**Relationship Maintenance\***

Duo Liu

University

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To maintain friendships requires effort. If neither partner in the friendship makes such an effort, even two close friends would eventually grow apart from one another. As social norms changed, people have started to rely less on friendships to lend each other social support or to enrich each other’s lives, as other means have taken its place. As part of the field research in this regard, I caught up with an old friend from high school that I had only maintained contact on Facebook but rarely met after I entered college. I will briefly outline my experience of our union lustrating the sociological significance of our meetup.

I managed to meet my high school friend, Wang, last night at dinner whom I had not met for a long time, feeling that our friendship needed strengthening. He was a smart and tech-savvy person whom I always thought would make into a Fortune 500 company when he graduated. It was perhaps our common interest in gadgets and technology that brought us closer in high school. After we enrolled in different colleges, we did not get the chance to meet up that often but retained some contact on Facebook. After getting in touch with him online, we agreed to meet up at the nearby restaurant to catch up with old times.

As soon as we met and started talking, it felt that a lot had changed in our lives. Yet at the same time, it felt as if we had only separated for a few days or so. He began to tell me about his activities at college, and we both agreed that it did not turn out the way we thought at high school. I was surprised to hear that he took up music and philosophy since I always imagined him to be technology-inclined. We discussed our career goals and our relationships, catching up for lost time. There were a lot of dreams and goals we shared in school that had not come true so far yet we agreed that it might not have been such a bad thing. It was quite fun remembering some of the silly antics we would engage in high school just for the thrill of it and laughed at ourselves for being so naïve at that time. We also discussed our relationships and confessed to each other about our new ones. As we laughed, I could not help but think that I really missed his company, and how much I enjoyed reminiscing about old times with him. As we finished dinner, he hired an Uber and went on his way promising to stay in touch.

Reflecting upon our brief reunion, I think that it truly contributed something special and significant to my life. It felt liberating and redemptive to catch up with someone who knew me for so many years, as I could open up to him in a way that I could not do so now with my friends in college. In a way, Wang served as a conduit to remind me of the earlier version of myself who I seemed to have lost. Moreover, I gained important insights about some useful career prospects, and discussing these matters with Wang showed me how we had evolved during all these years. I felt that having a friend like this serves as a guardian for your past memories, evoking a special form of happiness in me, the kind that is different from engaging with my family. I realized I needed someone in front of whom I could act carefree or even foolish, and it helped me laugh aloud, smile and relax and could feel that it served as a happiness booster for me. I could see that Wang apparently had the same feelings and realized how fulfilling it can be to connect with an old friend and laugh together about old times, picking up from where we left off. There was a mutual feeling that if we ever needed each other, we would be there to support and help out one another.

The experience I had, confirmed findings from different studies that the presence of friendship correlates with higher life satisfaction. As humans, we instinctively want to socialize, and a number of benefits are to be gained through these positive interactions that build a person's social capital (Amati, Meggiolaro, Rivellini, and Zaccarin 2018:15). These warm ties are very important to our individual happiness and thus require efforts and resources to be directed towards achieving these ties (Bok 2010:139). Meyers suggests that “a supportive network helps us evaluate and overcome stressful events…and can help bolster our threatened self-esteem” (1992:144). A friend's help, advise assurances, or even sharing an experience together can serve as a medicine for us.

# References

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