

Abstract

Friendships have been one of the constant connections throughout our lives. They provide unique benefits that our other interpersonal relationships may not be able to offer. But what does it mean to be a friend, especially today when technology is becoming ever present? When social networking sites such as Facebook encourage us to “friend” almost everyone we meet, these lines can blur. Another aspect that can affect communication patterns and what it means to be a friend is one's culture. This study examines how university students from multiple cultures see friendship, and how they sustain these connections with their friends over time through the use of social networking sites. Key themes found throughout student interviews included the classification of what it means to be a friend and how that friendship was maintained in a digital age. There was also a common theme, across cultures, regarding the ending of relationships and the hesitation that accompanied it, wherein differences emerged over expectations for what made it acceptable to end a friendship. A final theme we will continue to study is the commemorative value of friendship or staying connected to an individual because of the memories that a person holds or provides. This has the potential to be a valuable topic for future research. Studying friendships in the digital age across cultures provides a foundation for how we communicate on a global stage in the future and how to sustain our connections in a technologically and globally growing world.