CROSS CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS ON FRIENDSHIP: COLLABORATION, COLLEGIALITY AND COMRADESHIP IN DIVERSITY

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The axiom ‘O my friends, there is no friend’ attributed to Montaigne via Aristotle, has been used as a motif by the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida in his lectures and writings on friendship collected in his book The Politics of Friendship (1997). This citation of the citation of a quotation serves to indicate something of the complexities and contradictions inherent in the everyday term of friendship.

The apparent ordinariness of the word friendship conceals ideas about, not only a multiplicity of personal relationships, but also pacts between states, cultural exchanges, business contacts, political alliances and legal colleagues. Friendship in its various configurations links people and communities together in some sort of reciprocally beneficial association that forms societies. Thus friendship is a concept that deserves attention and that has the capacity to improve relationships in an increasingly conflict-ridden world.
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ABSTRACT

This paper is an investigation of the ways in which people from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds interpret the concept of friendship. Peer group conversations were held in English between colleagues from thirteen different cultures who are working and studying at a New Zealand university. The cultural backgrounds of those involved are Pakeha1 New Zealander, Sri Lankan, German, Indian, Iraqi, Korean, Trinbagonian, Japanese, Chinese, Maldivian, Italian, Samoan and Maori New Zealander. The discipline backgrounds that we can draw from include anthropology, economics, education, ethics, history, linguistics, political science, psychology, sociology and theology. We explored the use of the term ‘friendship’ and interrelated concepts and discussed the way in which linguistic and traditional differences and similarities link into the political, religious and social histories of the cultures.

On a more practical and personal level, this project is also an attempt to demonstrate how collaborative research can be a supportive method whereby friends and colleagues mentor each other in their academic work and share in the research ‘outputs’ increasingly demanded in the university world. At the same time, the challenges faced by the group dynamics involved in collaborative projects and the career disadvantages are acknowledged.

Attention has increasingly been directed at the concept of friendship in many disciplines in the modern and post-modern academic world, since a resurgence of interest in the 1980s. Although the interest in friendship as appropriate for intellectual research is relatively new, most of the main ideas about friendship exist already in the historical writings of Western philosophical thought, and in the literature and traditional stories of cultures throughout the globe. There is a rich starting ground which can be used to assist the debates and analyses on the role of friendship in current society.

The history of Western ideas to which mainstream academia has access is traced back to the classical scholars of Greece and Rome. Debate in the literature focuses on interpretations of the terminology used to refer to the concept of friendship in Greek and Latin, such as philia, eros, agape, xenia and amicitia, and their English translations such as friendship, desire, love, hospitality and patronage.

1 Pakeha is the Maori term for white New Zealander.
The historical trajectory of discussions about friendship in the Western tradition follows through the medieval period with treatises on the spiritual friendship advanced by the monastic community. The concept of spiritual friendship emphasises *caritas* (or charity) rather than *concupiscence* (or passion).

In the modern period the debate has resurfaced through various challenges to the Western liberal tradition which has emphasised independence and individuality. For example, feminist challenges have offered a reconsideration of female friendship or ‘gyn/affection’ (Raymond 1986). Feminists argued that the separation between the personal and the political had helped to disadvantage women. Making the underlying politics of power within personal relationships open to public scrutiny, it was argued, would expose some of the inequities and allow for them to be addressed politically.

The deconstruction of postmodernism produces alternative terms for the conventional love and friendship, such as Derrida’s ‘lovance’ and ‘aimance’, which integrate friendship and romance, while the discipline of psychology also spawned a plethora of research initiatives which looked at the importance of interpersonal relationships for mental well-being. The communitarian analysis also offered a more collective world-view and urged that social ties and common interests were a more ethical way to approach political problems.

There is now an abundance of literature related to the concept of friendship in the disciplines of psychology, philosophy, sociology, politics and history. Anthropology whose concentration had traditionally been kinship relationships is also moving to embrace the study of friendship. Economics and business studies as well as international relations and conflict resolution are likewise extending their scope of analysis into this area.

To access the histories and ideas of non-Western cultures, anthropologists have traditionally carried out ethnographic field work with the intention of sympathetically and systematically examining a particular region in which the (usually) Western anthropologist has an expertise. Linguists interpret the different languages and give explanations about culture accessible to the English-speaking world. Cross-cultural research has been carried out in other disciplines with the use of interpreters, translators and facilitators from the researched culture to help the researcher understand ‘the other’.

There are a number of studies which have carried out cross-cultural research on friendship. Most of these are based on a comparison of two cultures, and usually the comparison is between American or Canadian and ‘an other’. (see for example Gareis, 1995) Studies carried out in languages other than English are more difficult for most Anglo-American researchers, and translation difficulties occur if there is not the opportunity to discuss the intricacies of meaning with the speaker of the ‘other’ language.
When the topic of cross-cultural friendship is discussed in the political science and international relations literature, it is usually related to friendship alliances between different nations at the global level. This project, on the other hand, starts from the perspective of individual academics from a variety of cultural backgrounds and uses comparative analysis from approaches within the broad spectrum of the social sciences. The paper discusses a number of ways in which the concept of friendship is used to express political ideas and also the ways in which attitudes to friendship may have a political impact on the different cultures explored.

Methodology and Research Design

This research project incorporates aspects of grounded theory and takes a collaborative and comparative cross-cultural approach. It includes qualitative peer group conversations and bibliographical and textual research.

Grounded Theory

The grounded theory framework takes exploration as its starting point, and the theory evolves from the findings. This 'grounded' exploratory approach can be applied methodologically too. The methodology has evolved and developed in line with the gradual revelation of findings. (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003, Denscombe, 2003, Dey, 1999)

Incorporating some grounded theory elements into this research project proved useful. Although grounded theory recommends that one does not start from the literature review, but begins a research project with an openness not affected by conclusions arrived at by others, on-going reports to the university required that the theoretical background and a bibliography be provided. However, in keeping with grounded theory, this was kept as open as possible, with an eclectic approach to theory, and the literature review continuing throughout the project, the direction and the content being informed by the process.

In terms of the data gathering, this corresponded with grounded theory’s requirement of constant comparison. The transcriptions for each group meeting were circulated firstly to those who attended that group meeting to ensure that the transcriptions were accurate, and then to the rest of the researchers. Each meeting incorporated a discussion about the previous meeting’s transcript, and so each ‘conversation’ built on the last, and extended the scope from that point. Thus a continual cycle of review was built into the process.

In addition, with grounded theory, there is not necessarily an obvious end point. This workshop provides an intervention in the process, and so the analysis thus far can be presented. But the research process is continuing and the exploration of the topic is unfinished.

Qualitative Peer Group Conversations
A qualitative approach enables the participants to explain their thinking as fully as possible in a way which takes account of the complexities of communicating political and philosophical ideas and concepts. Qualitative research is regarded as a discourse or narrative and acknowledges the complexity of the study and the need for a flexible approach. An approach which employs peer group conversations constitutes a more collaborative methodology than focus group interviews. The small number in each group (usually not more than five) and equality between the participants as researchers means that the data gathered is rich and intense. The reciprocal interchange redresses some of the relational imbalances between respondent and researcher which are embedded in face-to-face interviews.²

There are some problems which need to be acknowledged in this form of research. The perspective of the participants is not necessarily representative, and information provided needs to be substantiated by independent sources. The interaction and group dynamics process can produce behaviours such as ‘groupthink’, particularly when there is ‘amiability and esprit de corps among members’ (Janis 1972).

The format of peer group conversations enabled the participants to feel at ease and to be prepared to share their views willingly. A rich body of data has been generated from the transcriptions of these ‘conversations’, and there is a resource which can be analysed in a variety of ways, and which can form the basis of extended research. The exchange of ideas and the voicing of different perspectives, not only resulted in the collection of very interesting and hard-to-access information, but also increased each person’s understanding of the others’ cultures.

Janis concern about ‘groupthink’ was not in evidence. This, it could be argued, is because none of the small conversation groups were made up of the same combination of people each time. This meant that each person was exposed to a different set of perspectives each time. However, one of the problems with peer group conversations is that because the composition of the group is dependent on availability of the participants, there are some people who participate regularly and others who have been able to attend infrequently. To an extent this is compensated for by the use of email and the circulating of the transcripts for feedback. But the ‘conversation’ element of the research methodology is missing if the communication becomes too tedious or time-consuming.

**Collaborative research**

A collaborative approach was chosen for three main reasons. Firstly, there are ethical concerns about some social sciences research which uses the knowledge and information given by the subjects of research to serve the ends of the researcher. Secondly, there is evidence that the cross-fertilization of ideas and the opportunities for academic debate and discourse can further the accumulation of knowledge and the development of wisdom. And, thirdly,

² See for example Brenner (1985); Denscombe (2003)
the adoption of a collaborative research approach was intended as a way of assessing whether this could serve as a supportive method whereby friends and colleagues can mentor each other in their academic work and increase opportunities for research engagement. In this way, a project which examines cross-cultural friendship, can also act in a practical way to serve the ends of friendship by bringing benefits to those with whom one works closely. The research culture of a university can be enhanced as the concept of a ‘community of scholars’ is revived.3

Participants were involved as co-researchers. The aim was to encourage those involved to share ownership of the project, to have their own views on the methodology included, to have some control about how their contribution is used, and to obtain research outputs in their own name.4

Reflecting back to the problems of groupthink, the tension between creating an environment of trust where people feel safe enough to share their ideas and views, and being able to challenge and critique these ideas and views needs to be taken into account. This is particularly a sensitive issue in cross-cultural research.

Despite the collaborative approach being adopted partly to address ethical concerns, it was the collaborative nature of the project which in fact caused problems for gaining ethical approval. Normally with collaborative research between only a few academics, the terms of their collaboration do not have to pass through scrutiny by an Ethics Committee. However, as this was a new initiative with a relatively high number of co-researchers, an ethics application was submitted. Ethical issues were identified as including confidentiality, intellectual property, authorship rights, consent, and power differences. A ‘contract’ was drawn up by the co-researchers to establish agreement on the sharing of information, the acknowledgement of researchers’ contributions, confidentiality, withdrawal from the project, and on-going research.

An interesting issue arose in the peer group conversations in relation to requirements set by AUTEC (Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee). As the initiator of this project, I had been particularly concerned that everyone would get at least one research output from this project – all equally acknowledged as authors. I had felt that this would be important to academics because of the pressure to produce research outputs from the university and the government. However, some of the group felt uncomfortable about this as they felt they had not contributed enough. They felt that I was doing the bulk of the work and therefore it was not fair that everyone should be equally acknowledged.

One of the participants, Laumua who is from Samoa, raised another perspective on the issue of authorship. He said that his motivation for being involved in this research project was not related to getting a research output. Laumua was ‘starting to ask questions of this ethics committee’. He was

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3 See for example Sadler 1999; Glassick et al 1997; Boyer 1990; Brett 2000; Little et al 2002; Laslett and Rapoport 1975.
4 See for example Lather (1988).
concerned that what AUTEC was doing was in a way obliging him to have his name put as one of the authors. ‘if they have anything in writing that says you must have your name on it because it’s collaborative research’.

There were three reasons Laumua gave for being cautious about having his name on the reports. Firstly was his perception that his contribution did not warrant it:

My part in this whole project is just bits and pieces, ad-ons, which doesn’t really require my name put onto it, you know what I mean? No ethical reasons whatsoever. I understood my role from the beginning. It was more like an informant, rather than anything else. And I was very happy.

The second reason had to do with the understandings within the Samoan community. Having his name on the report could be ‘misconstrued in the minds of the Samoan community’. It would have to be made clear that the views expressed were:

...Laumua’s personal views, you know, as a Samoan. He is not standing to represent the whole Samoan community.

It is not appropriate without extensive consultation, for Samoans to speak on behalf of the Samoan community. He had to be careful, because of his leadership role in the community, that his personal views were not taken to be authoritative or representative.

This project has achieved a cross-fertilization of ideas and a sharing of information as well as facilitating friendships and forming good collegial working relationships. The less experienced researchers have expressed an appreciation of the opportunity to engage in the research and there has been an increased knowledge of the perspectives of others. However, in the effort to establish a ‘safe’ research environment, and in the absence of a ‘leader’, it is more difficult to comment negatively or to challenge the opinions or statements which might be perceived as incorrect.

The logistics of the exercise is difficult and there is a requirement that everyone is flexible. It was never possible to have a meeting with everyone together. There are also times of unproductiveness, when waiting for the contributions of someone who has other priorities to attend to. The unexpected delays related to gaining ethics approval also had an impact on the time available, especially when working within the time constraints of a six-month research fellowship. In addition, as a research output, a collaborative project counts for little in terms of the pressure to get a high research grading. Collaborative projects, although encouraged in the research rhetoric, are discouraged by the accounting process.

**Cross-cultural research**

Cross-cultural research acknowledges that in New Zealand as in many ‘first-world’ countries, much of the academic literature to which we have access
comes from the perspective of the Western intellectual tradition, and because of the prevalence of the English language is often limited to the Anglo-American model. Cross-cultural research allows researchers to extend the scope of their understanding and potentially to improve communication and interaction between people of different language backgrounds and cultures.

With the growth in recent decades of cross-cultural studies, there has been an accompanying growth of literature which looks at the methodological difficulties of transporting data and methods across cultures. (Ryen 2003, p.429) Various attempts have been made to account for local nuances in language and culture and often the methods employ interpreters and translators to bridge the gaps.

**Linguistics**

One of the main difficulties with cross-cultural research is the language barriers. Part of the study of linguistics is concerned with semantics and whether it is possible to have words with exact semantic equivalence in other languages. In the 17th century Leibniz advanced the idea of a universal ‘alphabet of human thoughts’ (Goddard and Wierzbicka 1994, p.1) In the early 20th century, the French sociologist, Lucien Levy-Bruhl argued that there were fundamental differences between Western and non-Western thought (1928, cited in Goddard and Wierzbicka). Franz Boss in 1938 advanced the doctrine of the ‘psychic unity of mankind’. (ibid)

The socio-linguistic approach advocates examining the meaning of language or the semantics within the social context, taking into account the referential function of language. (Casson 1981) There have been other attempts by scholars such as Wierzbicka to develop a ‘semantic metalanguage independent ... of any particular language or culture – and yet accessible and open to interpretation through any language.’ (p.6) However, others believe that this approach needs to be more thoroughly tested. (see for example Massayuki Oniski, in Goddard and Wierzbicka, p.382).

Noam Chomsky hypothesises that human beings are born with an innate knowledge of universal principles underlying the structure of human language. But he draws a distinction between linguistic competence and an individual’s actual performance as a user of language. So although there is this basic understanding, words are ‘so radically beyond anything that’s ever been described.’ (Chomsky 1993, p.89.) Chomsky is well aware of the political implications of language and both the problems and the ‘mysteries’ that are inherent in any attempt to try to definitively associate language with specific meanings, and what responsibilities are involved (Chomsky 1979).

The acknowledgement of the political power of language is taken up by scholars such as Brown (1989) who is searching for a ‘discourse for emancipating society.’ He argues that both the study of language and of the social sciences should take responsibility for contributing to a ‘fully democratic civic discourse’ for:
Ideas alone, no matter how eloquently formed, cannot by themselves redirect the language and the mission of the social sciences towards politically enlightened ends. (p.ix)

Linguistics, and in particular semiotics, it is argued by some scholars, are essential tools for understanding society. According to Greimas (1990), for example, semiotics can be thought of ‘as a metalanguage of the human sciences.’ (p.vi) The importance of an interchange between the disciplines is stressed by Nuyts and Pederson(1997) who advocate that the study of the relationship between language and conceptualization needs to ‘consider carefully some important recent advances from disciplines and methodologies other than their own.’ (p.7) The ideas from linguistics and semiotics contribute to an understanding of culture and identify, and in particular need to be considered when the research is focussed on cross-cultural perspectives about complex and contested concepts.

This research project acknowledges implicitly the political role of language, and the complexities of working across language groups by speakers of different languages being able to explain their understandings of the concepts of their own language and culture in conversations held in English.

**The Anglo-American Comparative Model**

Much of the empirical cross-cultural research is undertaken from the perspective of the English-speaking world. In terms of the studies on cross-cultural friendship, most of the research compares one or two ‘other’ cultures to the Western model, or looks at friendships which take place between Americans, Canadians, English, and an ‘other’.5

What is being attempted in this research project is to allow the researcher from a particular culture to have control over the way in which the concept of friendship in his/her country is described and accounted for, rather than giving the authorship solely to an outside researcher. It is also attempting a multi-directional comparison. So rather than having each culture compared to the English-speaking one, which has implications of suggesting that the English version is the ‘standard’ or the ‘norm’, the aim is to have a non-hierarchical model of comparison. There is also the opportunity to broaden the literature basis of the research by including material which is not in English, but in the language of the co-researchers.

While the design has been successful to an extent, the project is still vulnerable to criticism of ethnocentrism. The language of communication is

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5 For example, Gareis (1995) studies US friendship patterns and then compares German-American, Indian-American and Taiwanese-American friendships. She identifies the literature on American friendship as concentrating on middle-class European Americans. (p.8). Other projects in a similar vein are e.g. Mead (1966); Jackson and Colthran (2003); Koh, Mendelson and Rhee (2003); You and Malley-Morrison (2000); Berman and Murphy-Berman (1988); Gao in Ting-Toomey and Korzenny (1991); Collier in Ting-Toomey and Korzenny (1991).
English. The research takes place in a New Zealand university. All participants were required to have a good standard of English. Languages with scripts which are not based on the Western script are not being represented in their original. All the literature needs to be available in English, or a translation or summary in English needs to be presented.

The Anglo-American applied research tradition also makes disproportional use of students as subjects. It has to be acknowledged that the convenience of the university setting has been used to conduct this research, and the co-researchers were chosen from staff and students who were known to the initiator of the research.

Research Process

The Auckland University of Technology (AUT) is host to a wide number of staff and students from many different countries and cultures. It thus provides an ideal opportunity for cross-cultural research. Twenty people, from a variety of cultures and countries who were either staff or postgraduate students, were invited to participate in this research project. Co-researchers were invited to join this research project on the basis of:

- An interest in research on friendship
- Identity with a culture other than New Zealand Pakeha
- Speakers of languages other than English
- Academic study in social sciences or languages
- Willingness to be involved in collaborative project
- Availability to attend meetings and participate in research
- Commitment to working collegially

All those approached were interested in being involved, but for some there were time constraints and logistics which did not allow them to join the project. The research team consisted of thirteen people: a Pakeha political scientist, senior lecturer in social sciences; a Sri Lankan, sociology tutor in social sciences; a German anthropologist, senior lecturer in social sciences; an Indian PhD student in social sciences; an Iraqi Ph.D. student psychology and social sciences; a Korean Masters student in social sciences; an educationalist, from Trinidad-Tobago who is senior lecturer in social sciences; a Japanese linguist, senior lecturer in languages; a Chinese Masters student in social sciences; a Maldivian Ph.D. student in social sciences; an Italian, translator, interpreter and administrator; a Samoan Masters student in social sciences; a Maori sociologist, senior lecturer in social sciences.

At the first meeting, introductions were made and contact details exchanged. We discussed the values and ground rules for working together which were based on ideas of trust, collegiality, and friendly behaviour. We discussed ethical issues such as confidentiality, intellectual property and power relationships. We agreed on roles and responsibilities. As I was the person with the research fellowship, I agreed to act as co-ordinator, scribe and transcriber. I took responsibility for obtaining ethics approval for the project.
Because of the logistical difficulties of getting everyone together, groups were organised in accordance with each researcher’s time availability and a process of ‘mediated dialogue’ was used to feed back the findings for each group to the other groups\(^6\). Some of this was accomplished via emails, but face-to-face sharing of information was undertaken whenever possible. Discussions took place in the small peer groups about understandings of the concept of friendship. These discussions were then transcribed and fed back to all the researchers for on-going comment, correction and addition. In all there were seven tape-recorded peer group conversations, each of about two hours. The numbers in each group ranged from three to six. Constant email contact was kept with everyone and everyone received copies of all the transcripts.

The bibliographical and textual research was conducted concurrently with the peer group conversations. Each co-researcher gathered lexical and etymology data on the concept of friendship in their own language, as well as searched the literature for academic studies specific to their own culture. The findings of their searches were fed into the peer group conversations, informing the discussion in terms of the information available, the theoretical approaches adopted and the context of the culture being examined, in line with the grounded theory approach.

An on-going bibliography was accumulated, as well as data on each country represented, biographical information on each researcher, and a database on the definition of friendship in a number of languages. In addition we have begun a collection of articles on cross-cultural friendship.

The analysis of the peer group conversations has commenced, but the process will be on-going as individual aspects are clarified. Continuous consultation is also necessary to make sure that views and perspectives are not misrepresented. Future research outputs will examine in more depth, for example, the role of gender in friendship, friendship treaties, friendship and religion, and the role of class in friendship, as well as an on-going analysis of the collaborative research process. It is also expected that the team of researchers will be expanded to include people from other cultures, universities and countries, as time allows them to contribute.

**Definitions of Friendship**

Friendship has connections to other concepts, and definitions often distinguish between friendship and concepts such as kinship, brotherhood, love, erotic love, love of God. Definitions of friendship stress voluntarism and mutual regard. So for example an on-line McGraw-Hill (2004) definition is:

> Relationship that exists when persons seek each other out and exhibit a strong mutual regard for each other.

\(^6\) ‘Mediated dialogue’ is a methodology developed by one of the co-researchers, Dr. Camille Nakhid. See reference in bibliography.
The Western tradition of friendship is usually traced back to the Greeks and Romans. Different types and levels of friendship are identified by Aristotle who draws a distinction between friendships based on pleasure, advantage or utility, and those which are virtuous or true. For Aristotle, true friendship is unlike the other versions and is based on virtue with friends showing goodwill to each other, and wishing each other well for the other person’s sake rather than for their own sake. (See Eudemonian Ethics VIII 2-3.) For Aristotle a friend is ‘another self’.

Montaigne (1580 cited in Pakuluk 1991) reflects this sense when he writes on friendship. He sees friendship as an intense relationship between two people and describes his friendship with La Boetie as a deep and abiding love. However he distinguishes this love from sexual erotic love which he sees as an inferior type of love. Nevertheless, his description of his friendship is coached in romantic terms:

In the friendship I speak of, our souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them, and cannot find it again. If you press me to tell why I loved him, I feel that this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because it was he, because it was I. (p. 192)

Nietzsche vision for a higher type of friendship includes an ‘independence of the soul’. He describes this friendship as ‘a different kind of neighbour love’:

It is a kind different from that of the sociable and anxious to please: it is a gentle, reflective, relaxed friendliness; it is as though they are gazing out of the windows of their castle, which is their fortress and for that reason also their prison – to gaze into what is strange and free, into what is different, does them so much good! (Daybreak, 1881, cited in Abbey 2000)

Many definitions of friendship compare friendship and love. So, for example, Allan Bloom (1993) discusses the two concepts in his book entitled Love and Friendship:

The friend is similar to the lover in his recognition of his incompleteness and his need for exclusive attachment to another human being in order to attain fulfilment. Friendship too is imperious in its demands, but the experience of friendship is gentler, soberer, without frenzy. It, unlike love, is necessarily reciprocal. You can love without being loved in return, but you cannot be the friend of one who is not your friend. The correlate of lover is beloved; the correlate of friend is friend. (p.547)

Derrida (1997) follows Nietzsche in recognising the importance of separateness, distance, boundaries and caution needed for friendship. His definitions are, of course, more tentative, uncertain and hesitant:
Perhaps, one day, here or there, who knows, something may happen between two people in love, who would love each other lovingly (is this still the right word?) in such a way that friendship, just once, perhaps, for the first time (another perhaps), will become the correct name, the right and just name for that which would have taken place, the condition being that it take place between two, ‘two people’, as Nietzsche specifies. But how can you adjust a name to what could take place only once, perhaps, for the first and last time – how can you name an event? For this love that would take place only once would be the only possible event: as an impossible event. Even if the right name for this unique love were to be found, how would you convince everyone else of its appropriateness? And what about the task of convincing the partner, at the moment of the act in which this love would essentially consist, that of giving him or her the name? (p.66)

The Etymology of Friendship

When seeking the definition of particular words, dictionary sources give both lexical entries, (basic information about the word), and etymologies (historical accounts of the origins of the words).

The etymology of the English word friend is connected closely to German, Dutch, and the Scandinavian languages, with origins in Old English (freond) Old Frisian and Old Saxon (friund, friond), Old High German (fruint) and Gothic (frijonds). The German word for friend is ‘Freund’, in Dutch and Afrikaans it is ‘vriend’. The original Old English was from the word ‘freogan’ meaning to love or favour, and there is also a connection to the ‘freo’ meaning free. According to Bammesberger (1984) the term beloved and friend were applied, as a rule, to the free members of the clan, rather than slaves. This came to be associated with the Quakers who called themselves the Society of Friends from 1679. Even though ‘freond’ was often paired in Old English with the word ‘feond’ meaning fiend or enemy, these two oppositional words are not directly related to each other in their etymology, fiend coming from the Gothic ‘fijan’ meaning ‘to hate’. The Norwegian ‘venn’, Danish ‘ven’ and Swedish ‘van’, all meaning ‘friend’ are obviously related to each other, and in Norwegian are connected to the word ‘venne’ meaning to accustom oneself to.

The English language has Indo-European roots. The word ‘friend’ comes through the European linkages. But there is an interesting etymological connection with the slang word for friend which is ‘pal’. This has the same roots as brother, fraternal, fraternity and friar. They all derive from Indo-European roots, starting with ‘bhrater’. Going through German and Old English it metamorphoses into ‘brother’. Via Latin (frater) and Middle English it becomes ‘fraternal’ and via French (frere) it becomes ‘friar’ which is a brother of a mendicant order. From the Indo-European origin via Sanskrit it

7 Several etymology sources were used for this. See full references in bibliography.
becomes ‘bhrater’ then passes through Romany to become ‘pral’ meaning brother, comrade or mate, then to English, to become ‘pal’ (see Davies 1981).

The usual Indian word for friendship ‘mitrah’ has an etymology from Sanskrit, Old Persian and Indo-Iranian languages. Mitra is the Hindu god of friendship and alliances, usually invoked together with Varuna as the upholder of order, punisher of falsehood, supporter of heaven and earth, and bringer of rain. (American Heritage Dictionary). Mithra also means contract and represents the god of contract.

A search of various dictionaries which give the English-‘foreign’ language definitions provides a range of meanings and different nuances within the words friend and friendship. In the Latin languages such as Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese the words for friends range from personal friends to acquaintances, lovers, clients, countries. The Latin word amicus describes not only a personal friend, but also a lover, a courtier, a client or a disciple and amicitia or friendship can be used for close bonds between two people, as well as just an association. It is also used to describe friendships between states or rulers and even an ‘affinity or accord between plants and inanimate things or qualities.’ In Italian amico or amica can mean friend or lover, beloved or mistress. The French amitie is less inclined to the erotic, and gives a more general sense of goodwill, defined not only as friendship but favour, kindness, salutations, greetings, regards. Spanish friendship or amistad can be between people and countries. In Portuguese a casual relationship also uses the same word as friendship but adds – amizade colorida.

Languages of the Pacific, such as Maori, Samoan and Hawaiian, share a common etymology. One of the Hawaiian words for friend is hoaloha, in Maori it is hoa, and in Samoan, uo. In Maori the type of friend is indicated by an additional word such as hoa mahi meaning colleague (mahi = job or activity); hoa tane meaning husband (tane = man, male, manful, husband), hoa wahine meaning wife or mistress (wahine = woman, female or wife).

Maori Friendship

After the 19th century colonisation of New Zealand, the English language largely replaced Maori. The dominance of English was encouraged by the banning of Maori in schools. However, in particular since the 1970s, there has been a revival of Maori culture and language. Nevertheless, many Maori do not speak the Maori language. Rob Webb identifies his early boyhood friends as working class, rather than Maori, and for him the language with which he is most familiar is English. As a Maori sociologist, his research involves examining concepts which may have different meanings between the Maori and Pakeha cultures. In the context of the friendship project we are drawing on his expertise in cultural comparisons. He does not want to claim to be an expert in the Maori language.

8 The dictionary search did not include languages which had a different script to English. Meanings of these languages have been discussed between the co-researchers from countries such as China, Korean, India, Sri Lanka and Maldives.
For Maori, the place of kin or whanau is extremely highly valued. Your whanau are expected to support you and you have a duty to your whanau. However, your whanau may also be considered to include those with no direct blood relationship. So friends are not always clearly distinguishable from kin. However, there are specific terms in Maori for friend and friendship. ‘Aapiti’ is identified in the dictionary as a word for friendship, but it is much less commonly recognised or used than the word for friend which is ‘hoa’. In Maori, as in English, there are not different words to describe different types of friendships. The more particular relationship is defined by the addition of a word which identifies the gender and the context of the friendship.

**Maori**

*Aapiti* = formal term for friendship (but also means connect, put side-by-side, radius bone, and supplement.

*Hoa* = common term for friend, can also be spouse or partner.

*hoa mahi* = colleague (mahi = job, activity)

*hoa pararau* = dependent partner (pararau = slave, dependant)

*hoa puumau* = comrade (puumau = fixed, constant, permanent, reliable)

*hoa taakaro* = playmate (play, wrestle, sport, game, engage in single combat)

*hoa takataapui* = best man, mate, close friend of same sex

*hoa taane* = husband (tane = husband, male, man, manful)

*taane male taane* = homosexual (male = problem, death, sickness)

*hoa tata* = neighbour (tata = near)

*hoa wahine* = wife/mistress (wahine = woman, female, wife)

*hoahoa* = spouse, or two women/wives of same husband.

*hoa whawhai, riri, ngangure* = sparring partner (riri = to be angry, quarrel, fight, scold, warlike, weapon; ngangi = cry of distress, make a noise; whawhai = fight, conflict, cause to chase)

*whakaaro and whakoanga* = friendly relations, friendship.

**Samoan Friendship**

Laumua Tunufai is a former Minister of the Christian Church in Samoa. He is now doing post-graduate studies in New Zealand and works with the Samoan community, particularly with youth at risk. According to Laumua, because Samoan is such a poetic language, there are often misunderstandings about meaning. Often romantic sounding language is used to describe non-sexual, often same sex relationships. Religious language is also used.

**Samoan**

*Mau mia* = close friend, meaning close to the heart or the bosom (English idea of ‘bosom friends’ Ma is a prefix indicating two people.)

*Uo* = basic word for friend.

*Faiganuao* = friendship between two parties (people or countries)

*Fefa’auoa’iga* = friendship, open to everybody.

*Soa* = partner, couple, best mate (also has special role in courtship)
**Sri Lankan Friendship**

Thushan Dodampegamage has lived, studied and worked in New Zealand for many years, although, most of his family still live in Sri Lanka. Thushan has a background in anthropology and sociology. Singhalese is spoken by the majority of the population of Sri Lanka (formerly known as Ceylon). Singhalese is similar to Pali, the sacred language of the Buddhists of India which is closely related to Sanskrit. Thushan also pointed to the many different influences on Singhalese, particular from the Portuguese and the British, and also the ‘Christianisation’ of the language.

- **Mithura** = male friend
- **Mithuryo** = plural
- **Mithurya** = female friend
  
  (In the singular it has similar connotations to the English ‘boyfriend’ or ‘girlfriend’ meaning a romantic relationship)

- **Machang** = mate (colloquial - comes from Old Singhalese term ‘massina’ meaning brother-in-law. Idea of not a blood relative, but a very special relationship. Also similar to the Tamil word ‘machang’ meaning brother-in-law.

Also hierarchical terms are used to indicate respect or status, as well as reliability as a friend when in need, the words for brother and sister are used:

- **Aiya** = older brother
- **Malli** = younger brother
- **Akka** = older sister
- **Nangi** = younger sister

The word used by the left for comrade or brother is the same word used by the fundamental churches for brother or sister ‘in Christ’. In addition the word can also be used to refer to the priest.

- **Sahodharaya** = comrade, brother, sister, priest.

**Maldivian Friendship**

Ali Rasheed has a background in economics and development studies. He has lived and worked in the Maldives for many years. Ali has moved to New Zealand and is currently studying for a PhD, looking at the economics of the Maldives Islands, although his topic might change since the tsunami. His extended family still lives in Maldives.

The language of the Maldivians is Dhivehi and resembles several other neighbourhood languages of Sri Lanka, South East Asia and North India.
The language also uses some Arabic, Hindi and English words. Historically, people of Maldives spoke ‘Elu’, a form of ancient Singhalese. The language has undergone many transformations.

The script of the Dhivehi language is known as ‘Thaana’ is drawn from Arabic numerals and is written from left to right. It is a very rhythmic language with the vowels below and above the letters in the form of dashes. Modern Thaana script was invented in the 16th century. In the 1940s the 20 atolls which are administrative districts were renamed using the letters of this script. The first English-Dhivehi dictionary was written in the early 1970s. There is very little information about the language of the Maldivians available in the English language.

The geographical dispersion of the islands means that people live in different communities. The different atoll communities have adopted differences in pronunciation, the most noticeable difference being between the most northerly and most southerly atolls. However, the vocabulary remains the same. People in the capital, Male, will find it hard to follow some of the words in the dialect used by the people of Seenu Atoll.

In Dhivehi there is a form of class system of language with three levels. The first level ‘reethi bas’ is the ‘nice’ language spoken by the people of the upper classes. Level two, known as ‘labba dhurvan’ is a polite language used for elders, officials and strangers. Then there is the third level, the ordinary use in informal everyday life.

The words associated with friendship and love are gender neutral and can be used for male or female relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maldivian/Dhivehi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rahmaiytheri = very close friendship, non-sexual, longstanding. The length of time is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekuveri = also close relationship, but not as close as Rahmaiytheri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhtehi = acquaintance. A relationship which could build up to be Ekuveri or Rahmaiytheri.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loabi/Loabiveriya = used for sexual love only.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Indian Friendship**

In India there are many languages, religions and castes which influence people’s function, status, job opportunities and lifestyle. India is the birthplace of Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism, and has a minority of Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians and Animists. There are four primary castes – Brahmans (spiritual leaders and teachers), Kshatryas (government officials and military), Vaishyas (farmers and merchants) and Sudras (helpers or servants), with the untouchables doing the menial labour. Gareis argues that even though the caste system is less obvious the structure still remains influential. (p.31)
An Indian ethnographic study by Srivastava (1960) looked at patterns of ritual friendship of 12 tribes between 1915 and 1958. Srivasta identified three types of friendship – serious (with elaborate rituals and lifelong obligations); non-serious (based on fun and romance) and trivial (short-lived emotional involvements). According to his research the most highly valued was serious male friendship with the least valued being ‘trivial’ cross-sex friendship. (p.240) Srivastava describes the rituals involved for serious friendship which include oaths, celebration, solemn covenants. These friendships do not cross sex lines. There are also customs involved with the more light-hearted non-serious friendship such as attaching flower or twig in the hair or on the ear of the chosen person.(p.241) He identifies a form of friendship which is encouraged between women, in particular married women called sahiaro, but it is unclear whether this is the equivalent of the serious male friendship. (p.246)

Baljit is from India, studying for a PhD in social sciences. He writes:

Friendship for me is a shared, reciprocal feeling between two people. It can take many forms, ranging from just being polite and demonstrating civil behaviour, to very intimate relationship. It is distinct from romantic love, which in my view is inferior to friendship, because in romantic love people do have higher expectations and lots of give and take. Romantic love can also be enhanced by friendship.

According to Baljit the sociological concept of friendship in India distinguishes between friends on the basis of degree and quality of attachment. Friendship is a positive emotion in contrast to enmity. Friendship is one form of love. There are a number of words for friendship and associated concepts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indian</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parichit</strong></td>
<td>acquaintance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shatruta</strong></td>
<td>enmity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kama</strong></td>
<td>lust, sexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sneha</strong></td>
<td>deep attachment, (parent, child, brother, sister)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mitta</strong></td>
<td>loving kindness (ancient Pali language)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mitr</strong></td>
<td>Friend (Hindi word from the Sanskrit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mithra</strong></td>
<td>sun (around which everything revolved – very important in Indian philosophy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dost</strong></td>
<td>friend (widely used in contemporary language, means two people, from Afghan or possibly Persian origin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sneh</strong></td>
<td>love (something for which one feels affection, very dear from Sanskrit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Snehetru</strong></td>
<td>friend (in south Indian languages of telugu, kannada, Malayalam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sneham</strong></td>
<td>friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sneha</strong></td>
<td>liquid, oil as in melting of the heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yaar</strong></td>
<td>very well-known, colloquial friend (as in mate. Persian or Punjabi origin, used in old sufi literature to refer to God, venerated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Iraqi Friendship

Rose Joudi is a young Iraqi woman who was born in Iraq but came to New Zealand from England. She has a background in psychology and is studying for a PhD in Social Sciences. She is a practising Muslim and speaks fluent Arabic. According to Rose, in Islamic times, words had a more spiritual and religious association, so friends were referred to as ‘brother of Islam’ or ‘sister of Islam’. In Arabic there are lots of terms for a single concept. But there is no term for a platonic relationship between the genders. There is an Arab saying that when an unmarried man and woman are together, then there is a third person (rafik) who will be the devil. The words for friend and companion in Arabic come from ‘sadk’ which means truth, and ‘morrafik’, a general word for someone who accompanies you (morrafikeen = bodyguard).

Iraqi/Arabic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sadiq</td>
<td>male friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadiqtī</td>
<td>female friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafiki</td>
<td>a male companion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafikti</td>
<td>a female companion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walif and anise</td>
<td>someone who keeps you company.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Rose, for Iraqi females, confidentiality is very important for friendship. Friends should be non-judgemental. It is permissible to have friends who are not Islamic, but these friends should not lead one astray from the Islamic ‘right way’. The Koran says you should stay away from friends who are a bad influence, so that a good friend is one who directs you to the Islamic path.

Chinese Friendship

There is a long history to the word friendship in Chinese which goes back to Confucianism and Taoism. Confucianism identifies five important relationships which are: princes and subjects; old and young; father and son; husband and wife; and friends. There are also three different levels of friendship identified: the first level concerns friends who share an intellectual and spiritual understanding; the second level is friendship based more on self-interest; and the third level is shallower, based more on gossip.

Can Qin came to New Zealand from China, with a background in the sciences. She has since completed a Masters in Social Sciences and has recently moved to Melbourne to begin a PhD. there. Can examined the
pictorial representation in the Chinese characters which represent friendship. The first character (friend) is made up of two other characters which mean the left hand and the right hand. The idea is of someone in the middle, someone you cannot do without, because you need both your right and your left hand. The left hand is the friend of the right, both similar yet different, knowing how to cooperate to achieve the goal you want. The second character (ship) has several parts which variously mean ‘word’, ‘mouth’, ‘communication’, ‘roof and floor’ and the large space in-between the roof and floor. The connotations include the idea that there is good space or opportunity for friendship which is likely to occur between those people who share similar goals or beliefs, are able to cooperate and communication with each other.

The concept of 'sworn brotherhood' or ‘ritual kinship’ in the Chinese tradition is described by Jordan (1985):

‘When its purpose is intimacy among close friends, sworn brotherhood stands on the border between friendship and kinship... It is closer than friendship, not as close as kinship, different from both, and similar to both...’ (p.2)

After the ritual the friends become responsible for each other’s kin. It can also be used as a political alliance or to provide local government, and women can also become ‘sworn sisters’

**Korean Friendship**

Korean uses Chinese characters written vertically on the page.\(^9\) The characters used for friendship are the same as the Chinese, but are pronounced differently. However, according to Joo-seok Lee, there is a similar understanding of the idea of left and right hand and an interpretation which accords with Can’s explanations about the Chinese characters.

Joe is from South Korea. He has been studying in New Zealand for several years, and is now completing a Masters in Social Sciences. According to Joe, the words used for friend in Korean indicate closeness and familiarity or being of long standing. There is no indication in these words whether or not these are sexual relationships. It is considered impolite to indicate this when you are introduced to someone. In other words there are few terms which represent the relationship between a man and a woman, apart from the terms for ‘husband’ and ‘wife’. There is no word for the term ‘partner’ indicating a personal relationship in Korean. There is a term for ‘lover’ which is ‘aein’. But again this would not be used in introductions.

The absence of terms showing the specific relationship between male and female before engagement or formal marriage Joe believes might be due to that fact that it would not have been used in feudal Korean society. So although Korean society has become more open and women enjoy many of

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\(^9\) For languages with different scripts, the words will be given phonetically.
the same rights and freedoms as do men, the tradition remains evident in the
usage of the terms.

**Korean**
- *namja chingu* = male friend or boyfriend
- *Yuja chingu* = female friend or girlfriend
- *Aein* = lover
- *Beot* = friend (original Korean term, mostly used in written material
  such as poems and novels)

**Japanese Friendship**

Cargile (1998) examines the different verbal descriptions given by ‘native’
Japanese of friendship. The Japanese words for concepts such as colleague,
companion, acquaintance, and close friend are identified and there is a review
of some of the literature since the 1950s on patterns of friendship of middle
class friendship, male friendship at work, and friendship between American
and Japanese teenagers.

Japanese, like Korean, uses Chinese characters (kanji), but combines this
with phonetical Japanese script (katakana and hirigana). Yvonne is part
Indonesian and part Japanese. She is now living in New Zealand and
teaches Japanese at the university. Yvonne considered how friendship in
Japan related to Buddhism and Shinto. In Shinto the role of friendship is a
practical relationship which can be traced back to feudal and rural Japan:

Shinto is very much what I would consider animism. It’s just belief in
spirits of certain rocks, and stones and rivers, and what the simple
human many years ago couldn’t explain, they would say it is a spirit.
Shinto is a religion that believes in lots of spirits in lots of different
things, whether they are physical or not. But it’s also a religion that
deals with life-cycles, and seasons and harvesting, and as part of
that, friends are there, because they give you a hand when you are
harvesting. So friendship is often in the context of doing things
together, rather than trust or emotion, or anything like that.

**Japanese**
- *Mikata* = ally, someone who is on one’s side, supporter
- *Tomodachi* = usual word for friend
- *Shinyuu* = very close, intimate friend
- *Yuujin* = close friend
- *Tsukiai* = acquaintance, particularly public relationship
- *Chijin* = acquaintance (rarely used)
- *Nakama* = colleague, fellow, company
- *Hanryo* = companion
- *Kuyuu* = friendship, alumni
- *Aibo* = mate
German Friendship

As Gareis (1995) points out, one of the problems of discussing Germany is that its history is a ‘mosaic of at times minute bishoprics, counties, duchies, electorates, landgraviates, margraviates, and principalities’ which have only recently been formed into more concise national boundaries, so that ‘old tribal structure’ of Bavarian, Frankish, Saxon and Swabian tribes still ‘shines through’ (p. 26). However, these differences, probably due to lack of research, are rarely mentioned in the literature on friendship.

Eveline Duerr is an anthropologist who is now teaching in New Zealand. In Germany there are two main concepts of friendship: a term for general friendship and a term for real or true friendship. The most important aspect of this true friendship is reliability and responsibility. True friendship needs to be proved, and therefore is usually only possible over a long time and with ‘quality assurance’. It is a relationship which does involve real responsibility for each other, and so is a form of extended kinship with tight social bonds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freundschaft</td>
<td>friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wahre Freundschaft</td>
<td>true friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamradschaft</td>
<td>solidarity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Italian Friendship

Mirella Soratroi is an Italian who now lives in New Zealand. She is trained as a translator and interpreter, and is also working as an administrator in the School of Social Sciences. As Italy is composed of very different regions that were united into one country, there are many regional differences in usage of terms. In Italian there are a variety of terms which refer to friendship, and the endings to the word indicate the gender of the person. Friendship is considered to be important, but very natural, and feelings of friendliness and friendship are involved in a variety of relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italian</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amicizia</td>
<td>friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amico</td>
<td>close male friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amica</td>
<td>close female friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conoscente</td>
<td>an acquaintance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragazzo</td>
<td>boyfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragazza</td>
<td>girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidanzato</td>
<td>serious boyfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidanzata</td>
<td>serious girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compagnolo</td>
<td>male partner of couple living together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compagnola</td>
<td>female partner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(These terms have bohemian connotations and were traditionally used by the left, indicating a liberal relationship)
Amore = romantic, sexual love, (associated with the idea that it comes and goes)
Amante = lover (used rarely except for extra-marital affairs)
Voler bene = love used for family, long lasting, deep, caring and stable. (literally means ‘to wish well).

Usually, as in English, the depth of the friendship is described by adjectives (such as ‘caro’ = dear; vecchio = old). The terms ‘amico’ and ‘amica’ are most often not used to indicate romantic love, although recently it has been used with sexual connotations for an illicit type of relationship, an affair. But then it would be understood through the context of the conversation/text, and the tone of voice.

**Etymological Connections**

This preliminary analysis of a range of cultural concepts of friendship highlights the etymological connections. The English word for friend is very close to the Germanic language with words such as ‘friend’, ‘freund’ and ‘vriend’ (English, German, Dutch). Within the historical understanding of the term are ideas of love, favour and freedom.

Some parts of the Indian language are linked to English by the Sanskrit roots which are common to both. However many Indo-Asian languages are also subject to the influences of Hindiusm, Pali, Persian. The Hindu word for friend ‘mitr’ from the Sanskrit, is similar to the Sri Lankan words for male friend ‘mithura’ and female friend ‘mithurya’. There is a language connection with Arabic through Persian and Islamic influences, but this is not obvious in the terms associated with friendship.

The Chino-based languages of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese share the script and certain characters. There is also a common Buddhist influence, but although some of the characters associated with friendship are similar, the pronunciation is quite different.

The Pacific languages, on the other hand, are close to each other in pronunciation. The words ‘soa’, ‘hoa’ ad ‘hoaloha’ – Samoan, Maori and Hawaiian for friend – are also related to the Polynesian word ‘aloha’ which means love, and is also used as a greeting.

**Friendship Treaties**

The issue of friendship treaties as the name used to describe alliances between nations emerged in a conversation about the Samoan words for friendship:

Laumua: ‘Faiganuo’ is friendship between two people, or two countries, between two parties. Like the friendship treaty we have with New Zealand. That’s the word we use for that treaty.
As in English, the same word is used whether it is between people or nations and the meaning is determined by the context. But unlike the English word ‘friendship’, ‘faiganuo’ is used only for two parties. If there are more than two parties involved the word is ‘fefa’auoa’iga’. This implies more openness, and can also be used when describing the relationship between allies.

The transcript of this conversation was circulated to the other researchers, and at the next peer group meeting this was raised by the German researcher:

Eveline: When we talk of friendship, we never think in terms of treaties, or negotiation on a national level. This was very new to me. This was very interesting to me....I would never have had that association.

Camille, from Trinidad-Tobago, also asked for clarification about what was meant by the term ‘friendship treaties’. Laumua gave as an example the friendship treaty between Tonga and Samoa, which is one of the oldest treaties. The agreement or understanding was formed about 100-200 years before the arrival of the Europeans in AD 1722.

Camille: How does it differ from agreements?
Laumua: It is a form of agreement. But this is now more like a treaty, respected by all, everybody is aware of it.
Camille: What does it involve?
Laumua: It involves no more wars between Samoa and Tonga.
Camille: So it’s a peace agreement, a peace treaty?
Laumua: Yes, a peace treaty.

Camille then explained the agreement between Trinidad and Venuzuela about returning Trinidad fishermen entering Venuzuelan waters. A verbal agreement was made between the Prime Minister and the President of Venuzuela.

Heather: So when was that?
Camille: This was... I heard about it this year. I was unaware that it existed. This was when Eric Williamson10 was alive and he died years ago. And I don’t know when the agreement comes off. But it’s just something that’s been carried on. I mean over here in New Zealand, it would have been signed and written about. But over there it was just...
Heather: So do they have that term of friendship treaties or friendship agreements?
Camille: Between countries? No, not really. People just... we don’t operate like that in the Caribbean. We have agreements for purposes of trade and thing like that....
Eveline: But this agreement, does it involve the term friendship?

10 Prime Minister of Trinidad during the 1960s – 1980s.
Camille: No it doesn't.

Heather: And are there terms used like, we have sister cities?

Eveline: Yes, we have sister cities, and partner cities.

Camille: Partnership.

Heather: So they use those types of terms rather than friendship? What about you, Joe. Do they use the term friendship treaties or friendship relationships between nations [in Korea?]

Joe: Mostly not. Alliance.

Heather: because often when you look at the web... if I look up friendship and politics, then most of the references are about nation to nation agreements. So it is a term that's used in English.

Joe: No, mostly alliance and peace. Peace treaty is made between old foes, old opponent countries.

Mirella was also not familiar with the usage in Italian of words associated with 'friendship' for treaties between nations. But between two cities the concept of 'twinning' is used. 'Gemellaggio' from the Italian gemmello/a meaning 'twin' describes a partnership with a similar sized town or city with others around the world.11

In a later peer group conversation, we discussed again the use of friendship to describe treaties. Ali indicated that it was not a familiar term for this concept in the Maldives. However, the English word 'friends' was used to describe a political group representing Maldivians in the UK:

Heather: Is that commonly used, that sort of term using friendship?

Ali: No, this is the first time I've heard it. Friendship treaty... But when you were talking about the Treaty, I was just wondering, because one of the things that is going on back at home in the Maldives is political unrest, that you will have heard of. Because what has happened is that the president who is in power, has been there for a long time. He's been there for 26 years, so it's been like... it's more like the Middle Eastern type of system there. It's not the Middle Eastern system exactly, but these scholars that came from the Middle East were in the ruling elite and had the power. And now that the president has come up with more openness and all these things, they have started forming these parties. And one of the parties is called 'Friends of the Maldives' FOM. It is a political party. It is based in the UK, in London, and the party is formed among the people, the students and families over there.

Heather: And the word that they use in Maldivian [Dhivehi], is it a word... is it the common word for personal friendship?

Ali: No, what they are using is English actually. Friends of Maldives. And there is a web site and I think it has been a quite powerful movement. I think it has a lot to do with the connotation of that word 'friend'. Because it has brought closeness.

11 Email 14.03.05
Baljit described the use of friendship terminology in describing alliances between nations in India:

Baljit: ... between India and Pakistan there is no such thing, but between India and Russia under the Soviet Union, there was something known as the Friendship Treaty, which was formalised in 1971 just before the Bangladesh War. India invaded Bangladesh that was part of Pakistan. And they signed this treaty just a few days before, so that Russian would support India, in case America supported Pakistan, or China intervenes.... It was popularly known as the Friendship Treaty between India and Russia – India and the Soviet Union.

Heather: But in whatever language it is, does it use a friendship term, in Russia and in India?

Baljit: I’ve not seen the text, but generally these things referred to the ‘peoples of India and the Soviet Union maintain the tradition of friendship, in the spirit of unity and friendship’. Things like that.  

Yvonne indicated that the Japanese do have a term for ‘friendship treaties’. ‘Yuukoo jooyaku’ literally means friendship treaty. Yuukoo is the word for friendship, amity, and companionship. Jooyaku is the common word for treaty. The idea behind this is that countries build up relationships based on amicability, a sense of good will and friendship. However, the treaty is used to ensure that the terms are agreed upon formally, rather than relying just on intentions or expressions of good will.

The association in the English language between the idea of friendship and contractual obligations between nations is commonly used. Other languages and cultures which have a shared understanding of this term are Samoan, Tongan and Indian, all having an obvious colonial association with the United Kingdom, and one might argue that the English influence on language and concepts has been adopted there. However, the concept of the Samoan-Tongan friendship treaty goes back to before the arrival of the Europeans. Also, another country which is similar in terms of the use of the term ‘friendship treaty’ is Japan. Again, the English influence from the American and British allies could be a factor. The researchers from Germany, Italy, Maldives, Korea, and the Caribbean, on the other hand, were unfamiliar with the use of words associated with personal friendship to describe peace treaties, alliances, pacts or agreements between nations. There needs to be further exploration about why these differences in interpretation exist.

Friend as Political Opponent or Enemy

English has very separate words to describe relationships which are oppositional. So, words such as enemy, foe, adversary, opposition indicate someone who is other than a friend. The Italian and German terms for parliamentary opposition are also distinctly adversarial, with no connotation of friendship or partnership. However, this distinction is not quite as clear in

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12 The Hindi word for friendship between nations is maitri (email 22.03.05)
some of the other languages. In Maori the terms for fighting, scolding, quarrelling, chiding, conflict are joined to the word for friend to define a sparring partner ‘hoa riri’, or ‘hoa ngangi’, or ‘hoa whawhai’.

In Samoan, the parliamentary opposition is named ‘itu agai’ and is also associated with friendship:

Laumua: ..means faces you, but not with a bad connotation, as a friend. More like you are talking to somebody opposite you. So in English, it has the idea of opposing, but in Samoan it has the idea that he is there facing you. We are having a discussion. So it’s friendship in that context. I think it is has sort of the same connotation as Maori. So instead of having an opposition, you have a friend which has to be right in front of your face.

The literal word for opposition, *tete’e*, is not used in the parliamentary context. The word *agai* conveys a sense of sitting face to face with someone, but not in an oppositional way. It incorporates politeness and respect. In one context it is used to describe eating together, facing the guest who is having a meal, so that the guest will not feel uncomfortable eating by her/himself, and has strong friendship connotations.

In the second context of a village council, it refers to the order and sitting positions of the chiefs in the meeting house. The high chiefs (*ali’i*) at one end (*tala*) of the meeting house, face the high chiefs who sit at the opposite end, while the orators or talking chiefs (*tulafale*) sit in the front of the house, facing the other talking chiefs who are facing from the back posts. Friendship is seen here in the sense of collaboration and consensus. Samoan meetings never hold a vote. They discuss matters until they reach a consensus.

The Samoan Parliament is run according to the British system. However, they use the term *agai* to portray an idea of friendship in their house. This is in order to take into account the importance of Samoan values and respect as are acknowledged in the village council.13

The idea of parliamentary opposition in India, like English, does not incorporate the idea of friendship, but there is the sense of two parties working together with a common goal. The language and culture describes the parliament as two sides in a tournament, not so much emphasising the other as an opponent, but there is the sense of participation in a similar venture, or game:

Baljit: Yes, in our culture, the words which connote the opposition or the opponent, they start with ‘prati’. ‘Prati’ is used for a tournament where people play. It’s ‘pratiyogita’. In parliament, two opposite parties could be like ‘pratidhandwi’. Two people who are opposing each other’s point of view, but they are not really opponents.

Heather: They are kind of participants in a game, rather...

Baljit: Yes, a game.

13 (email 23.03.05)
The Japanese word for ‘opposition’ as in parliament entails a visual and spatial concept of the land surrounding the village. Yato is the opposition and yoto is the ruling party. The symbolism behind the characters describes their relationship. Ya means the moor or the wild and ample space surrounding the village. To stands for faction or party and yo is the concept of being involved. So this has a similar sense to the ruling party as insiders, and the opposition as being on the outside, or in the wilderness.\(^{14}\)

The Japanese word mikata is usually translated as an ally or supporter also has a meaning which uses comparison and contrast. The Chinese characters convey some of the connotations behind the word:

Can: I think this one is very interesting.
Yvonne: Which one? Mikata?
Can: What type of friend are they?
Yvonne: They are really people who are probably in a war situation and they are fighting against another group of people, and you are either an ally or a supporter, as opposed to a foe, an enemy. So there’s the enemy and there’s the mikata. Those who are supporting you and who are rallying on your side.
Can: In Chinese these two characters are ‘taste’ and ‘direction’.
Yvonne: So, your direction is going in the same way. You have the same taste.
Heather: And you are going in the same direction!
(Laughter)
(transcript 05.10.04)

The oppositional emphasis of political life is evident in the visual aspect of the seating arrangements in Westminster-style parliaments and in the language and terminology used in English of division, competition and hostility. In contrast, the viewing of parliamentary or party opposition in terms of connectedness and the maintenance of on-going relationships is particularly evident in the Samoan context and the use of the political language. The Maori use of the word friend in the context of competition or ‘sparring’ likewise retains a sense of an underlying inter-connectedness. The sense of competition evident in the language used in Indian culture is associated with playing a game, rather than entering a battle, and the Japanese pictorial description of being inside the village, or being on the outskirts still allows a sense of inclusion being possible, or at least of exclusion being temporary.

**Friends as Comrades, Brothers and Mates**

The word comrade meaning a close companion, an intimate associate or friend, or room-mate is derived from the Latin camera meaning room. Socialist or communist circles adopted this as a term of address or a prefix to a name. Political friends or colleagues on the left were also considered to be

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\(^{14}\) Email from Yvonne, 16.03.05
part of a brotherhood and sometimes sisterhood. Interestingly, this also ties in with the naming of relationships within and membership of the Christian churches.

In Sri Lanka there is a rich association between the terms for kinship and the terms for friend. The common term for friend as in ‘mate’ is *Machang* which comes from an old Singhalese term *massina* meaning brother-in-law. This is an indication of a very close relationship, but not a blood relative. The words for older brother and sister, or younger brother and sister are also used for friendship to describe differences in respect, status and reliability. The term used by the political left for comrade is *sahodharaya* is the same word used by the fundamentalist churches in the English sense of ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ in Christ. In addition *sahodharaya* also refers to the priest, which is similar to English usage.

In Italy the word used for comrade by the communists, *compagno/compagna* is then adopted to refer to couples living together without marriage, particularly by the political left. There is the connotation of a more liberal, non-bourgeois, egalitarian relationship. The German understanding of *kamradschaft* or comradeship, is the sense of solidarity, bonding, reliability and sympathy with a cause, and usually has a military association connected to comrades fighting for the same side. This has no necessary connection with the communist left.

In Korea the expression for comrade is *dong-mu*, meaning literally equal obligation. According to Joe, although this word was used in a similar sense to companion before the rise of communism, now in South Korea, *dong-mu* is not used in this sense of generic companionship because it has such strong associations with the communism in North Korea. The Japanese communist party is called *kyoo santo* literally meaning equal party, but has no association with any friendship ideas.

The concept of sworn brotherhood arises in both Chinese and Japanese. In Japanese the term which describes a very close friendship uses a character which represents both older and younger brother, as well as the symbol for vowing or swearing. A ritual is involved to mark the friendship out as something significant, binding and durable. The Japanese term *ichi yuujin* is not commonly used, but it is known. The literal meaning is number one friend. In a discussion, Can, who is Chinese, indicated that she could interpret the meaning from the Japanese characters, even though they do not use the same characters for the concept in Chinese:

Can: I don’t know if my understanding is right – *ichi yuujin* - I would suppose that kind of person to have an understanding of the spiritual – deep things like that. But for the friend, yuujin is more like supports you, being supportive and being nice to you. Virtue character things. I’m not sure if my understanding is right, but for this kind of relationship, or friendship, you actually get some spiritual reward.

Yvonne, though, did not think there was a ‘spiritual’ sense in the word in Japanese, but it was instead being very close to that person, knowing what
she thinks, or how she feels without communicating, rather like being on the same ‘wave-length’, or being a soul sister or soul mate, in the colloquial use of the term. There was general agreement in the conversation between Yvonne and Rose, from Iraq, that the concept of sworn friendship is usually a brotherhood, rather than a sisterhood.

As with most cultures, the dominant term is the male term and this applies too to the idea of mateship. In Japanese the word *aibo* is related to male rather than female language, and means someone who is a mate:

Yvonne: *Bo* means stick or club. It also means together in a way. How would you explain that character? Do you have that character?

Can: This is a kind of cricket bat.

Yvonne: Yes, bat or club. And the top one?

Can: Very difficult character in Chinese. I mean there are so many meanings about that.

Yvonne: Yes, it does in Japanese too. Mutual, minister, aspect, a prospector. It’s what you see from the tree.

Heather: Oh, I see. That’s the tree and that’s an eye.

Can: I’m not very confident to explain this word. It’s too difficult.

Yvonne: Yes, *aibo* is really... So I’m still stumped on this one. But it is a word for ‘mate’

(05.10.04)

Samoan does not have gender-specific words to refer to friendship. The basic word for friend is *uo*, very close to the Maori *hoa*, and the Hawaiian *hoaloha*. So, for example, the word *soa* meaning partner is to describe:

Laumua: anybody that goes alongside you, performing a special task. So in terms of the couple, husband and wife, your wife is your *soa*, in terms of her being your wife, or my wife, and him being your husband.

However, *soa* also is a very old chiefly term which is used to describe a strategic function in terms of courtship, of the male friend of a male. It is the *soa* who accompanies a man to the house of the father of the woman he wishes to marry, particularly if the father is a chief. The *soa* is not only a close friend, but someone skilled in the ceremonial language for addressing chiefs:

Laumua: [Addressing Joe] Say, I’m going to ask to marry your daughter. So instead of me talking, my *soa*... You know, I’ve got to pick the right person. And in any particular village there is this person that always stands out as being very skilful with words, skilful with his knowledge of the *wanopena*. Now that is like all the proper words that you need to say with regard to any given title.

Heather: The honorific address?

Laumua: Yes, the honorific address. And every chief is different, and because of that, every chief has a different honorific address to their titles.
Heather: So, it’s very much showing respect, that you have to get the right address?

Laumua: Yes, this is the introduction. If you mess with that, the father will say, ‘Ah, how can I trust you with my daughter, when you can’t even address me in the proper way... the simplest, the introductory words that need to be said to me in saying hello’... So as soon as this person [the soa] ... and he’s got to memorise them, he’s not going to use a piece of paper... So as soon as they get into the house, the father, who apparently is the chief.. ‘Welcome’, you know in Samoan. And the soa this is the first thing he does... ‘Thank you’ and then out comes the honorific address and all that.

Heather: What happens if none of your friends have got that skill?

Laumua: Then I will just ask somebody who might not have the skills, but a friend that’s very... more like a... like a jester. Somebody that’s very funny, that will just crack jokes, who doesn’t care...

Heather: So puts everybody at their ease?

Laumua: Yeah, and then you just say, ‘Sorry, we didn’t bring anything much, but we...’ Just make fun of the whole situation and make the family laugh, and all of a sudden the father might say something a bit different. So it’s got to be a friend. But in Samoa, you know, we have friends who have those skills.

Usually the soa also ends up being the best man, and so sticks with his friend through the whole process. In addition to this specific ritual use of the term, soa is also used for male friends who go fishing together.

Laumua: And we have a special canoe in Samoa called soa-touo which is the second canoe in the fleet. So it’s more like a partner to the main canoe.

Heather: Is it.... could it be like mate? Is it mainly male? I know you can use it for female as well, but it’s mainly used by males, for male activity?

Laumua: Yes, yes, mates.

Heather: That just reminded me because of the canoe, and the fleet... because ‘mate, the first mate in the navy is ... it is a naval term...

A discussion followed about the use of the term ‘mate’ in New Zealand and Australia. In informal language the word ‘mate’ is used rather than friend, sometimes specifically to indicate that there is no sexual or romantic involvement. It is often used collectively referring to a group of friends, particularly the younger adults, that do sporting activities together, or go to the pub together, and it is usually a male term, used both by males to refer to other males, and increasingly by young women to refer to their male friends.

(transcript 9.10.04)

Another conversation group was discussing the use of male and female terms for friendship and various meanings of girlfriend and boyfriend. In New Zealand the term ‘girlfriend’ is generally used by young males to talk about the woman with whom he is having a relationship. The term ‘partner’ is now commonly used to describe a couple living together, but not married, although, recently more married couple are also using the term ‘partner’ when
talking about or introducing their husband or wife. Young women (and some not so young women) in New Zealand are also increasingly referring to their female friends as ‘my girlfriend’, rather than just ‘my friend’. This seems to be the influence of American usage. Eveline and Joe both expressed themselves to be rather confused by the use of the words girlfriend and boyfriend in English, especially the use of the diminutive to describe older adult relationships.

In New Zealand, boys would never introduce a male friend as a ‘boyfriend’, unless it was a gay relationship. In fact, New Zealand males very seldom use the word ‘friend’ to refer to another male. The terms more commonly used are ‘mate’ or ‘bro’, short for brother – a term used commonly by Pasifika males. ‘Bro’ is drawn from the African-American slang, and is one of the many aspects of Afro-American culture adopted by young blacks in New Zealand.

Laumua But there’s a word that’s commonly used in New Zealand now, and that’s ‘bro’. You know you’re friends. My male friends ‘Hey bro’. And that’s very common.

Heather I think it came from either Maori or Polynesian.

Laumua It’s mainly Pacific, Polynesian. And it’s now sort of spreading over the wider community. Much like everything else. There’s a give and take between the cultures.15

Heather And you were mentioning too that even women referred to male friends as ‘mate’. So women would say, ‘oh here’s my mate’. You know in face, probably, ‘This is my good mate Laumua’. I might say that.

Laumua That’s very accepted by society now. It doesn’t have any sexual connotation or any meaning rather than just being friends. Even ‘bro’ how it is used in New Zealand now doesn’t really have the connotation of family or kinship. But it’s mainly, he’s a friend. At the petrol station, Monday, I think. I walked in and out came the petrol station attendant, and he just saw me and said ‘Hey bro! How much do you want?’

Heather And he could say mate too. Mate is also used in the same context, isn’t it? ‘How is it going mate?’ Even if you don’t know them.

Eveline Just as a greeting, a very friendly greeting something like that?

Laumua Yes. But once these things will change eventually.

(transcript 29.10.04)

Left-wing political activism is indicated in the use of the word ‘comrade’ which is associated with friendship, companionship and close intimate living relationships in English, and is a form of address used by communists in Italian, compagno/compagna is the translation for ‘comrade’ and also carries with it the association with communism. But in addition, it is used to refer to an informal and egalitarian couple relationship. The idea of ‘comrade’ in these various cultures is based on a free association of friends without any kinship connotation. However, the universality of communism is described as

15 A cartoon currently screening on New Zealand television about a group of male Pasifika friends is called ‘Bro Town’.
an international brotherhood of man, thus using the concept of the male sibling relationship. In Singalese, brother is more explicitly used in the word used by the political left, although in this case it is expressly the indirect kinship relationship of a brother-in-law. This also stands in contrast to the direct kinship language of younger and older brother or sister used in Singalese to indicate differences in status within non-kinship friendships.

The idea of brotherhood as a political connection is contrasted with the Christian use of brotherhood, both in English and in Singalese, to describe the spiritual connections between fellow worshipers of a common God. The ritual of sworn brotherhood in Japan and China, however, does not involve the third person of the Godhead, but rather describe a very significant human to human commitment, which in Chinese seems to have more of a spiritual element than does the Japanese.

For most cultures there appear to be more words for describing specific functions in terms of male relationships. The role of the soa in Samoa is not only just a male mateship concept, but is a very specific role in courtship. There are gender differences in the use of friendship terminology, both in terms of the speaker, and the reference to the combination of genders in the relationship in many of the cultures, such as New Zealand, Samoan, Maori, Japanese, while other languages German, Italian, Korean and Iraqi, have gender-identifying aspects to the words themselves.

The Politics of Gift-Giving

In the West there are suspicions about gift-giving in political and business contexts. If the gifts are too elaborate, the criticism is that the gift-giver is trying to buy some favour, and thus challenge the impartial ethos of fair trading or objective political decision-making.

The conversation about gift-giving arose in the context of Laumua’s description of the courtship process in Samoa. The soa, or friend, who stands in for his friend in presenting his proposal in marriage to the father of the sought-after woman, also presents gifts to the father. Laumua related what he was told by an 80 year-old Samoan who had often acted as a soa for his friends.

Laumua So he advised his friend. ‘OK, you must prepare some food, put some money into the envelope.’ In those days he said it was only $20. But that was big money. And they took five cooked taro, baked, a cooked chicken and a big fish wrapped up in coconut leaves. And we call it taouga. It’s what they took.

Heather That’s similar to the Maori word, isn’t it? Taonga. It’s like a treasure, isn’t it? Valued.

Laumua Yes.

In another conversation with Yvonne, Qin, Rose and Heather, the issue of gift-giving was also discussed. In Japan gift-giving has become a very formal, twice-yearly event. Osebo is the end of the year gift, and ochugen the mid-year gift especially for the people to whom you owe favours. The purpose of
this gift-giving ritual is specifically to keep ‘the wheels of friendship or relationships oiled’.

Yvonne  So, companies would give it to their special clients, students would give it to their teachers...in the olden days, they used to actually buy the gift and then bring it across and give the gift to the person. Nowadays, you arrange with a department store, and they have set gifts ready – a, b, c, d, e. Gifts already laid out on display. So a company would call this particular department store and say I want 200 of those gifts sent to these, these and these people, and they actually send them. So it’s all become very impersonal, but it’s still the idea of...

Heather  Showing appreciation and keeping...

Yvonne  …keeping that relationship open and looking for more favours in the future. So you keep the wheels of relationships oiled by having these gifts.

The Japanese gift-giving is both instrumental and symbolic. So the best exclusive labelled whiskey is given to those people that are most needed to maintain a relationship with. Sometimes is could be household cooking oil, a box of tea, or canned fruit and detergent. Things to do with cleaning, like soap and towels are also given to the neighbours when moving to a new house to express the idea of a fresh clean relationship. Or dried noodles are offered as a symbol of long relationships.

Yvonne  In Japan you are expected to give a gift when you move into a new home. There is an expression in Japanese that says ‘Muko sangen, mio donare’. Means the three across and the two next-door. And you are mean to give it to the neighbours as a way of introducing yourself to the neighbourhood... because you are within... you need each others’ support as neighbourhood watch or whatever. So that’s the idea behind it. Of course, nowadays with apartment living, these traditions have slowly gone away, but in the days when you had houses, then you could talk about the three opposite and the two next-door.

In Iraq the gift-giving custom related to moving house, is more like the New Zealand custom of family and friends taking a house-warming gift. But Rose also talked about another gift-giving custom in Arab culture related to the announcement of a marriage:

Rose  Well, we do have an interesting custom which is about weddings... I was talking to a friend from the Philippines who said that they have the same custom as well, and that’s that you announce the wedding of your son or daughter by giving people or visitors that come and congratulate you... not necessarily people that come to the wedding... but to your home to congratulate you... a box that has some sweets in it, wrapped specially. And people don't necessarily eat those. They are not meant to be eaten. They are just a symbol that these two people are married and it's like publicly announcing. The family of the daughter give the gift. I think in a way it ties back to how important women are, females are in the culture, and how by announcing marriage you are announcing a solid and good public relationships, not a boyfriend/girlfriend, or hidden relationship.

Heather  So, it’s very public and that means that everything is right and everything has been done correctly?

Rose  Exactly, and everything has been done correctly, and you give people the symbol that announces that your daughter has married.
A discussion between Laumua, Camille and Heather about friendship in Samoa, Trinidad and New Zealand was initiated by Camille, following a discussion related to friendship treaties. Camille compared the way in which New Zealanders are more exclusive in their friendships than are either Trinidadians or Samoans (Camille is married to a Samoan). This led on to an explanation about the traditions related to gift-giving in the Samoan culture.

Camille I wonder if the way international friendships are determined has an impact on the individual friendships of the people in those nations are determined. I know just looking at how New Zealanders become friends. It's so different from how we have friends back home. Like if you are friends with someone, it becomes inclusive of all their friends. In New Zealand, the friends seem to be separate. I wouldn't know your friends, but you would be my friend. In Trinidad, you would be my friends, but I would know all your friends. If I introduced you to my friend, they don't need to go through me to become friends with you.

Heather Yes, it was like when I met your aunt?

Camille Oh, George's cousin

Heather Yes, and because I was your friend, she greeted me...

Camille ...like she greeted me.

Heather Ye, she kissed me, even though I had never met her before. Because I was Camille's friend, I then became her friend.

Camille But Samoans do that and Trinidadians do that too.

Laumua That's why in Samoa you hear these thing. Like 'you marry me, you marry my aiga.' It's like you marry me you marry my family. You know, you are part of the family. You are accepted just as you are. And my friends are yours.

Camille You marry the fa'alavelave.

Heather You marry the what?

Laumua Did you know that the Samoan government has just passed a law... at least it's been tabled in parliament... that they stipulate the amount of things they give for fa'alavelave?

Camille I heard about that at the talk given at the Fale Pasifika at University of Auckland.

Heather Tell us what fa'alavelave is.

Camille Fa'alavelave. Yes we have a Samoan name for everything.

Laumua Fa'alavelave. The literal translation is 'trouble'

Camille Not trouble, but more troubles!

Laumua Troubles. But this is a term that has another very different meaning in the Samoan context. It refers to times when a family has functions like weddings, funerals, and the whole lot...

Camille Babies, births, turning sixteen...
Laumua  All these ceremonies ... Dedications...
Heather  And is it the gifts that are given or...
Camille  Well, you come together and the family would decide, each person in the family would give a hundred dollars. I mean with George, we have given... with all fa’alavelave, we would get a call from the family saying uncle so-and-so, who you don’t know, have never met, who you’ve never heard of, has died. But George is there, and he has to call on everyone, and say we’ll give a hundred dollars. So they’ll do that.
Heather  So everybody gives a hundred dollars?
Camille  Yes, from the family. Say from P...S...’s family. And the other S families would probably... and George would never have even met the person, but it’s ai’ga, it’s families, so they give. And this has gone on over the twenty years since I’ve known George, and in Trinidad, in my family, we don’t have things like that.... and when my mum died, when I came home, all these letters with money had come from George’s family.
Heather  So you are saying that the government is trying to put a limit on it?
Laumua  Because it’s now done in such an excessive way. It’s out of control. It’s more like a big show now, and there’s greed, greed coming into it as well. More like the High Chief of the family will manipulate the custom in which a way that he will call on this clan, and this clan, you know five clans to contribute. At the end of the day you find out that he’s never put any cents into the whole thing. And worse still, left-overs, like left-over money from this so-called fa’alavelave, it’s all in the High Chief’s pocket. A lot of families do that, but you know it depends on the family, and the make up of the family.

According to Laumua and Camille, fa’alavelave started off as being gifts of the land, and mats and towels and food, just gifts for the well-wishers that would turn up. The produce was easy and plentiful, but money is not. The law limiting fa’alavelave will also apply to giving money to the church. Within this context, the conversation touched on sensitive issues of cultural relativism:

Camille  When is the law going to be passed?
Laumua  I’m not sure.
Camille  Sorry to go off the topic, Heather, but I’m interested. Because when we were in Samoa, the poorest villages had the most grandiose churches where just the minister and his family were living.
Eveline  Yes, but you know, sometimes I found that... I know this from other contexts in Africa and Latin America... The point is that those villages are actually very proud of their churches, and it’s a reason for the people to have a very prestigious church. So I don’t agree necessarily to force them not to do it, because we think it is bad for them. Actually, it’s their pride in their decision...
Camille  But this is a Samoan thinking it is bad for them. And of course it has to do with the government.
Laumua  But building a church is something different.
Eveline  But if the people themselves have a different perspective on that. And I think that is quite an ambivalent thing, to pass a law to forbid a sort of ritual or cultural practice.
Laumua  Oh, not necessarily. The law doesn’t concern building churches, and you know, supporting churches. But it’s more like controlling the amount of money that’s given… you know I would say, the abuse of the system. There are ministers in churches that...

Camille  What I would disagree with, is a New Zealand government, or an anthropologist, or someone from outside coming into Samoa and putting a law. But if it’s a Samoan...

Laumua  I think it is a Samoan thing...

Camille  Making a statement about something that is not traditional. Because it wasn’t traditional to give money. I mean churches are only a Christian… this is a Pakeha, Christian, missionary thing.

Eveline  Yes, well that’s something different. I don’t mean that. And the term traditional, I think is very difficult to define as well. Because if the people decide that they want to have a huge church, or big building, and they are proud of that, whether it was originally Christian, or whatever it is, if it relates to their identity today, and if it is their wish to have that, I think that is something that is difficult to decide from outside.

Laumua  That is not questioned at all. Let me explain what is going on now. Ministers in many Protestant churches in Samoa are not paid in the same salary way that we do here. The wages and salary system. No. They are paid by a system that is called in Samoa ‘alofa’. Alofa means love.

Camille  or mea-alofa which is a gift.

Laumua  Mea-alofa is gift. Alofa is the name that is given to this system that is used by the churches to pay their ministers. Now this is how it’s done. Each Sunday… it used to be monthly, then it came down to fortnightly, but some churches now do it weekly. So on a weekly basis the minister gets paid, the secretary of the church will stand up, and read out the list of the members’ gifts, and because you hear your name and you say, ‘Oh, I only give 200’ and the next person might feel like giving 250.

Camille  It’s akin to corruption

Laumua  Corruption and competition.

Heather  A corruption of the original concept.

Laumua  So much so that if you don’t have any money in your pocket, the common thing that a lot of people are doing in Samoa now is ‘give me a piece of paper’. This is the father to the mother. ‘Where is your pen’. The pen is given, a piece of paper. He’ll write down. He’ll just sit there, look at the amounts on the board, and the minister is sitting in the crowd. If 500 is the highest number, he’ll write down 550. Give it. ‘I’ll pay next week’. At the end of the day, the minister gets about $1,000 that particular Sunday, and this is a weekly or fortnightly thing. Now the minimum wage in Samoa is $65 a week. Now imagine the minister getting $1,000 a week compared to his flock, to his members getting round about $60 tala, or at the most 100 tala a week...

Camille  And the thing is, it doesn’t end in Samoa. They bring those practices… it’s done here too.

The idea of taking food as gift-giving in the German, Samoan, New Zealand and Trinidadian cultures was discussed. The New Zealand tradition of BYO
(bring your own wine) and ‘take a plate’ used to be very customary, where as in Trinidad and Germany, an invitation to someone’s home for a meal would not carry with it an expectation that the guest should bring something to eat and drink themselves.

Camille  But with the food thing... when in New Zealand, you bring something to eat. At home when you invite someone to dinner, you don’t expect them to come with anything at all. Unless it is agreed beforehand, and in the family, then we have something at home, and they all brought something. But if you invite someone for dinner. We don’t go with anything. We just go.

Eveline  Yes, with your friends you can just go. You don’t have to...

Heather  But there is a kind of... I suppose you would call it a ritual, although we don’t tend to use that about us Western people. But, like, when you go to somebody in New Zealand. It is customary... not so much now, I don’t think, but certainly when I first came to New Zealand, which is about 20-25 years ago, when you were invited, the women took a plate, and that didn’t mean an empty plate. It meant a plate with something on it. But they’d say, bring a plate and BYO, which is bring your own drink, and you basically bring a contribution to the food and the drink, so that they host doesn’t necessarily provide for everyone.

Camille  When they said BYO initially, we brought our own things, we just put it with all the other drinks. But as we saw people bringing their own, and sitting and drinking their own.

Heather  Well some people do that, and some people...

Camille  And then taking back home their own. And I was thinking, that’s really weird!

Heather  That’s almost, even in terms of Kiwi culture... the people who bring a nice wine and then drink it themselves... that’s not seen as quite in the spirit of things, excuse the pun!

Eveline  That would be strange to me. The idea is to socialise and to share. And food is a very social event.

Camille  In Samoa, though, and Samoans there, you have something and everyone brings something. But from bringing a plate... whereas in Samoa and here, everybody gets together and so everybody brings something. But if you are invited personally, just you to dinner, in Trinidad you wouldn’t bring anything.

Heather  No, well I think it is uncertain too in New Zealand. You would say, if it’s a friend, ‘would you like me to make a salad or something?’ And they may say, ‘Oh yes, that would be great, or can you bring the dessert.’

Camille  But why? If you are inviting someone to dinner, why would you want a salad?

Heather  No, but I think it is because, in my circle of friends, most of us are working...

Camille  Because you don’t know how to make something!

Heather  Well, yes. That’s part of it! Not the greatest cook! But you know, everybody is busy, and in fact what we say to each other is, instead of it being a big effort for one person to make dinner, and then, you know, I think I can’t ask them round because I haven’t got time to do all the proper preparation, we’ve sort of said, ‘Well let’s just get together, go to a café or let’s all bring something, so that we can at least get together.’ Because otherwise if we wait until somebody’s got the time to put on a big dinner party, we are never going to see each other.
Camille  That's one point of view.

Eveline   It's a lot to do with social evaluation. So that's quite a big story. So that people would talk about how the food was afterwards, and there's always a social evaluation of your host. That's very common.

The Maori idea of *koha* as a gift-giving ritual, and the Indian gift-giving ritual of *Diwali* were discussed in a later conversation between Rob, Baljit and Heather on 12 November, the date of the Diwali November festival in India.

Baljit  Diwali, we had a parade over here a couple of days ago, but officially Diwali is today, and it's a festival of light, but on that day people do exchange gifts. It's mostly like, we visit your house, being a friend, and give you some sweets. Mostly people bring sweets. But in modern life, if, for example, the people you are working with in the office, your bosses, etc. The gift-giving has become quite vulgar over there. People are giving just to... I don't know... to get close to the boss. And people give a lot of material things. For example, if the boss is a lady, they might expect a Mixie, or a steam iron, or maybe something bigger, like a fridge, depending on your position. I've seen it last time I was in India, and on Diwali we were there. And my sister-in-law is a judge, and all the lawyers, they are sending, because it is the pretext of Diwali... you can't approach the judge otherwise. But they know that the judge can't stop you. So she said there were heaps of these sweets -- and I ate a lot of them! And also these material kind of gifts. Sweets are harmless. That's OK. Everybody will accept sweets without any problem. And so... but material gifts, they kind of oblige you. That's the term they use in India. They oblige you to accept the gift.

Heather  Yes, in Japan they talk about ‘oiling the wheels of friendship’. Rob, can you tell us a bit about the *koha* and that kind of idea?

Rob       Traditionally it's a sign of wealth if you can give things away. So if you have guests you give them things, you feed them, you always give. Or if you go to visit them, you always bring a *koha*. I think it still persists today. So a sign of your wealth and your generosity is to give. But it also goes back to the idea of reciprocity. So as Maori society is communal, and they seem to think, based upon the balance you give, and you will receive back. So we have always been brought up to give things.

Heather  So when you go round to somebody's house, do you take something?

Rob       You take something. So you might take a cake, for example, or a bottle of wine, or whatever. So you always take something.

Heather  We take a bottle of wine, if we go to somebody for dinner... and there's also that New Zealand tradition of ‘taking a plate’ which women always used to take...But now, if people have a party, for an occasion, you take a gift and you give gifts to your friends for birthdays. But you don't really give gifts to other people that you don't know. There's not a tradition, I don't think, in Pakeha culture. You tend to only give gifts to your friends, and relatives, and that's it. I also think that the Western culture is very suspicious of gift-giving, particularly in business situations, and they often seem to refer to it as almost a corruption – something that's corrupt, rather than a tradition. And obviously these things can become corrupt, but it's not seen as the right thing to do. I think the more they are dealing with, particularly Asian cultures, they are having to realise that it is something that you need to do.

Baljit   Even if you show friendly intent to someone, people do give. For example, there is deep conflict between India and Pakistan, but every time there is a chance of
meeting between the two Prime Ministers or the Presidents, they gift each other. Like they know that so and so likes wearing smart blazers, so they send the best guy to stitch one for the Prime Minister, and send a famous painting of someone – gifted. This has happened recently between India and Pakistan. Quite – like there was a lot of publicity about it. The Prime Minister of Pakistan has gifted something to the Prime Minister [of India].

Heather I was also just thinking about R. She went to India to see her family, and when she came back, she brought me several gifts, and I was embarrassed in a way, because they were things that I would normally give as a birthday present, and this was just a gift. And it was completely unexpected for me that she would give me presents.

Baljit. But this is quite common. More of a goodwill kind of a gesture.

At this point, Ali arrived and when offered a piece of cake, reminded us that he was fasting for Ramadan – the last day of his fast.

Baljit When you break your fast it’s got a special name. What is it called? I’ve forgotten the Islamic word for it.

Ali That is called...

Baljit It is a huge thing in India, inviting your opponents and all that.

Ali Yes, bringing people together.

Heather So you bring people that you might have had...

Baljit Political opponents. Recently, the Chief Minister of the State presided over a dinner...

Heather So who was it?

Baljit So, for example, there was a deadlocked election in one state, like the two major parties had an equal number of seats, so they couldn’t decide who was going to be the CM, the chief of the state. And they were both haggling over it, arguing over it, so a third person organised the dinner to break the fast.

Ali Ifthaar, that is the break of the fast.

Baljit So, he invited the political leader of one party, and then the other party, and let them talk, and they came out with a solution some how.

Ali It was a good outcome. Because the basis is the purification of yourself. That is the idea behind that. So just you become more humble, staying without food. You think about the people who are poor. It is believed to be said that you become more equal. Probably on an equal footing. So it is the belief behind that.

Heather Well, it makes sense, doesn’t it.

Ali So people get together, especially in the fasting month. It is a month when you have a lot of meetings. I mean friends come together. Now the Ifthaar what they call the breaking of fast, is usually with friends and family, getting together. So it is the time and the month where a lot of Muslims they get together.

Baljit They show brotherhood and those kinds of feelings – friendship, even reconciling with opponents. These kinds of things

Heather That’s interesting.
But the other side is that it is because people get short-tempered as well.

Because they are not eating? So they have to come together and be friendly again.

So that is like back at home, when you go up to the marketplace, and all this, and especially during Ramadan, the fasting month, you find that people get into quite this type of uneasiness quite quickly and get quite excited.

Well, it’s difficult to purify yourself, isn’t it!

In the personal sense, in many of these cultures, gift-giving is often connected to food and hospitality. Customs differ and the importance of the friendship or occasion is recognised in different food rituals. So among friends in New Zealand and Samoa, guests sometimes take contributions to the meal. Breaking a fast, such as Ramadan, in Iraq and Maldives involves sharing meals with relatives and friends, but is also used to bring political rivals together in India. In Trinidad and Germany, an invitation to friends to dinner carries with it the expectation that the meal will be provided by the host. The gift of sweets is a symbolic gesture of friendship to mark particular celebrations in countries such as Iraq and India.

Moving house is also an occasion marked by present-giving in New Zealand, Iraq and Japan. There are different present-giving rituals around these occasions and celebrations such as birthdays in Korea, Germany and New Zealand cultures.

The exchange of gifts as a good-will gesture is carried out in countries such as India, China and Japan, as an indication of gratitude or anticipation of a continuing beneficial relationship. Often this is in a business context. The gifts have tended to become grander and less personal in recent times, are increasingly seen as becoming too elaborate, and status-driven. The situation in Samoa regarding the perceived manipulation of the custom of gifting resulting in excessive financial gain by some high chiefs and church ministers is currently being addressed in Samoan law.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The original meaning of friendship in the all cultures explored in this research project appears to be associated with a voluntary, personal, important reciprocal relationship between individuals. This relationship involves affection, caring, understanding, support, loyalty and companionship. Rituals and customs which are used to demonstrate to the importance of the friendship vary according to different cultures. Gift-giving, hospitality, swearing allegiance, acting on behalf of the friend, differ in kind and according to other customs and traditions. The naming of different sorts of friend varies according to gender, status, closeness.

There are more terms used to describe male relationships than female relationships. The kinship terminology used to describe friends is more often than not the brotherly relationship. This Derrida describes as the
‘fraternization’ both of friendship and democracy. The use of words such as ‘mate’ in many cultures, indicate that there is some reluctance for males to use the generic term ‘friend’. This may perhaps relate to a certain machismo attitude and reluctance to use expressions which could have connotations of homosexuality or lack of toughness.

There has been a political meaning given one of the friendship words, ‘comrade’ in many of the cultures affected by communism, to the extent that the word is now almost exclusively associated with the political left, and in most cultures has lost any immediate reference to a type of friendship and companionship. Even in Italy where it is used to describe a live-in couple relationship, it carries with it a left-wing emphasis. In Germany, though, comradeship is associated with military use, but not as a communist term. Communist terminology in Japan, on the other hand, does not relate to any friendship concept, but rather expresses the idea of ‘equality’.

Aristotle used the concept of civic friendship to describe the association between citizens of a political community in Ancient Greece. Friendship in the Roman sense was used by writers such as Cicero to refer to political patronage. It was not used to identify particular partisanship but was associated with relationships essential to society. These connotations can be located in cultures such as Samoan and Maori where political interaction between ruling and opposition parties is conducted with the respect and discussion process associated with guest friendship, with the words used implying this relationship. Other cultures, such as Japanese and Indian, also use less oppositional language to describe political factions or parties than is common in English.

The use of friendship to describe alliances between nation states or countries was only common to certain cultures and languages. The idea that a personal, individual relationship was similar to a contractual arrangement between two countries seemed anomalous to researchers from some cultures. It was considered by some that the concept of friendship might be degraded if it were to be associated with politics, or used to describe relationships which were obviously not the same as close, intimate, personal friendship.

Likewise, there were different understandings about traditions of gift-giving in political, business and religious situations, although there was a general acknowledgement that these rituals could be corrupted. There was agreement that gift-giving rituals: (a.) had become more mechanistic, impersonal and involved little choice; (b) were becoming associated with buying favours; (c) were a means of exploiting the resources of poorer people; and (d) could lead to corruption of power by leading figures.

Friendship in all these different languages can be commonly understood as a very close relationship based on feelings of love and affection. There may be some overlap with kinship, but friendship is considered to be something which can be distinguished from kinship. Although it is connected with love and intimacy, there is also a difference between friendship and erotic or romantic
love. The concept of friendship is seen to play an important role in all these societies. Every culture identifies different types of friendship, whether it is concerned with the quality or the gender of the friends, the quality of the friendship itself, the exclusiveness of the relationship, or the specific role of friendship.

The historical, religious and political influences on the languages leads to subtle differences and nuances which impact on the terminology, rituals, customs, activities, and values associated with friendship. Yet, despite these differences, the general concept of friendship as a valuable, reciprocal, close relationship is universally understood. What is needed for someone to fulfil the role of a particular sort of friend is more open to interpretation and possible disagreement.

The project has explored the concept of friendship by trying to match the process to the topic. The collaborative nature of the research has given all participants the opportunity to work cooperatively and to form closer attachments with their colleagues, for mutual benefit. An understanding of both the similarities and differences in the various cultures has been initiated. Some of these linkages and discrepancies will be explored further as we consider in more detail the role of gender, class, religion and politics in the ideas of friendship in each others’ cultures. It is anticipated that some of the original researchers may not be able to continue to have such close involvement in the future, but as our friendship network expands, we will bring in people from the many languages, cultures and countries which have not yet been included.

‘O my friends, there are many friends!’

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