

In their 2004 article entry “Do Race and Ethnicity Matter Among Friends? Activities among Interracial, Interethnic, and Intraethnic Adolescent Friends”, Grace Kao and Kara Joyner argue that adolescents who manage to break the racial barrier present in friendship and inclusion are still subjected to the hardships that arise within interracial and interethnic peer relationships, and they face these at a higher rate than those who seek friendships within the same race. In order to gain a nationally representative sample of adolescents, Kao and Joyner employed the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to examine friendship activities in teenagers from 1994-1995. Shared activity was used as an indicator to gauge intimacy within friendships.

In the article it was notably mentioned that friendship activities between interracial and intraracial groups did not deviate significantly, meaning that whether or not friends were of the same race or of differing races, they mostly engaged in the same activities. It was noted however, that white, Hispanic and Asian adolescents reported a significantly lower rate of shared activities with their black friends. The prevalence of intraracial friendships is highly due to the lived experiences and segregations that each demographic face in their day to day lives that make it easier to relate to similar peers.

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health was employed to assess adolescents reports on their top five friends, and they were also asked to identify their best friend and all races and ethnicities were noted. Surveys were then used to assess shared activity level between inter and intra racial as well as cross cultural adolescents.

Critiques of this article would be the fact that few research papers are able to have nationally representative samples. In addition, when focusing on race and ethnicity, the researchers did not only include black and white demographics, they also gathered data to represent Hispanic and Asian demographics as well, which makes the study more representative and generalizable to the American public. The validity of this research is high due to the increasing diversity of the country and the increasing likelihood of having cross racial or cultural peers. However, it should be noted that the influence of modern technology and social media were not accounted for in this study due to its time of execution, so that might affect its applicability to the real world of now.

In conclusion, the article notes that higher priority friendships, “best-friends” were more commonly seen between peers who shared race and/or ethnicity. There was also a higher proportion of shared activities occurring between friends of similar race and ethnicity than cross cultural peers. This factor was used to determine that higher friendship intimacy was seen between peers of the same race and culture and those who reported their “best friends” as being of a different race or ethnicity had fewer shared activities, indicating that a strain on friendship intimacy was present. This was attributed to the difference in lived experiences across race and cultures.

Kao, G., & Joyner, K. (2004). Do race and ethnicity matter among friends? Activities among interracial, interethnic, and Intraethnic adolescent friends. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 45(3), 557–573.