

Less than 4% of young people use ethnic or racial labels

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

Wednesday, 17 January 2024

When describing friendship cliques in their school, less than 4% of young people use ethnic or racial labels, reveals new research by the University of Cologne.

The study, conducted by Clemens Kroneberg, Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Sociology and Social Psychology, and Mark Wittek, investigated the use of ethnic and racial labels among 13-year old students in Germany, and found that in most cases they were rarely used.

The researchers conducted interviews with more than 3000 students across 39 schools, and asked students to indicate which cliques they observed in their school grade and to describe these groups in their own words.

The study found that students were most likely to describe friendship cliques in a neutral way. After this, the most common way they perceived their fellow students were by their hobbies, if they were funny, or just in a positive way.

This revealed that despite that fact that friendships are more frequent between individuals of the same ethnicity, the younger generation seems to be more successful than adults at blurring such boundaries.

However, the study also finds that Muslim cliques with a high level of self-identification were more likely to be labelled in ethno-racial terms. Still, this was a rare occurrence.

“Our results call on people to rethink their assumptions about the nature of ethnic segregation in students’ social networks, as these findings add to recent studies that found ‘ethnic homophily’ to be less detrimental than often assumed,” says Professor Kroneberg.

The study was published in the Journal “Sociological Science” and was a part of the SOCIALBOND project funded by the ERC.

/ENDS.

For more information, a copy of the report, or to speak with Professor Kroneberg, please contact Katie Hurley from BlueSky Education on khurley@bluesky.pr.com.