Creating Schools that are welcoming for young refugees and asylum seekers (and their families)

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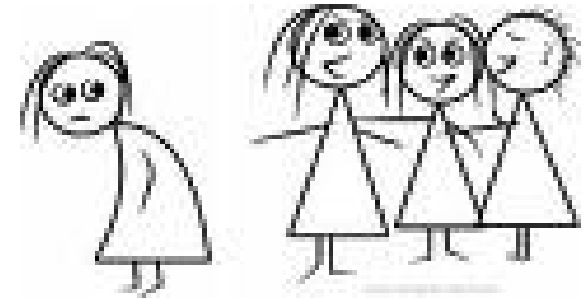# Creating welcoming and inclusive schools

- Majority of research and workshops today focus on supporting young refugee and asylum seekers
- My presentation concerns creating inclusive environments

Why is it necessary?

- Ethnic minority children more likely to experience racial victimization (Verkuyten, 2002; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2001).

- Children as young as 10 years victims of racial discrimination (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002).

- Linked to low ethnic self-esteem and acculturative stress (Verkuyten, 1998; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2001) and feelings of loneliness or peer rejection (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2001).

Why is it necessary? Cont.

Acculturation project (Brown, et al., 2013):

- Kent & Sussex, longitudinal study, 5-11 year olds, White British and Asian children.

- Integration, peer acceptance, social adjustment (inc. emotional symptoms)

- Diversity, and *desire for integration* (desire for contact with other group, and also strong ethnic identity) among minority children a double edged sword:

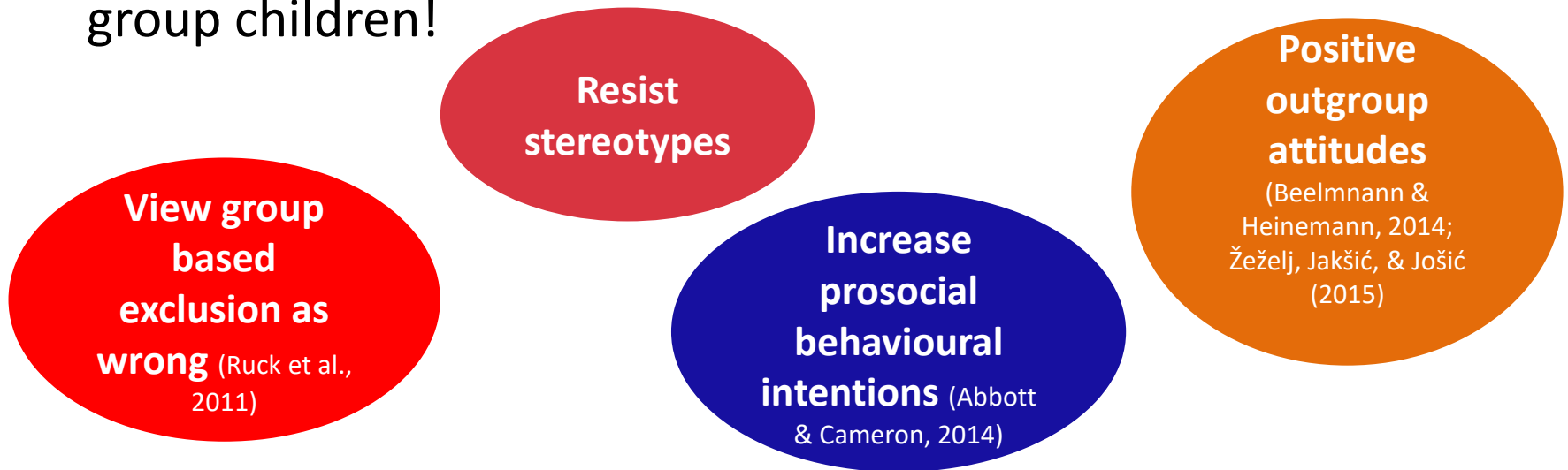Greater feelings of peer acceptance

Greater social competence

Increased emotional symptoms

- THIS is why important to address the attitudes of children in schools towards refugees and asylum seeking children & create a welcoming and accepting environment

Why is this necessary? Cont.

- Good peer relations important **for all children** and young people: well-being, academic engagement, problematic behaviours.

- Potential for positive impact of diversity for majority status group children!

Resist stereotypes

Positive outgroup attitudes (Beelmnann & Heinemann, 2014; Žeželj, Jakšić, & Jošić (2015)

View group based exclusion as wrong (Ruck et al., 2011)

Increase prosocial behavioural intentions (Abbott & Cameron, 2014)

Supportive environment

Creating an environment that supports inclusion, friendships that cross boundaries, values diversity is essential.

AIMS:

- Improve peer relations: friendships that cross group boundaries
- Help children resist stereotyping and prejudice
- Specific to **refugees/asylum seekers** OR **more general**

1. Knowledge: Resisting prejudice and stereotypes: teaching about refugees & asylum seekers

- Lots of resources out there already!

- See table in pack

- E.g. British Red Cross, Oxfam, UNHCR,

- Oxfam: Schools of Sanctuary

Resisting prejudice and stereotypes: teaching about refugees & asylum seekers

- More general approaches

Need more than knowledge and information.
Personal connection! *Some* provide this.

One Globe Kids Imagine Friendship with Real, Typical Kids from Around the World

One Globe Kids

- Funded by EHRC (Cameron, Swift & Glick, 2017)
- Tested online resource in 4 schools

Greater openness to and enthusiasm for other cultures

Increased perceived similarity across cultures

Personal connection important

Need to focus on SIMILARITY: children naturally inclined to DIFFERENCE

2. Friendships across group boundaries are essential

- Many benefits of experiencing diversity at school: attitudes, better peer relations, social adjustment

- BUT children most likely to benefit if hold *CROSS-GROUP FRIENDSHIPS*

Friendships that cross group boundaries essential cont.

Decline of cross-group friendships

- Children are typically attracted to same-race friends, *choose* to segregate *(Al Ramiah, Schmid, Hewstone, & Floe, 2015)*

- Intensifies through childhood and adolescence *(Aboud, Mendelson & Purdy, 2003; Tropp & Prenovost, 2008).*

- CG friendship less durable

How to support friendships across group lines (and promote positive attitudes)

Structured interactions

Positive interaction outside of school

Modelling (come onto this next)

Opportunity for positive, cooperative interactions: Jigsaw Classroom

Encourage 'bicultural' identities among minorities (Rutland et al., 2012)

Emphasise similarity across groups
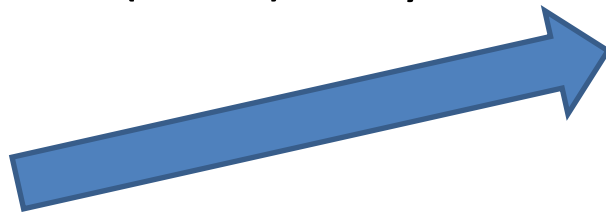
3. Model good relations

- Children pick up on adults ideas about diversity, and specific attitudes about groups.

- These impact on attitudes and friendship choices.

- Setting the **norm** for attitudes

 and behaviour in schools

Model good relations cont.

- **Non-verbal behaviour of adults is important**
- Children pick up on verbal and non-verbal behaviour of **adults.**
- E.g. Castelli et al (2008), Italy, white Italian children 3-6yrs

inter-racial (W-B) interaction

Verbal:
friendly or
neutral

**Non-verbal:
easy or uneasy**

How does watching videos impact children's attitudes towards the Black person in the video? And other Black people in general?
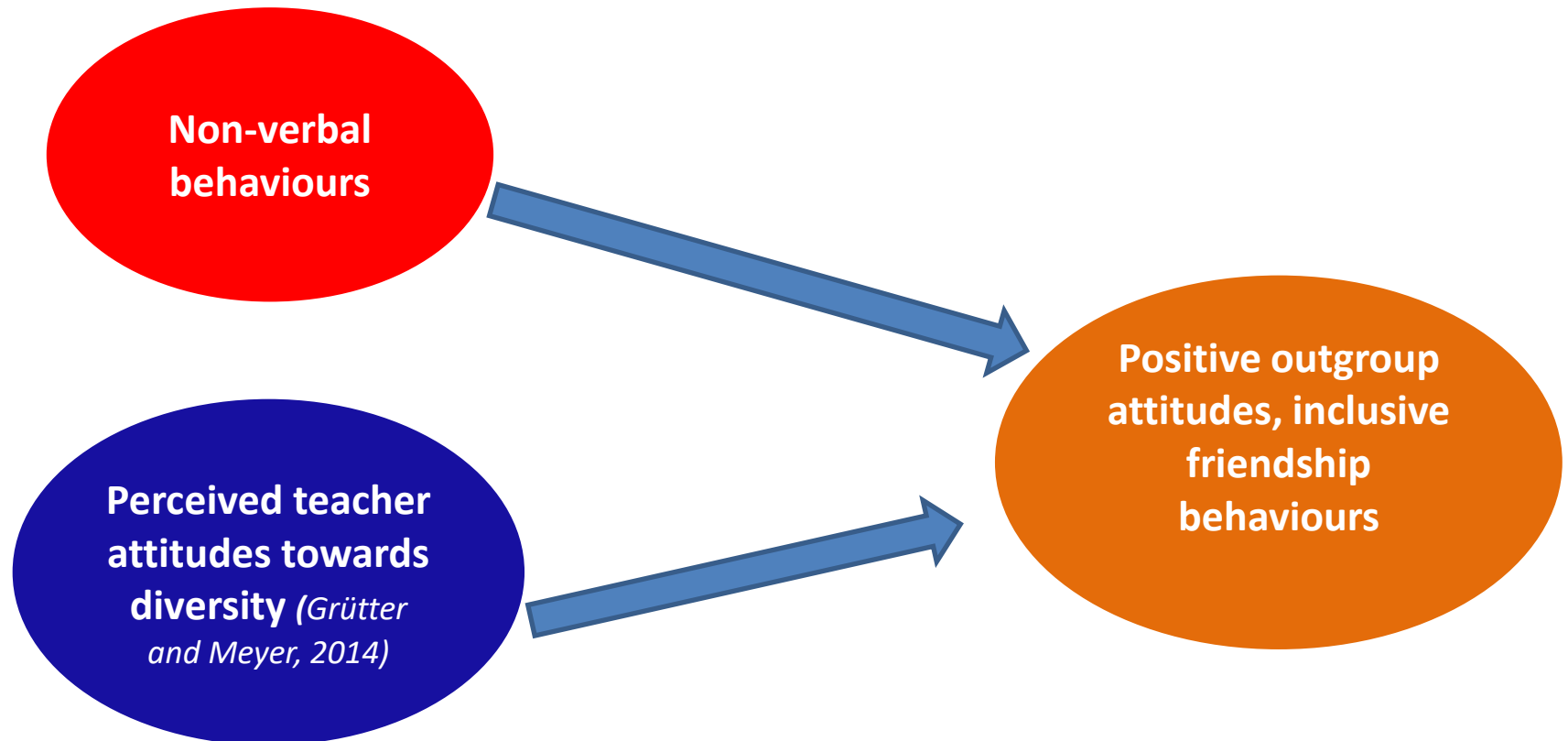
Model good relations cont.

- Children picked up on non-verbal signals & this shaped:

- Nature of interaction (e.g. how much W adult liked the B one, could become friends, etc)

- The child's attitude towards the Black adult (e.g. think B adult a nice person, share with him)

- *This attitude TRANSFERRED to a new Black person*

The **non-verbal behaviours** they observe in adults inform children's attitudes towards that individual, and other members of the same group.
Also models how behave to one another.

- **Potential positive impact adults in setting**

Non-verbal behaviours

Perceived teacher attitudes towards diversity *(Grütter and Meyer, 2014)*

Positive outgroup attitudes, inclusive friendship behaviours

- **Need to communicate positive attitudes**

Parents: also models & contribute to 'the norm'

- White children's attitudes towards other groups ALSO linked to parents unconscious attitudes (Castelli et al., 2007), particularly mothers.

- Children picking up parents NON VERBAL behaviour (Castelli et al., 2007)

Provide opportunities for parents to interact across group boundaries: structured, cooperative: POSITIVE MODELS.
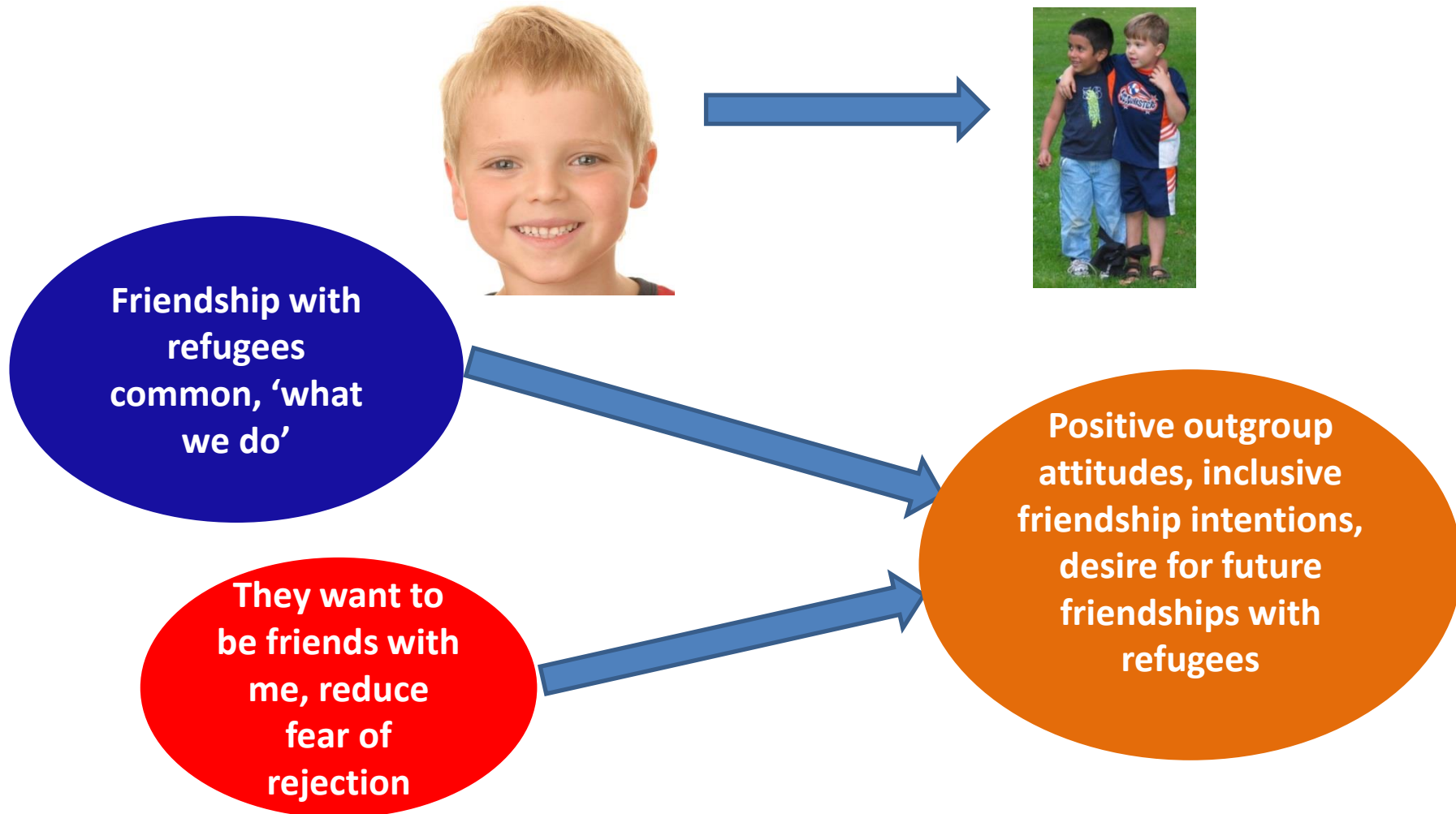
- What does this non-verbal behaviour look like?
- Eye contact
- Open body posture
- Crossing the street
- Ignoring
- Pushing past
- Disrespectful
- Not listening

- **Peers also model good relations (Cameron et al, 2006, refugees)**

Friendship with refugees common, 'what we do'

They want to be friends with me, reduce fear of rejection

Positive outgroup attitudes, inclusive friendship intentions, desire for future friendships with refugees

Modeling through media:

Cameron et al., 2006
Cameron & Rutland, 2006
Cameron et al., 2007
Cameron et al., 2011

Modelling through media: Cameron et al., 2006

- CROSS-GROUP FRIENDSHIPS is KEY

- *Tested impact of books featuring CG friendship among children from 6-11 years,* N = 253,

- *White British-Asian, disabled-nondisabled, refugee-White British*

- More positive **attitude** towards refugees
- More likely to want to be friends with refugee children
- Especially under certain conditions:

Low diversity setting: more chance for impact (Cameron et al., 2011)

Friendship element crucial

SCHOOL

Observing friendships between groups also…….

Reduces anxiety about interacting with members other groups

More positive attitudes

Increases confidence in future interactions

Changes perceived norms for friendship: 'they want to be friends with us'?

To summarise….

- Modelling good relations essential for positive attitudes, and creating friendships that cross group boundaries: parents, teachers, peers, media all have a role to play.

- Focus on common membership of groups

- Emphasise **value of diversity**: it adds to the strength of the school, ways that pupils benefit, communicate this.

- Frame diversity positively – watch out for those non-verbal behaviours!!

- Create opportunities for positive, structured interactions: children and parents!

4. Embedded in curriculum/school ethos

- One-off interventions/assemblies/classes not enough: sustained effort

- Part of school ethos: support for diversity, senior level, structured interactions across group boundaries, recognise strength in diversity and communicate this

5. Education for school staff and pupils

- Understanding terminology: **crucial**
- Confidence to talk about **difference**
- Confidence in using **proper terminology**
- Do not 'shoosh' children when they talk about difference and terminology: this how links with negativity begin!

5. Education cont.

- Understanding
- Empathy
- *Similarities*
- Critical thinking skills: finding the facts, who to believe, media.

6. Language barrier

- Barrier to cross-group friendship and positive interactions among parents, teachers and children.

5 top tips…..

- Knowledge is important, but a ***personal connection*** and focusing on *similarity*, and **valuing difference** also important: *children feel **accepted for who they are.***

- Positive interactions (**friendships**) that cross group boundaries key to creating welcoming and inclusive. Create **opportunities for positive, structured interactions** across group boundaries (children and parents?)

- Adults, teachers and peers have critical role to play: can **model good intergroup relations**, verbal and **non-verbal behaviour**. **Media** also important for communicating positive examples of friendships.

- Embedded in **curriculum** and school ethos.

- Education for school staff and pupils: understanding of terminology, **confidence in terminology and talking about difference**.

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