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Anthropology in the Digital Age

An Analysis

of

Social Interaction on Networking Sites

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The Internet and social networking sites appear to have transformed the ways in which users interact socially, and have shaped communication in unique ways. The intention in conducting an ethnographic study on social networking sites was to uncover the interactive patterning of users. The study also explores the manner in which social networking sites have redefined communication, friendship and intimate relationships between individuals, and how they have perhaps influenced users to share or show cultural experience in what could be new, unique, "wired" (perhaps weird) "virtual", online "societies."

The transformation in communication between the old methods of the past and the rapid current technological advances that have occurred over the last decade have enabled users to find previously "lost" and "unreachable" individuals in ways that have become unimaginably easy.

The number of friendships that individuals make and maintain, as well as an analysis of who the friends actually are, were essential focuses of this paper, and were also explored in the light of differing global cultures and how those cultures are shared and/or shown to other users online. The notion of the "Other" was also examined in this context, with a view to understanding how foreign cultures are embraced or otherwise.

Intimate relationships between individuals and how they are formed, together with the advantages and/or potential consequences often encountered by users were analysed in some detail, together with a study on how marriages and communication between family members have been affected by online social networking.

A comparative analysis of how online issues like privacy, loyalty, loss, danger, addiction and support relate to, or differ from offline situations, which are then perhaps indicative of the view that social networking sites are indeed societies in their own right, and in which users actually "reside."