Introduction

He hono tangata, e kore e motu, kāpā he taura waka, e motu. –
A human bond cannot be parted, unlike the severable canoe rope.
Māori proverb[1]

The happy man needs friends.
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics

Relationships are the glue that holds the world together. This common belief applies to ancient Greece as much as to contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand[2] society – as the two citations above attest to: *He hono tangata, e kore e motu, kāpā he taura waka, e motu.* – 'A human bond cannot be parted, unlike the severable canoe rope.' According to Hirini Moko Mead and Neil Grove (2003:70 f.), this Māori proverb refers to a spiritual bond, which is stronger than the mooring rope of a canoe (*waka*). This saying is often applied to marriage, but also to friendship – the relationship, which, according to Aristotle, is needed in order to live a happy life. Friendship, i. e., the idea of a bond that goes beyond the ties of family or kin, stands at the core of this study. Specifically, my analysis focuses on friendship experiences by Māori and Pākehā in Aotearoa New Zealand, i. e., the members of the indigenous population and the descendants of the European settler population.[3]

Friendship has become increasingly significant in people's lives – in Aotearoa New Zealand as well as in other parts of the world. This is the result of the transformation of the place of the family (e. g., Bell and Coleman 1999b) and of the growing interconnectedness of our contemporary world(s) that have led to a new variety of social ties in which people engage in creative ways (Featherstone 2001). Despite this actuality, the study of friendship still constitutes a rather neglected field of study. In anthropology, friendship has taken a surprisingly marginal role, especially if one considers the meticulousness with which anthropologists have studied kinship or clientelism. In contrast to these estab-

1 Cited in Hirini Moko Mead and Neil Grove (2003:70 f.).

2 Aotearoa – Māori for 'New Zealand'. In this study, both terms will be used interchangeably.

3 The term 'Māori' refers to the indigenous peoples of New Zealand. While 'Pākehā' follows no unitary definition, in common usage it refers to "a person of pre-dominantly European descent" (Williams 2000 [1844]:252). Pākehā identities have been shaped by their experiences as members of the dominant group in society. I use the term to refer to New Zealanders of European descent who identify as Pākehā and/or European (cf. Spoonley 1988). This includes persons identifying as 'New Zealanders' but acknowledging a cultural heritage linked to the settler population.

lished topics of enquiry, the anthropology of friendship is just emerging as a research field of its own.

One goal of this study is to contribute to this growing research field by providing an anthropological study of friendship conceptions and practices. A second goal is to illuminate the social dynamics of New Zealand inter-group relations. By understanding the place and the meaning of friendship in Māori and Pākehā's everyday life-worlds, I not only seek to uncover the variety of friendship conceptions and practices, as well as to illuminate the workings of cross- and intra-cultural friendships; I specifically set out to further our understanding of the embeddedness of social relations in their wider societal context.

As fellow anthropologists are starting to take up the topic of friendship more systematically in their work, they have also started to challenge some widely spread assumptions on sociality and modernity.[4] Rather than treating friendship merely as a subsidiary category to kinship, these authors have called for a contextualized study of emic friendship categories. The picture that emerges is that of a highly flexible social phenomenon that (a) may 'mean' quite different things in different cultures, epochs, and languages; that (b) is linked to ideas concerning the constitution of the subject; and that (c) touches on notions of autonomy, intimacy and relatedness, as well as on the relationship between the private and the public.

The study of cross-cultural friendship has been described as vital for understanding the particularities of friendship contents and practices since such friendships are particularly revealing about existing social, cultural, economic as well as political boundaries (Beer 2001). At the same time, the study of cross-cultural friendship uncovers the transformative potential of such relations across boundaries. Ultimately, cross-, inter- or trans-cultural friendships may lead to more flexible forms of sociality that allow the actors to actively construct, de- and re-construct existing boundaries. However, as I will argue, in order to grasp in detail the dynamics involved in the formation and maintenance of such ties across boundaries, we need to examine the place of friendship within actors' social universes.

Aotearoa New Zealand provides a particularly interesting setting for such an undertaking because of the special status of intergroup relations. In particular, the places of Māori and Pākehā have been shaped by the colonial experience; their relations have grown historically from first encounters between Māori and Europeans, through colonial times, and decolonization. In conjunction with migration flows from the Pacific Islands area, Asia, and other parts of the world,

4 For example, Beer 2001, Brandt and Heuser 2011, Desai and Killick 2010, Grätz 2011, Grätz et al. 2003, Guichard 2007, Heady 2007.

this has led to a situation characterized by rapidly changing culture composition. Against this background, present-day New Zealand identity making processes and group relations are dominated by popular and political debates surrounding (a) indigenous rights and postcolonial settlements and (b) immigration issues.

Inextricably linked to these processes are the notions of biculturalism and multiculturalism. Since the 1980s, the New Zealand government has officially espoused a bicultural policy that acknowledges Māori's cultural difference on the basis of their status as indigenous peoples – a move that was based on the acknowledgment of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) as a central defining document for Māori and Pākehā relations (cf. King 2003:515ff). However, mainly as the result of the socio-demographic changes brought about by immigration, the notion of multiculturalism has entered into the debates in recent years, which has unfolded into an ample debate as to the place of the bicultural ideal within a *de facto* multicultural state. The challenge of reconciling the country's (post-) colonial heritage with its growing diversity proves to be a challenging task, which – as I will show – is reflected in people's social universes. The study of friendship here reveals crucial implications for the understanding of group relations in postcolonial society.

Due to the lack of research on friendship in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere, and due to the complexity of the topic, a qualitative approach based on ethnographic research methods is particularly suitable for uncovering the everyday construction of friendship in different socio-cultural contexts (Gareis 2000).

In the following chapters, I provide an in-depth analysis of friendship in Aotearoa New Zealand based on ethnographic field research in 2007 and 2008. How do individual actors conceptualize friendships within the wider socio-cultural environment? How do they engage with others and on what grounds do they establish more intimate ties? How do they place their friendships in their wider social network? How do the socio-political relations influence cross-cultural friendships? Are cultural and ethnic boundaries reproduced, or can friendships provide a site for overcoming boundaries and for social role modeling? What is the significance of culture-specific friendship conceptions and interpretations? By tracing these questions, I will illuminate some major trends and patterns that deserve further inquiry. As I will show, the idea of biculturalism within a multicultural society reverberates in Māori and Pākehā's everyday social universes and friendship worlds. Some of these friendship worlds are monocultural, others are bicultural and/or multicultural; and while the boundaries of these worlds are in constant flux, only few transcend them fully, thereby creating new transcultural social worlds in spaces in-between (Bhabha 1994).

This book consists of four parts. *Part one* (chapters 1 to 3) specifies the

theoretical framework. I start with the analysis of social theories of friendship, which are for the most part informed by the Western-European tradition of thought (chapter 1). After discussing relevant approaches, I conclude this chapter by arguing for an emic approach to friendship that favors categorical openness. Chapter 2 takes the discussion to the local level. My analysis of the available literature takes me from 'friendship' and 'mateship' as localized Western-European conceptions to the question of the absence of such categories in Māori society. The analysis of Māori social life reveals a complex universe of relatedness in which the idea of friendship is included in the idea of the *whānau* (extended family) and of *whanaunga* (relatives, relations). Chapter 3 presents the analytical framework of this study. I propose a multidimensional practice framework, which strongly relies on the idea of 'figured worlds' developed by Holland et al. (1998) and their theory of identity and culture. From this I develop the notion of 'friendship worlds' as a social practice theory of friendship that favors categorical openness, and which takes as a premise the idea that actors engage in multiple internalized figured worlds in interrelation with others.

In *part two*, I specify the socio-historical framework, thereby providing the grounds for a contextualized study of individual life-worlds (chapter 4). After tracing out the historical processes that continue to shape group relations until this day, I turn to contemporary society and take up the issue of culture discourse, pointing out some central implications of the notions of biculturalism and multiculturalism for present-day group dynamics.

Part three, 'New Zealand Friendship Worlds', is dedicated to the empirical data. I start by espousing the methodological framework (chapter 5). In chapter 6, I discuss New Zealand friendship terminology, ideals and practices. I argue that friendship cuts across a variety of social conceptions and practices that are associated with multiple Māori and Pākehā friendship worlds. In chapter 7, I apply this finding to the level of individual experiences: I look at how Māori and Pākehā engage in relations with people called 'friends', 'mates', or *hoa* (the generic Māori term for friend), how they experience themselves and others in these relationships, how they employ terminology and how they express sociocultural context and/or belonging. I argue that different friendship worlds are skillfully juggled by the actors depending on their respective environments, experiences and identifications.

Finally, *part four* brings together the different strands of analysis. After summarizing the main findings, I discuss implications for understanding intergroup relations in Aotearoa New Zealand, and for the study of friendship in general (chapter 8). I conclude with a reflection on the limitations of the results and implications for future research (chapter 9).