

ABSTRACT

The Implications of Friendships in a Multicultural Comprehensive School.

Patrice Sharma Evans

Friendships have been found to contribute greatly to the social, academic and psychological development of the individual. Through this select, intimate, reciprocated union, the individual is able to mature as he learns within a relationship based on trust, respect and equality of status. He not only learns from others by modelling their behaviour, but in turn influences their attitudes and contributes to their psychosocial development.

Friends tend to have similarities such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity and interests: to a large extent, the school which students attend define these criteria. Its organizational structure is such that it allows for categorizations along similar definitions through its year and subject groupings. If therefore, the structuring of the organization determines the type of friends selected, it follows that a change in the management of any given school may result in changes in the friendship criteria. The purpose of this thesis therefore, is to identify the types of friendships which occur within a multi-ethnic comprehensive school which purports to adhere to multi-cultural ideals. The aim being, to see if the friendships reflect this multicultural trend, since these interactions are good indicators of how well a person is integrating.

This research makes use of two sociometric instruments. The former (Baker-Lunn, 1970) indicates closest relationships, while the latter (Thomas, 1982) provides us with evidence of a range of interactions. Not only are the types of friendships which exist, identified within this study, but the grades and self esteem of students are scrutinised to see if they become a friendship criteria. All these variables are later assessed according to ethnic and racial origin to determine if they impact in any way on their social interactions.

The findings indicate that there is a link between students making more cross-ethnic choices, self esteem and their eventual performance. While the results cannot be generalised for British society, they do provide an indication of behaviour within an identifiable framework.

Mr. C. Keller, Dr. E. Taylor, Professor G. Verma, Mr. H. Atunipane, The Head Teacher and staff of Chalney High School for Boys (in particular Mrs. D. Thakooridin, Mr. M. Berrill and those who administered the questionnaires), Mr. J. Evans, Mr. J. Thakooridin, Mrs. S. Mapp and Dr. G. Mapp, the library staff at the Faculty of Education Cambridge University, and the Cambridge Institute of Education for the use of their facilities, last but certainly not least, all the students who willingly answered the questions.

Any errors or misconceptions present in this research are undoubtedly mine.