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A white community's perception of white youth's interracial friendships.

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Abstract

This study explores the feelings that a White community have about their youth befriending Black Africans. The study was conducted in Gauteng with most participants from the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. There were 105 adults that participated in the study – 39 males and 66 females. A questionnaire was used to gather data and consisted of eight scales namely: feelings about White youth having Black friends, affective prejudice, social distance, intergroup anxiety, perceived symbolic threats, levels of ingroup identity, perceptions of out-group homogeneity and levels of contact with Black Africans. Participants indicated positive feelings toward White youth having Black African friends. Items in the symbolic threat scale were explored and they were summated into a scale.

A strong positive relationship was found between the perceptions of symbolic threat scale and feelings about youth having Black African friends. In order to determine the impact of the different variables on feelings about White youth having Black African friends, a forward stepwise regression was conducted where two explanatory variables proved to be significant: social distance and perceptions of threats. Social distance was the stronger influential variable on youth having Black African friends. Although not the main aim of the study it was decided to test the contact hypothesis by way of two forward stepwise regression models, the first using social distance as the measure of prejudice and the second using affective prejudice. The variables that proved significance in the first model were intergroup anxiety, having Black African friends, perceptions of outgroup homogeneity, and levels of identification with the White group. And having Black African friends and intergroup anxiety in the second model.

A t-test and ANOVAS were conducted to explore the difference in attitudes and feelings as a function of gender, age and socio-economic levels. There was no significant difference with gender and age. There was, however, a significant difference between high and low socio-economic levels regarding perceptions of homogeneity and affective prejudice.