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Mechanisms that reinforce and counter religious segregation in school classes: Network processes involve the interaction between positive and negative ties.

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School classes are often confronted with subgroup formation. From a signed network perspective, such groups can be characterized by a high level of positive ties among members inside each subgroup and a high degree of negative ties between these subgroups. Such subgroups are partly formed based on nodal characteristics such as ethnicity, gender or religion. However, such subgroups can be reinforced or countered. One crucial question is which micro-level processes drive subgroup formation. In this paper we focus on religion (non-religious, Christian, Muslim) as a basis for subgroup formation. We know surprisingly little about the mechanisms behind the emergence and stability of religious segregated subgroups. We ask the question, which network mechanisms reinforce them, and which ones might counter such segregation. Relying on social identity and (structural) balance theories, this study investigates the co-evolution of friendship and dislike networks in creating ingroups and outgroups along religious lines. To answer this question, we use a stochastic actor-oriented model (SIENA model) to study the evolution of dislike and friendship among 1,204 secondary-school pupils in 5 German schools. Results show that both religious homophily in friendship and religious heterophily in dislike simultaneously form and maintain high connectedness within (group cohesion) and lack of connectedness between (group boundaries) Muslim and non-Muslim groups. However, we also find that some triadic processes involving a combination of positive and negative ties amplify segregation, while others tend to counter such divisions based on religion.

Keywords

homophily, heterophily, segregation, religion, SIENA

Topics

- Student mobility network

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