

# Free understanding the concept of friendship literature review example

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



## **Intercultural Friendship**

### Introduction

Scholars and academicians have paid little interest to intercultural friendships in spite of their obvious magnitude and regularity in the continuously expanding multicultural world. Intercultural friendships symbolize a close linkage between interpersonal and cultural dimensions of communication systems. The hardships involved in sorting them out might be one explanation why they attract so little interest from researchers. In recent times, it has become generally acknowledged that cultural diversity in the backgrounds of communicators contributes to differences in the patterns of communication behavior. This has made several researchers studying intercultural communication to make the assumption that it is a distinctive aspect of communication which requires special attempts at theorizing and research. However, in many recently published works of research, this assumption has been subjected to question.

According to Sarbaugh (1979), the moment an individual starts to identify the factors that operate in the communication set up, it becomes clear that the same factors hold for both intercultural and intra-cultural settings.

Therefore, it follows that one key focus of research in intercultural communication should be upon extending the results and theorizing from intra-cultural communication to intercultural settings. According to Orbe & Harris (2008), a good number of intercultural friendships encounter challenges that are largely nonexistent in intra-cultural friendships. Research work conducted on the cultural foundation of friendship has depicted cross-cultural differences in patterns of friendship (Adams & Plaut, 2003; French,

Bae, Pidada, & Lee, 2006; Sheets & Lugar, 2005).

Studies also imply that differences in culture may inhibit the commencement and/or development of intercultural relationships (Diggs & Clark, 2002; Gareis, 2000; Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Numerous researchers have showed that intercultural friendship continues to be a largely understudied area of study (Chen, 2002; Lee, 2006; Morgan & Arasaratnam, 2003). Most notably, establishing intercultural friendships acts as an enlightening experience for people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Social interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds actually expands individuals' view of the world. It contests some formerly held prejudices about people from other cultures. Indeed, intercultural friendships influence the lives of individuals at both personal and professional contexts.

The result of globalization leads people to generally suppose that avenues to interact with others from an array of different national cultures have risen (Leeds-Hurtwiz, 2002). However, the real situation on the ground is that people inhabit a global village in which their neighbors, friends, and workmates will not essentially share common values or speak a similar native language. In the words of Hall (1990), individuals must be willing to accept that the people of this planet do not just inhabit one world but exhibit a range of different cultures, and if this is not properly understood, it can destroy some sections of the population of the world. In order to emerge triumphant in both their personal and professional undertakings, people need to learn how to connect, on a face-to-face basis, with other people from different cultures. As a matter of fact, the study of culture is becoming one of the vital areas obtaining heightened attention from researchers.

## **Literature review**

### Overview of friendship

Friendship is an exceptional and essential form of interpersonal relationship. It is distinguished from other forms of relationships by its non-compulsive nature and by its individualistic focus in which individuals learn how to treat one another as wholesome persons, rather than simply situational occupants (Wright, 1984). Intercultural friendships are signified by differences between peoples' cultures that bring about unique challenges as well as rewards. Individuals must embrace differences in cultural principles, ethics and values and/or languages, and overcome continuing stereotypes. Nonetheless, they also achieve cultural knowledge, widen their social perspectives, and do away with stereotypes. In addition, several cultural groups have conflicting interpretation mechanisms, making the exchange of information more constrained and increasing the risk of possible misapprehension, uncertainty, aggravation, and dispute (Barnett & Lee, 2002). Such challenges present significant difficulties to the establishment and maintenance of intercultural friendships. However, in spite of these difficulties, people do cultivate and nurturing tolerant intercultural friendships.

### **Importance of friendship**

Only a handful of people would question the importance of friendship. Friendships are act as a basis of social intimacy and contact, two vital elements of human survival. However, friendships are not synonymous to friendly relations. Kurth (1970), in her classic essay, distinguishes the phrase 'friendly relations' from the term 'friendship'. She describes friendly

relations as a product of a role relationship and possibly a preliminary stage to friendship. On the other hand, friendship is a very close relationship comprising of two people as individuals. These two forms of relationships are also different subject to the normative specifications that direct them. While there are some socio-cultural norms denoting what amounts to friendly relations, Bell (1981) argues that the foundation of friendship is personal consultations and is not established through cultural norms or values. According to Suttles (1970), of all the important interpersonal relationships, friendships are the most nonprogrammable.

Wright (1978), in defining the term friendship, focused his attention on two aspects of the relationship: the unconstrained nature of the interaction, and the individualistic focus of the interaction. According to Bell (1981), friendships are not only entered into freely and willingly, but they are recognized as such by both participants. If two persons are good friends, they commit themselves to spend some quality time together without the presence of external constraints or limitations (Wright, 1978). As a result, choosing to be interdependent on one another is, therefore, a vital factor for consideration in a friendship relationship. Friends in this relationship also respond to each other as fulfilled individuals and not just as occupants of roles. In addition, Wright (1978), discovers that, in friendship, each person responds to the other as an equal being.

## **Communication and Friendship**

The single most habitual activity in which friends engage is communication (Fehr, 1996; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1983). Self-disclosure is one of the

essential communicative characteristics in the formation of friendship relationships (Matsushima & Shiomi, 2002). Self-disclosure can be described as the process of revealing personal information that others might not know otherwise. Self-disclosure is one of the main interactive methods used to decrease uncertainty and foster intercultural relationships (Gudykunst, 1985a; Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Kudo and Simkin (2003), in particular, have pointed out self-disclosure as a crucial sign of intercultural friendship; it only comes third to frequency and similarity of contact. In spite of the significance of self-disclosure in enhancing close friendships, no much is known about the methods through which individuals reveal personal information in intercultural friendships. In addition, not much has been done to examine potential relationships between self-disclosure and cultures. Based on his results that traditional Japanese friendship patterns rarely entailed intimate self-disclosure, Barnlund (1989) has even argued that self-disclosure might be a concept of the Western culture. Barnlund's assertion undermines the need to examine cultural effects on self-disclosure in friendship patterns. The skills that people value in their friends reveals some things about the duties and obligations of being a friend, the standards to which friends are held, and the kinds of interaction that are expected in and help to shape close friendships. In other words, skill assessments provide a mechanism of accessing the specific beliefs of people regarding the role that communication plays in friendships between people of same sex. Burleson & Samter (1990) and Burleson, Kunkel, & Birch (1994) recognized a group of ten different communicative abilities pertinent to same-sex friendships. These abilities can be loosely categorized according to whether or not their

primary emphasis is on the management of affect and emotion or on the management of more useful, daily behaviors and activities. In various studies conducted by several researchers, it was revealed that communication skills that are affection-inclined are considered to be more important for same sex friends to acquire than are instrumentally oriented skills (Burleson & Samter; 1990; Burleson et al., 1996; Finn & Powers, 2002; Samter & Burleson, 1990; Westmyer & Myers, 1996).

According to Matsushima & Shiomi (2002), one of the critical attributes of establishing and maintaining friendship is self-disclosure. Self-disclosure is commonly referred to as the process of making oneself known to other people (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958). Intra-culturally, Tardy and Dindia (2006) conclude that self-disclosure is mostly of the time used strategically to control the development of a relationship and found out that factors influencing self-disclosure in personal relationships comprise of gender, trust, reciprocity, liking or affection and requests for disclosures. In comparison, in spite of the fact that cross-cultural studies have been effective in portraying how depth, quantity, breadth, timing, valence, targets, and social values pertaining to self-disclosure vary across cultures (Barry, 2003; Chen, 1995; Fitzpatrick et al., 2006; Lustig & Koester, 2006), not much has been done to explore what variables facilitate or hinder self-disclosure in intercultural friendships.

## **Communication and Friendship**

At a close look, strong friendship bonds in both Western and non-Western cultures appear to have common core-valued qualities such as mutual

affection, trustworthiness in sharing personal information, approval, and support (Argyle, Henderson, Bond, Iizuka, & Contarello, 1986; Gareis, 1995). However, a closer look at personal qualities and related communicative competencies often reveal that cultures, even if they share general notions, differ in the manifestations of these traits and the degree of their importance. For instance, according to Barnlund (1989), although self-disclosure is a common characteristic of friendship across the world, its extent and prevalence tends to be less modest in the U. S than in Japan. Another study by Morse (1983) revealed that self-disclosure is more significant for Brazilians than Australians. This was a clear indication that friendship relationships exhibit different levels of openness.

## **Research question**

What is the relationship that exists between different national cultures and the formation and development of intercultural friendships amongst university students? This study seeks to add to the existing body of research work regarding the topic of intercultural friendships by examining the factors that hinder intercultural friendships between domestic United States university students and their foreign counterparts.

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