the interviews. Although none of the children had chosen Myryam as her or his friend or playmate, she was questioned together with Iida on their friendship. During the research period it became evident that they did indeed spend quite a lot of time together. For example, the day before the interview they had played the whole day together at school. Children apparently enjoyed the pair and group interviews: they were very lively, spoke and laughed a lot during these sessions.

In the aggregate, the children reported only a few cultural differences and when there were some, they were not seen as a burden but rather as a richness. One can

learn from other cultures and meet new people, one can also tell others how it is like in one's own country. Children from other cultures may also teach others the language and games from their own country. Disagreements within multiethnic friendship pairs or groups were similar to those between only Finnish children. Although children's friendship relations are presented and classified according to ethnic and national backgrounds, one should be aware of the fact that these examples are unique and not generalisable. Any cultural differences which may have occurred in these examples are not necessarily found in other friendships between children originating from the same countries.

Finnish - Estonian Friendship

Three boys - two Finnish and one Estonian - were interviewed together about their friendship. They had all met and been friends already in pre-school. When asked about cultural differences, they found there were none. The only difference the boys did between each other was the fact that Lennart had a different language and spoke in a different voice. When asked whether the fact that one of them was not Finnish had importance, one of the Finnish boys answered: *"Of course not!"* The boys had visited each others homes and reported that their homes were not very different. For example, they ate the same food at home. Some differences occurred in the sense that one of the Finnish boys found that there was nothing to do at Lennart's home because he had no computer. This data confirmed previous observations: Lennart seemed to be very well adapted and was practically considered as a Finn by his friends. This is also confirmed by Mikkola and Heino (1997). They have found that Estonian children have very few or no problems related to cultural differences.

Finnish - Somali Friendship

Iida and Myryam had not known each other for a very long time since Myryam had been in the class only since the third grade. Myryam had however already visited Iida's home twice and Iida had been invited to Myryam's. They played the same kinds of games as other girls i.e. they were mainly jump-roping during the recesses at school. At Iida's home they would watch movies or visit some places after school. When Iida and Myryam were asked how it showed or felt like when one is from Finland and the other from Somalia, Myryam answered: *"not in any bad way"*. Iida described that you would get friends easily with a foreigner and that it would be nice to tell him or her

about one's own country. She described that the first day when Myryam had come to school she had been surprised; she had thought that there was a mistake. But finally she had thought that it might be nice to play with her and so they had become friends.

The girls reported that they were a little different. The issue was further developed in the interview (R=researcher, I=Iida, M=Myryam):

> R: In what ways are you different then?
> I: [looks at Myryam] You have---
> M: Iida is somehow always nicer than me.
> I: You have a darker face, by the way. [...] But we have not much difference.

Other differences mentioned were related to religion, hand-writing, and the manner of holding the pencil. When the girls were asked to elaborate further what it meant to have a different religion, they told that they went to a different church and that they had different ways of 'doing' religion. Myryam described that she had Islam and Iida had her own religion. Also, Iida told that Myryam could not eat potatoes because of her religion but Myryam corrected that she did eat potatoes but not pork. The girls reported that they were similar in that they both always forgot to do their homework

Myryam told that she had been planning to tell Iida about Africa. She would want to tell her about all the animals one can see there such as lions. Iida said that she had never seen any Southern countries nor Africa. Then Myryam began to list animals she had already seen in Finland: "In Finland I've seen for example a tiger, a lion and---" At this point, Iida did not seem to believe Myryam and interrupted her by asking: "Where then? In a zoo?", and Myryam said yes. Then Iida wanted to tell Myryam what animals could be found in Finland: wolves, foxes, wild cats, wild horses and bears. She also explained Myryam that if she met a bear in the woods she should pretend to be dead and the bear would then leave her alone. This discussion illustrates very well how the two children taught others things about their own culture. They were both learners and teachers.

Finnish - Vietnamese Friendship

Iida and Kim sometimes played together. They had chosen each other as playmates but not as best friends. They had also known each other only since the third grade when Kim had come to the class. At the moment of the interview, however, they had not played together for almost three weeks. The girls reported that they were both similar

and different. They noted that Kim had a black and thick hair while Iida had a very blond hair. Also, Kim was shorter and had freckles. Kim told that she spoke a different language at home with her family. The girls also explained that Kim had different holidays because of her religion. Once she had not been at school because she had been celebrating the Vietnamese day. Iida also told that sometimes Kim did not know the rules of the games they were playing and they had to teach her. Although all these differences were identified, both girls assured that it did not pose any problems.

Both Iida and Kim had difficulties in finding how they were similar. Finally, they came up with *"because we are friends"* and *"because we play together"*. Thus, friendship in itself was seen as a unifying bond. When two people play together, they already have something in common. At the end of the interview, Kim noted that they were both human beings.

Russian - Vietnamese Friendship

Kim and Sonja had known each other since the first grade. They had chosen each other as best friends and they seemed indeed to spend a lot of time together. The teacher described that these two girls were the most likely to be the first ones to become interested in boys and to have early puberty. They both had a big sister and already showed interest in such things as listening to Backstreet Boys and chasing boys.

The girls first said that it did not matter even though they came from different countries since they were human beings (Kim repeated this sentence again during this interview). When asked whether they were *similar* human beings they said no - they spoke a different language, had a different hair colour, different religion and different eyes. Sonja noted that the researcher had the same eyes as Kim. Kim had visited Sonja's home and told that they also ate different food and listened to different music at home. Kim and Sonja also felt that they were both somehow similar to and different from their Finnish peers. They told that Finns had blue or brown eyes; and that Finns spoke better Finnish than they did. These girls also saw cultural differences as richness. They had, for example, taught each other their own language.

As we can easily notice, all the children mainly paid attention to concrete cues of culture or ethnicity, such as physical appearance, language and religion. They did not mention any personality characteristics or behaviour which might be resulting from culture. Both interviewed teachers were very careful in talking about possible cultural differences or cultural influences in children's personalities. The sports teacher had, however, observed that Russian boys were often gentlemen when compared to

Finnish boys. The regular classroom teacher had taught earlier twelve-year-old Russian girls and she estimated that puberty shows more radically in Russian than Finnish girls: *"When a girl powders her face five times during one lesson, it's a little too much."* One explanation for this might be the fact that 'traditional' femininity is more emphasised in Russian culture than in Finnish culture.

7.7 The Researcher as a Reflective Practitioner

Although this research was not purely ethnographic, there is reason to evaluate the process as well as the impact of the researcher in it. All in all, the study advanced fluently and without major problems. The two-week research period in the field was a very enriching experience. Nevertheless, it might have been even more so had it been a little longer. Although the collected data was sufficient, it could have been possible to produce more profound information by the time.

The researcher already had previous experience in working in the field with children as well as in conducting the same type of research. The children were also used to the presence of additional personnel, such as Riku's personal assistant, in the classroom. These facts facilitated greatly the establishment of contact with the pupils who very soon seemed to accept and like her. Even the boys who had major problems of behaviour and learning were co-operative. It is clear that the researcher was not totally integrated into the children's social world as one would expect in a pure ethnographic research. Rather, the researcher represented some degree of authority for children. The pupils actually called the researcher 'teacher', or sometimes by her own name. However, the children understood that she was not a usual teacher. She did not interfere with class activities except if help was needed. Also, although she asked children to write stories and answer questions, she made clear that there were no right or wrong responses and that the answers would not be graded. The role of the researcher as a 'friendly cultural stranger' was, all in all, succeeded.

It would be pretentious to claim that the children had complete confidence in the researcher and that they told her everything. The children were told that all they wrote or told about their classmates would remain as a secret. The

researcher would not tell anybody even though they might say some bad things about others. They were thus encouraged to express freely what came into their mind. Some children still seemed to hesitate in a number of questions and certain contradictory responses show that the children attempted to give a spotless picture of themselves. For example, the Somali girl lied about the use of *hijab*, maybe in fear of being discovered by her parents. One Russian girl told that she agreed to play with everyone although there was strong evidence that she did not.

The secrecy was also kept the other way around: the children were told that it would be nice if they did not tell others what they had been asked. This was double-checked by asking each child in the beginning of the interview what she/he already had been told about it. Most children said that they had heard nothing. Two children had only been told that it was 'really nice'. It is naturally impossible to control the situation completely in the field but in very strictly controlled research situations we would loose something of the real life authenticity and spontaneity.

The presence of the researcher possibly had an impact on children's behaviour but not essentially with regard to the research topic. The children knew that the researcher was studying their friendship relations but they did not know that the focus was on ethnicity. The children were surely activated during the two-week period in such a way that they reflected more upon their friendship relations. However, it is probable that the situation did not change radically. Rather, the activation of the subject only reinforced the *already existing* tendencies and structures in friendship relations.

Nevertheless, it seems that the research situation did influence the evolution of one friendship relation which had not yet been firmly established, namely that of Iida and Myryam, the Somali girl, who played together more often than before. Although Iida had not chosen Myryam as her playmate at first, she might have done so at the end of the research period. We cannot, of course, take all the credit for this evolution. As confirmed by both teachers, this kind of development and gradual acceptance of Myryam by other children had already started to take place earlier.

When reflecting upon the interview situations, one cannot avoid the question of whether it would have been possible to receive longer and more detailed responses by posing more detailed questions or by insisting on certain points. The

children were rather young (aged between nine and ten) and did not give very precise responses. It would have been interesting to get more details concerning cultural differences. Children could tell that a classmate was 'different' but they could not explain in what way. But, after all, liking or disliking another person may be influenced by unconscious motivations - how many adults can explicitly tell what they exactly like or do not like in another person? The interview questions were formulated so that no ideas were imposed to children. All that came out in children's responses were their own thoughts. There was no possibility to answer the question by 'yes' or 'no', since otherwise we could not be sure about what children considered as important themselves.

Interviewing was a dynamic process within and between interview sessions. The situations were relaxed and the interviews advanced at children's own terms to the extent it was possible. The interviews grew longer and better in quality towards the end. In the beginning, the researcher moved too fast to the next question without giving enough time to think. Also, certain questions posed in the beginning were found to be quite useless whereas some questions took a more accurate form as the interviews went on.

8 DISCUSSION

This research does not provide simple answers - certainly because any simple responses to such complex questions do not exist. We might, however, carefully conclude that ethnicity has a certain role to play in children's peer relations. But what this role is depends on individual children and their particular situations. Ethnicity did indeed have importance in the case of Myryam who seemed to be rejected almost merely because she was considered as different, and in the case of the three Russian-speaking girls who were reported to behave in a way which could be described as ethnocentric. Cultural differences did not cause any conflicts, nor did they matter in friendship although children were aware of them.

One should be careful in making any claims about prejudiced or discriminative behaviour. Thus, we are not accusing any individual children for being prejudiced or racist. Rather, we should think about the classroom situation as a whole: there were indeed discriminative patterns but apparently not any particularly prejudiced individuals. What matters to us is that no child should ever feel lonely. In this classroom, all the non-Finnish children felt that they had friends and that they were accepted at least by some of their peers. The subjective feelings of classroom interaction are indeed the most important. Positive experiences help the child to construct her or his identity in a positive way.

Children's friendship relations are dynamic, within the relationship as well as with regard to beginning or terminating a friendship. Although children's answers reflected great stability in their friendships, we should keep in mind that friendships are

essentially communication processes. As we saw already during the short research period, children are constantly negotiating their friendships. We should not then be too worried about Myryam's situation either. Kantor et al (1993) have emphasised the importance of situational factors and particular group dynamics: even though a child may not have succeeded to enter one peer culture group, this does not mean that she/he could not succeed in another one. The particular nature of each group is to be kept in mind also in the sense that the results of this research may or may not be found again in other contexts.

Bullying, whether based on ethnicity or not, is an increasing problem in schools all over the world. There is evidence that ethnic minority children are bullied more often than others, as was also shown in this research, but any personal experience of being subject of bullying, whether it be by ethnic minority or host country children, is to be taken seriously. According to Smith et al (1998), a lot can be done to reduce bullying problems in schools. Results from extensive intervention programmes carried out for example in Norway and UK have been promising. The main intervention has been the development of a school anti-bullying policy, involving co-operation between teachers, pupils, parents and other school personnel. (Smith et al 1998, 137.)

Research in the field of multicultural education as well as intercultural communication should not be directed to finding *by force* cultural differences or problems between people of different backgrounds. Culture can so easily be used as an alibi in order to deny real problems (Abdallah-Pretceille and Porcher 1996, 119). However, the problems may be found in the lack of communication or in the lack of will to communicate and resolve problems. Intercultural education should not be directed merely towards so-called immigrant children. Cultural diversity may be present in so many other ways (Abdallah-Pretceille and Porcher 1996, 59). We should not create problems there where they do not exist in the first place, using the pretext of culture, but instead concentrate on real needs. One excellent example was the class studied. Major problems were not found in the problematique between different ethnic or national cultures but rather in the behaviour of certain children who did not follow the behaviour codes of the classroom culture. These children were Finnish.

Let us go back to the ideas of Abdallah-Pretceille and Porcher (1996). We should no longer view 'culture' as a stable structure or state. Rather, we could talk

about 'culturality' which refers to processes, and complex, unprovided and aleatory situations. Culture does not actually determine behaviours, but individuals use culture in order to communicate. Culture cannot be an obstacle for communication if individuals are capable to meta-communicate, communicate and interpret culture. This is what culturality is about. Instead of seeing individuals as unchanging products of their culture, we should concentrate on the intercultural skills of each person. Perhaps an ethnic minority child does not adapt because either she/he or the host country children have not succeeded to develop the required skills for 'culturality'. It may be so that this process of 'becoming cultural' is more difficult for certain individuals than for others, and that certain elements offered by each person's culture make it either easier or more difficult to negotiate between cultures.

This research confirms what we already have stated before: the children's own points of view are worth studying. Had we only interviewed the teacher, with all due respect to the expertise and knowledge teachers have about their pupils, the data would have been somewhat limited and would have left us with more questions and speculations than answers. Further research in the field is certainly needed, and it would be important to study friendship and ethnicity on a larger scale, having larger samples studied during longer periods and using ethnographic techniques in order to gain a fuller and richer understanding of the phenomenon. It would also be most interesting to study children's interactions from the communication viewpoint: what kind of language, verbal and non-verbal, is used between children with different ethnic backgrounds and how they cope with imperfect language skills.

We should reflect upon what could be done by means of education in order to promote tolerance, not only tolerance towards people coming from different countries but tolerance towards any persons different from oneself. Of course, not every child is meant to be friends with everybody - but to learn to respect another person, the Other being an equal individual.

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APPENDICE 1

Letter for Parents

***n ala-asteen 3B-luokan oppilaiden vanhemmille
To the parents of the pupils of the class 3B of *** School

Hyvät vanhemmat,
Nimeni on Katriina Hänninen. Opiskelen Jyväskylän yliopistossa kasvatustiedettä ja kulttuurien välistä viestintää. Olen tekemässä pro gradu –tutkielmaani erimaalaisten lasten ystävyyssuhteista ja olen valinnut tutkimuskohteekseni ***n ala-asteen kolmannen luokan, jota lapsenne käy. Olen saanut luvan tutkimuksen tekemiseen luokanopettaja ***lta.

   Olen tulossa tekemään tutkimustani 15. – 26.3 välisenä aikana, jolloin aion osallistua luokan toimintaan 'apuopettajana'. Tänä aikana aion haastatella lapsia ja pyydän heitä täyttämään kyselylomakkeen sekä kirjoittamaan pienen kirjoitelman ystävyyssuhteistaan. Ketään lasta ei haastatella vastoin hänen omaa tahtoaan.

   Mikäli Teillä on lisää kysymyksiä koskien tutkimustani, vastaan mielelläni!

Dear parent(s),
My name is Katriina Hänninen. I am a student of Education and Intercultural Communication at the University of Jyväskylä. At the moment, I am preparing my Master's Thesis on friendship between children from different cultures, and I have chosen to do my study in the class 3B of the *** School which is attended also by your son/daughter. Ms ***, the teacher of the class, has agreed to receive me in her class.

   I will be conducting my study between 15 and 26 March 1999. During this period, I will participate in every-day classroom activities as an assistant teacher. I will interview some of the children and all children will be asked to answer a questionnaire and to write a short essay on their friendship relations. No child will be interviewed against his or her own will.

   In case you have any further questions, please, do not hesitate to contact me!

Nähnyt/Seen by: _____

☐ Lastani saa haastatella/My child may be interviewed
☐ Lastani ei saa haastatella/My child must not be interviewed

Jyväskylä 24 February 1999   Katriina Hänninen
                  Tel. ***
                  Email: ***

Name: _____

1. Which of the pupils of your class is your best friend? _____

2. Write down the names of three pupils in your class with whom you play the most during recess. (Do not write again the name of your best friend even though you play a lot with him or her, too.)

      1. _____

      2. _____

      3. _____

3. Write down the names of four pupils in your class with whom you play the least or not at all during recess.

      1. _____

      2. _____

      3. _____

      4. _____

4. If you think that there are one or several pupils in your class who are bullied or called names, write down their names. If you are bullied or called names yourself, you can also write your own name.

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDICE 3

Instructions for the Essay

The name of the essay is "A Good Classmate". You should now think about what a good classmate is or should be like. You can, for example, tell what a good classmate does and what she/he does not do, how a good classmate behaves and how she/he does not behave and so forth. While you are writing, do not discuss with anyone, do not show your paper to others and do not look at others' papers. Write as much as you can. When you are finished, turn your paper face down on the desk and raise your hand, but do not talk since there may be other pupils who are still writing. Then, your teacher or I will come to take your paper.

APPENDICE 4

Interview Structure for Finnish Children

Your best friend is ***. Tell me about him or her, how is she/he like?
- How have you become friends? What do you do when you are together?
- Do you ever have disagreements? Why do they occur?

Questions to both Finnish and non-Finnish children:
- You also play with ***. Could you tell me something about him or her?
- You do not play often with ***. How is she/he like?
- You also wrote that in your class, *** is/are bullied or called names. In what ways? Why?

Then there are in your class several non-Finnish children. How are they like?
- Different? Explain in what way.
- Do you think they have friends? With whom do they usually play?

APPENDICE 5

Interview Structure for Non-Finnish Children

Your best friend is ***. Tell me about him or her, how is she/he like?
- How have you become friends? What do you do when you are together?
- Do you ever have disagreements? Why do they occur?

Questions to both Finnish and non-Finnish children:
- You also play with ***. Could you tell me something about him or her?
- You do not play often with ***. How is she/he like?
- You also wrote that in your class, *** is/are bullied or called names. In what ways? Why?

You come from ***. How is it like to live in Finland?
- What language do you speak at home? Do your parents like to live in Finland?
- Do you like school?
- Do you feel that you have enough friends at school? If you want to play with others, do they take you into play?
- If bullied, how? Why?
- Do you think that you are similar to or different from your Finnish peers? How?

Could you then take a look at this picture. Could you tell me what happens?
- Have you ever seen similar situations? Where?

APPENDICE 6

Interview Structure for Pair and Group Interviews

You are good friends. How did you become friends?
- What do you do together?
- Do you sometimes meet outside school? Do you visit each other's homes? How is it like in your homes? Is it similar or different? How?
- Do you ever have disagreements? Why?
- Do you think you two are similar to or different from each others? In what way similar? In what way different?
- What do you think about the fact that you come from different countries? Does it disturb?

APPENDICE 7

Interview Structure for the Teacher

General: Description of the classroom situation; atmosphere; etc.
- How does cultural diversity show? Or does it?

Questions to non-Finnish children:
- Tell me about **. How long has she/he been in Finland?
- Adaptation?
- School achievements, language skills, friendship relations, bullying?
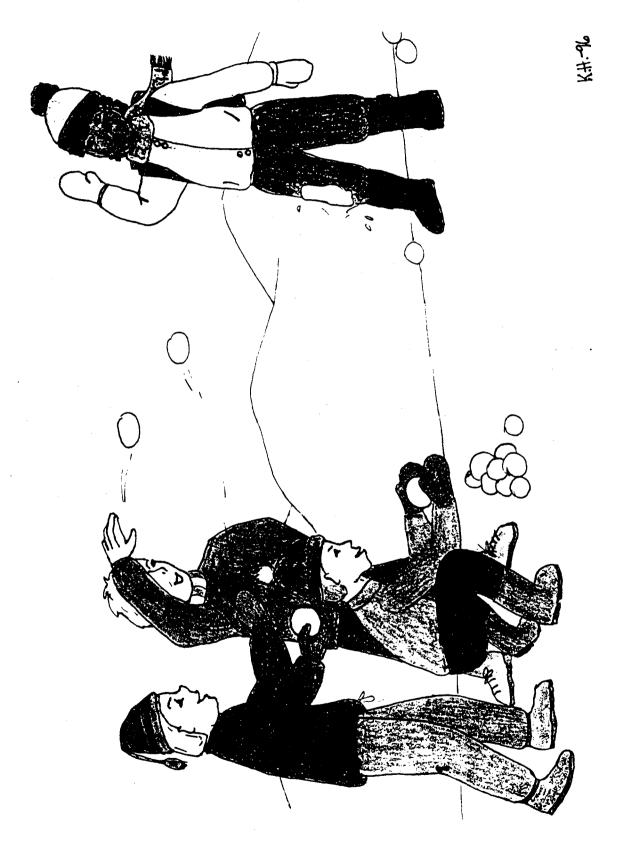- Particular problems?
- Personality, behaviour?

- What do you think is important for the children of your class when choosing friends?
- Any particular problem or situations related to cultural differences?
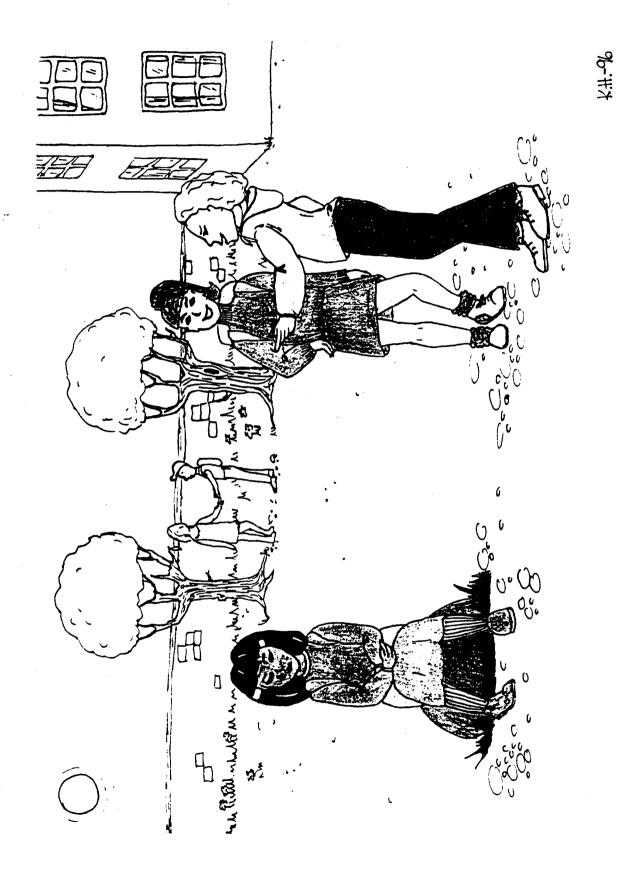- Do you find there are significant differences between Finnish and non-Finnish children: behaviour, reactions, etc.?

Picture (1) Used in Interviews

Picture (2) Used in Interviews

Copy of the Original Essay of the Finnish Girl in Finnish

Hyvä luokkatoveri

Luokkatoverin pitää olla
ystävällinen ja auttaa. Luokka-
toveri ei saa kiusata eikä ottaa
tavaroita. Luokkatoverin pitää
olla itselleen kiltti. Luokkatove-
rin pitää olla käyttämättä
rumia sanoja. Luokkatoverin
pitää ottaa leikkiin mukaan.
Luokkatoveri ei saa syyjä
muita tekeistä. Luokkatoveri
ei saa haukkua toista
maalmasta tullutta.

Copy of the Original Essay of the Somali Girl in Finnish

Hyvä luokkatoveri,

Kaveri ei saa kiusata eikä haukkua.

Kaverin pitää olla kärsivällinen.

Ystävä ei saa pettää eikä kieltää.

Kaveria ei saa jättää yksin.

Jos ystävää jättää joutuu kärsiä.

Sen minkä ystävä kokee, kokee myös
muut. Ei kannata luulla itseä
yksinäiseksi. Myöhemmin löytää
ystävän. Kaveri ei saa olla kiukkuinen.

Kaverin pitää auttaa eikä naureskella (p
halle asialle).

Figure 7. Best friend choices
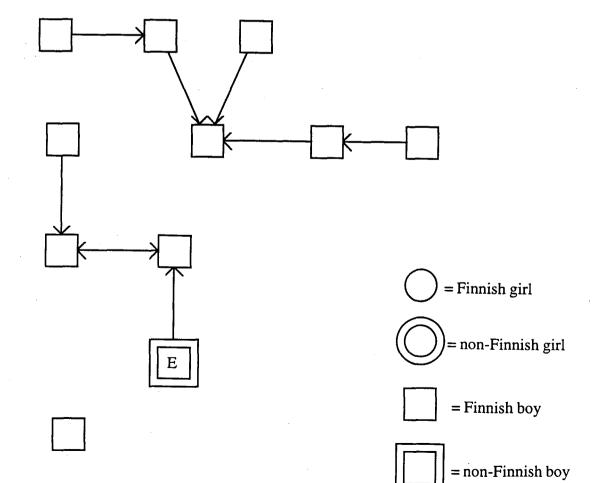

○ = Finnish girl

◎ = non-Finnish girl

□ = Finnish boy

▣ = non-Finnish boy

TIIVISTELMÄ

Suomea on pidetty perinteisesti kulttuurisesti varsin yhtenäisenä maana. Tälläkin hetkellä vain hieman yli yksi prosentti Suomen asukkaista on muodostunut muualta tulleista. Tämän vuoksi Suomessa on tutkittu melko vähän etnisiä suhteita, ja vielä vähemmän löytyy tutkimusta suomalaisten ja ulkomaalaisten lasten välisistä suhteista. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli tarkastella ystävyyttä ja etnisyyttä suomalaisessa luokkahuoneessa ala-asteella. Tutkimusmenetelminä olivat sosiometrinen mittaus, lasten kirjoittamat aineet sekä teemahaastattelut. Tutkija osallistui luokkahuoneen toimintaan apuopettajan roolissa kahden viikon ajan. Aineisto kerättiin tämän jakson aikana. Tutkimuskohteina (N=27) olivat luokanopettaja, liikunnanopettaja sekä luokan 25 oppilasta, iältään 9-10 vuotta, joiden etninen jakauma oli seuraavanlainen: yksi virolainen poika, yksi virolainen tyttö, kymmenen suomalaista poikaa, yhdeksän suomalaista tyttöä, kaksi venäläistä tyttöä, yksi somalialainen tyttö sekä yksi vietnamilainen tyttö.

Lapset eivät vastauksissaan kiinnittäneet erityisen paljon huomiota luokkatoveriensa etniseen taustaan: he kertoivat, että ystävien tulisi olla mukavia ja auttavaisia, eikä heidän tulisi kiusata toisia. Sosiometrinen aineisto paljasti kuitenkin etnisen halkeaman: neljä ulkomaalaista tyttöä sekä yksi suomalainen tyttö muodostivat oman ystäväjoukkonsa, jolla ei ollut kahdensuuntaisia ystävyysvalintoja muiden tyttöjen kanssa. Somalialaistyttö oli ainoa ulkomaalainen tyttö, joka ei ollut mukana tässä joukossa. Etnisen halkeaman olemassaolo ei kuitenkaan todista, että luokan oppilaat olisivat erityisen ennakkoluuloisia; tässä tapauksessa ennen kaikkea tilannetekijät ja käytännölliset seikat, kuten ulkomaalaisten lasten yhteiset suomen kielen tunnit sekä osan tulo luokkaan uusina oppilaina syksyllä, näyttivät vaikuttaneen halkeaman muodostumiseen.

Mitä tulee luokan vuorovaikutussuhteisiin vetovoima-torjunta -akselilla, sosiometrinen aineisto ei paljastanut säännönmukaisia kuvioita etnisyyden suhteen. Vaikka ulkomaalaiset lapset olivat keskimäärin selvästi vähemmän suosittuja kuin suomalaiset, yksilökohtaiset erot olivat suuria. Esimerkiksi luokan vietnamilainen tyttö oli yksi luokan suosituimmista oppilaista kun taas somalialaistyttö oli ylivoimaisesti vähiten pidetty. Tästä ei tulisi kuitenkaan vetää hätäisiä johtopäätöksiä: tyttö itse kertoi, että hänellä on muutama ystävä, ja toiset oppilaat kertoivat pitävänsä tästä sekä leikkivänsä joskus hänenkin kanssaan.

Koulukiusaaminen, perustui se sitten etnisyyteen tai ei, on kasvava ongelma kouluissa. Tämä tutkimus vahvisti sen, mikä on jo aikaisemmin todettu: ei-suomalaisia lapsia kiusataan useammin koulussa kuin suomalaisia. Lasten mukaan kiusaajia olivat yksinomaan suomalaiset pojat. Joskus haukkuminen sisälsi rasistisia elementtejä, kuten 'neekeri' tai 'ryssä'.

Joitakin lapsia haasteltiin pareittain tai pienissä ryhmissä tarkoituksena tutkia, esiintyykö eri kulttuureista tulevien lasten ystävyyssuhteissa kulttuurieroja ja haittaavatko ne jollain tavalla ystävyyttä. Lapset olivat tietoisia kulttuurieroista mutta näkivät ne rikkautena: he oppivat tuntemaan eri kulttuureita ystäviensä kautta. Kulttuurierot eivät myöskään aiheuttaneet ristiriitoja lasten kesken.

Tämä tutkimus ei tarjoa meille yksinkertaisia vastauksia - ehkä koska yksinkertaisia vastauksia näin monimutkaisiin ongelmiin ei ole olemassa. Tämän tutkimuksen perusteella voidaan kuitenkin varovasti päätellä, että etnisyys vaikuttaa jollain tavalla lasten suhteisiin. Etnisyyden merkitys vaihtelee kuitenkin yksilöllisesti kunkin lapsen ja hänen tilanteensa mukaan. Etnisyydellä näytti olevan merkitystä ennen kaikkea somalialaistytön kohdalla: hänet torjuttiin miltei yksinomaan sen vuoksi, että hän oli erilainen kuin muut.

Avainsanat: ystävyys ja etnisyys; etniset suhteet; sosiometriikka; kulttuurienväliset suhteet; kulttuurierot.

ABSTRAIT

La Finlande a traditionnellement été considérée comme un pays homogène : environ un pour cent seulement de la population est formé par des personnes d'origine non-finlandaise. En conséquence, les relations éthniques n'ont pas été beaucoup étudiées en Finlande, et on trouve très peu de recherche sur les relations entre les enfants finlandais et non-finlandais. Cette recherche avait pour but d'étudier l'amitié et l'éthnicité dans une classe d'école primaire en Finlande. Les méthodes utilisées étaient : questionnaire sociométrique ; essais rédigés par les enfants ; et, interviews thématiques. Le chercheur a participé dans les activités de la classe en tant qu'assistante scolaire durant une période de quinze jours, pendant laquelle les données ont été collectées. Les sujets de recherche (N=27) étaient l'institutrice et le professeur d'éducation physique, ainsi que les 25 élèves de la classe, âgé(e)s de neuf à dix ans, dont un Estonien, une Estonienne, dix Finlandais, neuf Finlandaises, deux Russes, une Somalienne et une Vietnamienne.

Les enfants n'ont pas considéré l'éthnicité comme un facteur important dans l'amitié : selon eux, ce qui compte dans l'amitié c'est d'être sympathique et gentil, et de ne pas ennuyer les autres. Pourtant, les données sociométriques ont prouvé l'existence d'une rupture basée sur l'éthnicité dans la classe : quatre filles non-finlandaises et une Finlandaise ont formé un groupe d'amitié distinct, sans choix d'amitié réciproques avec d'autres filles. Seule la Somalienne était exclue de ce groupe. L'existence d'une rupture éthnique n'implique pas obligatoirement que les enfants aient des préjugés ; par contre, certains facteurs contextuels et pratiques, comme le fait d'avoir des cours de finnois communs et d'avoir été présents dès le début de l'année ont pu contribué à la formation de cette structure.

En ce qui concerne les dynamiques de la classe en termes d'attraction et de rejet, les données sociométriques n'ont pas révélé des motifs systématiques en relation avec l'éthnicité. Bien que les élèves non-finlandais soient, en moyenne, bien moins populaires que les élèves finlandais, l'étude a mis en évidence des différences individuelles. Par exemple, la Vietnamienne étant une des élèves les plus populaires de la classe, la Somalienne était largement la moins aimée. Pourtant, il ne faut pas se hâter de conclure : la Somalienne ne se sentait pas seule elle-même et les autres élèves ont raconté dans les interviews qu'ils l'aimaient bien et qu'ils jouaient parfois avec elle, aussi.

La turbulence à l'école, basée sur l'éthnicité ou non, est un problème à travers le monde. Cette recherche a confirmé ce que l'on avait précédemment remarqué : les enfants non-finlandais font plus souvent l'objet de turbulence et d'insultes que les enfants finlandais. Les enfants qui ennuyaient les autres étaient uniquement des garçons. Parfois les insultes contenaient des éléments racistes, comme 'nègre' ou 'ryssä' (un mot péjoratif finnois pour un Russe).

Quelques enfants ont également été interviewés en paires ou petits groupes pour étudier si les différences culturelles auraient de l'importance dans l'amitié entre enfants venant de cultures différentes. Les enfants étaient parfaitement conscients des différences mais ils les voyaient comme une richesse : ils ont dit qu'ils pourraient apprendre beaucoup de choses sur les différents pays par leurs amis. Les différences culturelles ne causaient pas de conflits entre les enfants.

Cette recherche ne nous offre pas de réponses simples - peut-être n'existe-t-il pas de réponse simple à une question aussi complexe. Nous pouvons cependant conclure que l'éthnicité semble jouer un certain rôle dans les relations entre enfants - un rôle qui dépend des enfants individuels et de leurs situations particulières. En effet, l'éthnicité avait de l'importance dans le cas de la Somalienne qui semblait être refusée presque uniquement parce qu'elle était considérée comme différente des autres.

Mots-clé : amitié et éthnicité ; relations éthniques ; sociométrie ; contacts interculturels ; différences culturelles.