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Chapter N

But I thought we were friends?

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This chapter is concerned with a relatively under-explored aspect of 'engaged research' – the nature of friendship relations between researchers and practitioners, and the ethical dilemmas that arise in such relationships. Attention has been paid to the relational aspects of research in the methodology literature, but this chapter focuses more closely on friendship in particular. The chapter is framed around two guiding concerns: how do friendships, formed in and around research, change over time; and in view of friendship conceived in this dynamic fashion, what ethical questions and dilemmas arise for the 'friends'?

The chapter is structured as follows. Since the development of friendship might be expected to be more prominent in forms of research that presuppose a close engagement between researcher and research participant than those which are based on distance and 'objective' separation between researcher and subject, we start by briefly exploring the nature of 'engaged' forms of research. Second, we explore the friendship literature as it relates to the identities people construct for themselves and others in research relationships. Third, a phased model of research engagement is presented, highlighting the way the relationship between researchers and research participants develops over time. Finally, we present two 'tales from the field', of contrasting examples of friendship in research relationships, and we highlight some of the ethical questions that arise in such situations.

Engaged Research

'Engaged research' is a somewhat ambivalent term which carries several meanings. In essence, it is research which is close to practitioner concerns and aims. It incorporates ideas and practices from traditions such as Participant Observation (Spradley, 1980; Bernard, 2005), Action Research (Eden and Huxham, 1996; Reason and Bradbury, 2001), and 'Mode 2' research (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998; MacLean et al., 2002). Taking each of these in

turn, Participant Observation is distinguished from hidden or remote observation by the acknowledgement that the observer's presence will inevitably have an impact on the activities, artefacts and discourse that are observed (Johnson et al., 2006). Rather than adopting an objective, detached stance, the researcher moves within organizational processes and interactions in an attempt to 'understand from the inside' (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). In so doing, the researcher establishes a subjective connection to the participants in the research setting, through which mutual influence occurs (Spradley, 1980). Indeed, it could be argued that if there is no subjective connection (Johnson et al., 2006), then the desired 'understanding from the inside' has not been achieved. Participant Observation is able to offer rich insights when the process has brought about a change in the observer's perspective or a new understanding of the setting (Bernard, 2005). Transforming one's understanding entails some degree of personal change on the part of the researcher, and openness to such subjective changes is intrinsic to this method (Geertz, 1983; Jackson, 1998).

Action Research also makes participation and engagement explicit, as the researcher is present with the intention of having an impact on how the people and organization work (Greenwood and Levin, 1998; [see also ch. X, this volume – ed.](#)). The very presence of the researcher connotes a desire to help improve the situation for 'clients' in the organization. This can entail the researcher becoming part of a team that is trying to achieve particular organizational or operational goals (Coughlan and Coughlan, 2002) or the researcher taking on aspects of a managerial role (Coughlan, 2001). In either case, for such research to be effective, it must both help members of the organization with matters that are important to them, as well as developing more general learning that stimulates the researcher's theory generation. Action researchers thus adopt hybrid roles – both inside the organizational setting and doing theoretical work outside – and are embedded in subjective connections to the communities of practice inside the organization and in the academic world. The resultant depth of knowledge, and the consequent ability to theorise from the experience, relies on being able to genuinely 'be part of the experience' rather than being detached from it.

Mode 2 research, a form of engaged research that has been promoted by the British Academy of Management (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998), stresses the co-production of knowledge. It is contrasted with Mode 1 research, in which concepts are developed through theorising and subsequently applied, in a top-down fashion, to the workplace. Mode 2 is anti-hierarchical in that 'empirical settings' are conceived neither as places for 'transferring

knowledge' to practitioners nor as sites for experimental data gathering (Van Aken, 2002). Rather, practitioners and researchers jointly define problems and issues to be explored; both parties bring skills and knowledge to the process; and reflection and feedback on the work occurs within the setting as well as being written up for academic consumption (MacLean et al., 2002). In this style of research, the role distinctions between practitioner and researcher are blurred, and both take on activities and purposes that would traditionally (i.e., in Mode 1 research) be the preserve of the other. For example, researchers might take on the role of providing management expertise, and practitioners could become involved in developing theoretical concepts for publication.

There are subtle but significant differences between the specifics of Participant Observation and Action Research, with Mode 2 operating as an umbrella term that highlights similarities and common ground with respect to the nature of the engagement between the researcher and the practitioner. Engaged Research can therefore be conceived as an effort to co-produce knowledge in which both researchers and practitioners seek to improve things in the workplace whilst simultaneously marshalling and producing formal and informal knowledge. The engagement increases the possibility of subjective change, mutual influence and interpersonal relations that go beyond traditional Mode 1, objectivist and detached styles of research. Hence, this is particularly fertile ground in which to explore the idea and practice of friendship between researchers and research participants.

'Engagement' implies more than a cognitive framework for the production of knowledge. It is an emotional and risky business, sometimes ambivalent, sometimes exciting, but always crossing organizational and intellectual boundaries. In subjectivist research (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) the researcher is interested in understanding the subjective realities of the actors in the situation. But beyond this, we find that as researchers we become subjectively involved – wanting to help, having a view on what would be good and bad, and feeling a sense of shared objectives and 'togetherness' with other people who have similar views. It is unsurprising that under such circumstances, in-group ties and social group formation can take place (Tajfel and Turner, 1985). Friendships can develop; and when this happens the engagement between friends goes beyond shared views and perceptions of the issues at hand (Pesamaa and Hair, 2007) to incorporate emotional attachment and even a degree of identification.

However, the concept of friendship plays a small role in the literature on Participant Observation, Action Research and Mode 2 research. We argue that this is an important omission because when friendship grows, ethical dilemmas also arise. With friendship may come improved access and openness, but to what extent should one initiate or foster friendship? When the researcher and practitioner are in friendship relations, how should one use privileged information? To what extent should political activity or advocacy become part of the researcher's purpose? When the research project finishes, what happens to the 'friendship'?

In this chapter, our aim is to elucidate engaged research from the perspective of the phases of friendship development, growth and decline – and to identify the ethical questions and dilemmas that the researcher encounters during such social processes. We will argue that in addition to altruistic intentions and authenticity of self towards other, which would be expected in a friendship, in order to remain engaged the researcher may also need to act in arguably more negative ways, such as fudging, performing and silencing/self-silencing.

Friendship

The common-sense understanding of friendship is that it is a sharing, a joining together and a mutual liking. In Marmaros and Sacerdote's (2006) study, factors such as proximity, frequency of interaction and similarity of background were correlated with friendship formation. Similarly, Markiewicz et al. (2000) found that patterns of friendship within organizations correlated with sex; same-sex ties were generally found to be stronger than different-sex ties. They also found that 'successful' friendships were associated with job satisfaction and career success, particularly for men. Whether or not the friendships were deliberately instrumental, there appears to be some functional utility to such friendships.

A sense of instrumentality is also evoked by Nietzsche (1977), who uses the metaphor of two boats when discussing friendship. For a time, the boats can have one destination, and whilst they are in harbour, they can celebrate and feast together. But inevitably their tasks take them in different directions, and a distance develops. Hence, for Nietzsche, friendships persist whilst they are helpful to both people either in assisting towards a shared task, or fulfilling the social function of joint celebration and fun, but once the friends develop different interests, or have divergent tasks, the friendship will decline.

Leach (1982) also draws attention to the temporal character of friendship which he contrasts with the permanence of kinship relations. Friendship is regarded as impermanent and contingent. In addition, Leach highlights the role of exchange in friendship relations. Many things can be exchanged in friendship, including status, access to in-groups, political support, emotional support and personal closeness. Whilst exchange-based relationships are not necessarily friendly (indeed, enmity can also be conceived as a form of social exchange), exchange in friendship, according to Leach, is typified by trust. The friends will not start out with a contract-like mindset or the measurements of relative value of exchanges that typify low-trust relations. However, that is not to say that friends do not make assessments of equity in what each puts into the relationship, and feelings of inequity can provoke a diminution of the friendship.

It is notable that the aspects of exchange raised here have resonances for research friendships, as well as other sorts. Status, access and support are all involved in developing research activities and insights, and these are not necessarily sought for altruistic reasons. It might be that there are genuinely shared interests as implied by the literature on engaged research cited above; however, it could also be that there are times when it is advantageous to the researcher to fudge or even fake the trust that Leach sees as differentiating friendly exchange from other forms of exchange. In what might be an extreme case, Kipnis et al. (1984) define friendship as a management tactic that, in their view, is an alternative to the use of power; it is proximal to coalition forming and bargaining in their conceptualisation. This view of 'friendship' would barely conform to the understanding developed by Nietzsche and Leach, as it seems to advocate giving the appearance of friendship in order to get something from the other party without actually developing trust, emotional support and personal closeness. Although, Kipnis et al. regard this as distinct from power, it could be argued that such an approach is interwoven with power of both subtle and unsubtle types. It seems that friendship is complex and dynamic.

If friendship is regarded as dynamic, it will grow or deteriorate as interests, tasks and personal bonds change over time (Sias, et. al., 2004). Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1985) traces the mechanisms by which people enter and leave in-groups, such as friendship groups. Transition rites and practices often mark movement across boundaries as people develop stronger ties, maintain positions and subsequently loosen ties. These processes can include the adoption of identity markers or symbols of group membership

such as shared dress, the espousal of socially approved values and the enactment of 'appropriate' behaviour (Berger, 1997). However, tension can still arise in relationships given their tendency to deterioration (Sias et al., 2004), and so there is a need for 'identity work' (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) to maintain position and membership. Without maintenance, friendships can be expected to atrophy, such that the in-group ties become vulnerable to dramatic or gradual decay. Hence, the dynamics of friendship involve development or decline in relation to shifting exchange, trust, perceived utility or shared interests, and are also based on emotional bonds and support between people. Given the mix of trust and support with exchange-utility, ethical questions can arise as people ask why they are being friendly with this person rather than that, how far what they 'get out of the relationship' inspires action to connect or disconnect, and when (if ever) it is acceptable to fake friendship, producing a pretence in order to serve personal needs. In the next section we introduce a way of thinking about friendship in a series of temporal phases. This will then be applied to two examples of researcher-research participant friendships.

Relationship Phases in Engaged Research

When reflecting on our own experiences of engaged research and on the friendship literature, we identified four phases in research relationships: invitation; momentary auditions; engagement; separation. Of course, not all friendships go through all of these phases, and the flow through them is not always unidirectional (hence, we are not proposing a classic 'stage theory'). However, we suggest that the phases offer a potentially useful way of characterizing the nature and dynamics of 'friendly' research relationships.

1. Invitation and Relationship Formation

During the initial phases, friendship formation entails the tentative 'offering and acceptance' of the idea of being friends. The offering and acceptance may not typically be explicit, but are implicit in tone of voice, non-verbal behaviours and verbal behaviours such as repeated agreeing and the supply of words by one for the sentences of the other. These same verbal and non-verbal actions can also denote opposition. For example, one could feel constantly interrupted, but when there is a spark of friendship there is a recognition of the interplay as an invitation to join, rather than as someone overriding your words. This stage is often referred to as gaining entry or gaining access (Feldman et al., 2003). Feldman et al. place emphasis on the relational character of gaining access, but even more than this, invitation to

friendship entails two-way access that is personal and possibly self-revealing. Hence, there is a need for gradual trust building between the parties.

The invitation to friendship may accompany an implied enquiry and negotiation that we would normally expect in the 'gaining access' phase. That is, what can each of us expect from this relationship? In engaged research relationships, attempting to negotiate entry to the organization is an occasion when the careful balancing of research interests against the requirement for practical outcomes comes to the fore. For researchers, openness to surprises and the unexpected is part of what makes research interesting and empirically grounded (Vinten, 1994). However, this same characteristic can make it difficult to explain to potential research sponsors and participants exactly what the benefits of the research will be for them. Sponsors often look to the researcher as someone capable of providing insight, guidance and, depending on the character of the contract, interventions of a functional and managerial nature. This encourages researchers to construct themselves as external consultants, whilst being mindful of the issues of integrity this might raise later in the research process.

In summary, in this phase the researcher typically becomes involved in relationship-oriented activity on two fronts: with the research sponsor, who is likely to need some reassurance that things will proceed as agreed; and with a wider set of research participants with whom trust and credibility must be established. The researcher can make new friends and develop research agreements, but the nature of the 'contracting' of the research and the initial invitations to friendship are different from each other, and neither necessitates the other.

II. Momentary Auditions and Testing Out the Friendship

Acclimatisation is a key period of familiarization for researchers coming to terms with a new organizational setting. Balancing the expectations of self and other is highlighted during this phase. The researcher's expectations and previous experience may shape his/her perceptions in trying to understand the organization; but organizational members also have expectations and previous experiences which, reciprocally, may shape their perceptions of the researcher as they try to work out the researcher's agenda. Nevertheless, the researcher's prior experience can be significant in developing friendship relations beyond those with initial 'gatekeepers' who may have facilitated access (Chikudate, 1999).

As friendships develop, a process of normalisation and boundary-establishment unfolds. Each party tries out language, behaviours, preferences and tastes to see what is acceptable in the relationship. Such momentary 'auditions' take place where organizational members form a judgement on the researcher as a potential 'friend', and passing such auditions is critical to the researcher's ability to achieve engagement on his or her own terms rather than in response to the 'gatekeeper's' requests or demands. During and immediately after an audition, researchers need a high degree of criticality in assessing the dialogue that develops (Alvesson, 2003; Wilson, 2004), as it is easily possible to misread how one has done in an audition, and indeed to misperceive the auditions themselves.

III. Engagement

As friendships flourish, norms of behaviour, shared values and mutual reliance become more taken for granted. Breaches of these tacitly accepted boundaries can provoke urgent relationship-maintenance activities or can lead to a cooling of relations. If one continues to pass the on-going series of momentary auditions, relationships between the researcher and the researched become more established. Trust can develop as each person builds up a story of the other which incorporates a match between promise and delivery, and perceptions of consistency develop.

In this phase the challenge is to continue *active* participation in the research situation by deliberately – but 'naturally' – provoking discussion and dialogue in order to test assumptions and generate new levels of insight. Friendship can provide a framework which allows critical engagement and provocative dialogue. On the other hand, there can be a danger that critical dialogue is not welcomed from a friend, and hence the strength of the friendship can be diminished, for example, where it is revealed that what had been taken as shared assumptions turn out not to be shared.

A further risk of active participation is that we develop emotionally committed positions or become embroiled in political manoeuvrings (Pettigrew, 2003; Kock, 2004) which make it difficult for researchers as friends to stand back from what is taken for granted. As Galibert (2004:456) puts it, *"How can we be astonished by what is most familiar, and make familiar what is strange?"* Answering this question involves a balance between engaging *enough* to be able to develop informed interpretations about observed practices, while also limiting that

engagement in order to maintain some distance from the situation (Weeks, 2000). For the friendship this means that engagement is not always fully open and unconditional.

Within research friendships there is a need for a balance between engagement and distance. This may also be true of friendships more generally, but in the case of research friendships, the closeness between friends can enhance mutual subjective understanding and the ability of the researcher to build theory based on an 'insider view'. However, if the researcher does not maintain sufficient distance, he or she runs the risk of accepting one version of events as the truth and of being unable to critically engage with alternative perspectives.

In a context in which friendship relations have developed, conceptualising 'distance' is highly problematic, but the very recognition of this as a question may signal the final phase in the process.

IV. Separation

Ethnographers often speak of the warm relationships they have built up during engagement (Kondo, 1990; Watson, 2001), and it is not unknown for enduring friendships to be formed (Oakley, 1981). However, research projects do draw to a close. While in some cases it might seem that there is no need to develop an 'exit strategy', because the project has a fixed term that has been contractual, the best way of respectfully facilitating disengagement is by no means obvious in all circumstances. Leaving the organization can be a bittersweet experience of nostalgia tinged with regret, as all participants come to terms with a shift in their relationship.

In circumstances where a friendship has developed it can be hard for both parties when the time comes to leave. Research friends may develop an attachment to the research process and feel a certain dependence on it (or on the researcher) as part of their own sense-making. Similarly, researchers may themselves develop attachments to the research as part of their own identity and/or sense-making, allowing themselves to be drawn back again and again to search for yet more subtle and detailed nuances in the research story, without recognizing either the possibility of diminishing returns or accepting the end of the research operation. On the other hand, friendships can form which mean that both the researcher and the research participant seek out new opportunities to work together in the future.

Phases of Friendship and Ethical Questions

Each phase of establishing, developing, progressing and terminating the research engagement can give rise to ethical issues, including around such matter as: what each party presents to the other; the interests and purposes that are pursued; and how the relationship should be conducted as it approaches and crosses temporal, organizational and friendship boundaries. The need for an ethical focus in research (Kondo, 1990) and for reflexive engagement (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) has been established in general terms, but our concern here is how ethics and reflexivity play out when friendship develops in the research relationship.

During the invitation to friendship phase there is a combination of self-interest and altruism. Both parties typically want to get something out of the relationship; and as researchers, we want good access and the ability to engage in a way that will enable theory building. However, in organizational ethnography we may also be interested in helping to make what we would see as improvements in the situation. We are not neutral about how we 'leave things behind' at the end of an engagement. This relates both to utilitarian aspects of the friendship in which the relationship serves mutual needs and to the aspiration that relationships should be more than merely self-serving. However, as was pointed out above, friendships have a temporal nature. In research settings this is usually explicit, as there will be an agreement (even if relatively informal) on the terms and conditions of the research engagement, and this will usually include an envisaged end-point. There is, therefore, an awareness and even an expectation that this sort of relationship may well be time-bound.

During the audition and testing-out phase, in addition to utilitarian questions of how useful each might be to the other are questions of the extent to which we share a view of the world and approach to work and research. How do we see our roles? What are the things we ought to do (and ought not to do)? In the case of engaged research, this includes a subjectivist perception of the roles of researcher and research participant (as opposed to the objectivist detached view in which the researcher ought not to get too close to the research subject).

During the engagement phase, the friendship is being lived. In addition to the highlighted questions in phases one and two, at this stage questions for the researcher can arise concerning: to what extent should I support my friend – am I also a political ally? How far should I go in questioning my friend's view of things? How far should I go in trying to

influence and change my friend's behaviour? How much should I try to influence other people's perceptions of my friend? In short, there are a series of questions relating to power and influence – how far should I follow my friend's influence and how far should I try to influence my friend? Lastly, there is often a tacit question of whether or not we agree on what it means to be friends, as expressed in our attitudes and behaviours.

During the separation phase there is an overall question of whether or not I am acting reasonably. This incorporates the concern that my friend and I might not have the same view that the relationship has run its course: is one perceived as leaving before the other is ready? It also includes the question of whether the departure is effected appropriately. Is each party following the expected norms of friendship in this regard? Lastly, there is the question of balance, in terms of residual social obligations: does either owe anything to the other?

Although the questions raised here are not exclusive to particular phases of the friendship, our experience is that they usually have particular relevance in particular phases as the relationship grows and declines. The Table summarises the phases and some of the questions that might be expected to arise in each one.

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Tales from the field

The following two illustrative examples are derived from the research experiences of two of the authors and are narrated from the researcher's perspective. They trace contrasting experiences through the four relationship phases identified above, analyzing some of the ethical questions that arise. The stories were initially told by the researcher who was directly involved, and subsequent analysis was conducted by the authoring team.

Research Setting One: Science

Phase I. Invitation and Relationship Formation

I began my relationship with a particular organization – the 'Lead Institution' - as a competitor: the 'Lead Institution' had lost an earlier competitive tender to the organization that employed me. However, even during that 'competitive' phase, I made an effort to

modify the relationship with the Lead Institution from competitor to potential collaborator as the project we had won through the tender depended on key inputs from the Lead Institution. There was some complex stagecraft at that time. On my side, I sought to present myself not as the victorious competitor, but rather as a neutral contractor. On their side, the Lead Institution managers gave the appearance of public-spirited cooperation without delivering much in the way of actual information. Their occasional brusque rudeness about the (much smaller) company by which I was employed was perhaps characteristic of the coldness of relations at that time.

Nevertheless, I was interested in the Lead Institution's likely lead role in a programme to develop Science Networks – an area of management practice central to the doctorate I was pursuing on a part-time basis. It was at least partially for that reason that I took considerable pains to develop collaborative relationships with key managers in the Lead Institution. An example of the kind of actions undertaken to recast relationships was that I gave the senior manager from the Lead Institution the opportunity to comment on a report for the project. Whilst this voluntary action made the completion of the competitive project a little more time consuming, it gave the Lead Institution the opportunity to forestall any major embarrassments or inconveniences in the report which might have impacted on their reputation or strategic position in later projects.

This action of opening up the report therefore helped in two ways. Firstly, it gave the impression that I was *not* trying to engage in developing competitive advantage at their expense. Secondly, it meant that the senior manager took an active interest in the report – and could see that it was of a good standard, since very few changes were suggested by him. The relationship investments seemed to pay off, as the Lead Institution engaged my firm as a sub-contractor when the Science Networks contract was awarded to them.

Analysis. At this phase of the relationship, friendship had not yet begun. The question of how helpful each party can be to the other arises. From the researcher's perspective, there is potential self-interest in developing a relationship with the Lead Institution, and so he is careful not to undertake actions which could alienate the managers in the Lead Institution. He makes an 'offering' to them by revealing the report, and this is stepping beyond what would normally be done in the circumstances. They respond in a reciprocal fashion; and hence, there is a degree of openness in addressing the question 'how should we engage with each other'.

Phase II. Momentary Auditions and Testing Out the Friendship

Making myself at home in the research situation was partially deliberate, through sharing enough of my personal background to let my new collaborators see that we had a common history in the same niche area of the natural sciences, something that was not obvious to them from our earlier, competitive, business interactions. Our shared background as professionals in a particular area of science was something of a surprise for the manager in the Lead Institution, and my ability to join in technical conversations was a key moment of change in the relationship. Having passed a momentary audition by means of our shared professional training, I was, from then on, treated as “one of us”. Discussions about the project were framed to include much more scientific content and dialogue. It seemed that being able to identify myself as a scientist – like them – caused me to be regarded as an insider, and many barriers were lowered.

I also made the most of my position as the nominal expert within my firm on the processes of collaboration,. This was important as managing the collaboration would be central to the success of the Science Networks project. However, whilst I was the academic ‘expert’ in this field, it is fair to say others in the firm could probably have undertaken the same collaborative process work at an acceptable standard. My interest in maintaining an expert position was due to the legitimacy it provided for me in the networks I was researching. Emphasising my personal expertise made the Lead Institution managers more likely to ask for my personal involvement, rather than looking for generic support from another member of the firm.

Whilst I had done a lot of work to fit in with and appear useful to the Lead Institution, relationships were further deepened by the serendipitous realisation that the manager and I had a longstanding mutual friend. Although I didn’t *really* get on with this third party, the stories we swapped about him helped to make me a part of the social circle – not just the scientific community – within the Lead Institution. This, however, took conversations beyond a task-orientation into more personal areas that held forth the potential of shared connections.

Analysis. During this phase of the research relationship, acclimatisation entailed the taking and enacting of a role (being a scientist) along with others for whom being a scientist was

an important part of their self-identity. Self-interest was still being pursued in the sense of making sure that there was good research access to gain data for a Ph.D.; however, the relationship went beyond the utilitarian. In answer to the question 'how close should we get?' there was a testing out of whether or not we liked mutual acquaintances. Often this is a risky moment, but agreement (or simulated agreement) regarding the acquaintance signalled the perseverance of relationship building and an increasing closeness (particularly when compared to the initial competitive stance between the researcher and the manager in Lead Institution).

Phase III. Engagement

Having seemingly been established as a member of the scientific community at the Lead Institution and luckily been able to develop deeper friendship relations, I seemed to be called upon to fulfil my duties as a 'good citizen'. For example, I was asked to join a national committee dealing with a niche area of science, at the request of the senior manager from the Lead Institution. This added some depth to my study of science networks, but it also made me fearful of exposing the limits of the currency of my scientific awareness. Whilst this exposure never actually occurred, I was also conscious that I was getting embedded a little more than was comfortable, partly because the relationship had the potential to develop greater depth than I was seeking and partly because of the risk of 'unmasking' as less expert than I appeared to be.

At the same time, I actually liked and respected the people from the Lead Institution whom I worked with and found myself not wanting to let them down in the committee work, despite it being rather a strain. There was some confusion developing in my mind as to whether my principle responsibilities should be concerned with the advancement of management research or with my new committee role supporting the natural sciences. I was beginning to 'go native' in the sense that I was increasingly engaged principally in participation and less in observation. For example, I was concerned with the *content* of decisions in the committee and less with the social processes that framed and enabled the decisions.

Analysis. During this phase of the research relationship there are questions of how far the friends should influence each other and what constitutes friendship as expressed through attitude and behaviour. In this example, the researcher starts to feel a degree of discomfort as he is influenced to take on a position of responsibility which in turn gives him some influence. The researcher feels that he ought to take on the committee work as the offer

was made in friendship and it would be an unfriendly act to reject the opportunity. In addition, there was some self-interest operating as the position offered further useful research access. There was a degree of altruistic activity in which self-interest was very secondary to the concern for shared goals. The relationship had moved beyond the stage of regular auditions to each side coming to rely on, and act in the interests of, the other.

Phase IV. Separation

The responsibility dilemma was eventually resolved in a rather dramatic fashion – I quit my consultancy job and took on a full time academic research position – and explained the move to the managers at the Lead Institution, who were of course aware of the research interests I had been trying to advance on a part-time basis. On reflection, I think that I was becoming rather cynical about the impact of consultancy work, and I was also not convinced that it was appropriate for me to be working on standards committees in the natural sciences – neither my interests nor abilities really supported either of these endeavours. I sought to make the change easier for the Lead Institution and my consultancy employers by taking a colleague from the consultancy firm along to my final series of meetings. During this time I gradually withdrew and allowed my colleague to take the lead in interactions with the managers at the lead institution. My erstwhile colleague is still involved with the Lead Institution, but for me, as the work connections have stopped, the friendships have also faded and contact has reduced to almost nothing.

Analysis. At this phase there was an effort to act reasonably. There was no real question that the researcher should remain in the situation, and the experience related to the notion of the declining friendship as Nietzsche's 'boats from the harbour' follow routes to different tasks. Both sides can regard this as legitimate because it is not simply choosing no longer to be friends, but rather perceiving an 'external' cause for separation – in a sense both parties could read the situation as if the new tasks had dictated the parting. This makes the separation much easier than attributing it to 'internal' causes (e.g., 'I no longer like you').

Research Setting Two: Art

The organization that provides the second illustration is in the Creative Industries sector. Its main 'products' are international music festivals, which run each year, and running three large and complex concert venues in which classical and popular concerts are staged.

Phase I. Invitation and Relationship Formation

One of the international festivals was, in general, perceived to be highly successful. It had a world-wide reputation and generated large audiences and a significant boost to tourism. Senior management, however, had some concerns about how the festival was being run and were worried that there was the potential for problems to occur. I was (and remain) friends with a senior manager who asked for some informal help. The plan was that I would provide him an external perspective on the needs of the managers and the organization and see how things were 'really' going in order to understand what 'might' go wrong. I agreed to do some interviews and focus groups to help diagnose the problems. Part of the reason for my agreement to undertake this initial stage of what became a much bigger research project was our friendship, but I also had a research interest in the area. We agreed that although I would not be paid for the work, I would be able to use the data for research purposes. I was introduced to the Chief Executive and other members of the organization and felt quite an affinity with them.

Friendship was operating at two levels in this case. In part, there was an engagement between established friends, and there was also the introduction to new friendships. These introductions were mediated by the first friendship. Hence, people's reactions to me were relative to their opinions and alliances with my friend, the senior manager. In some cases this led to expectations of shared values and interests, and in others, a degree of suspicion.

Analysis. This first phase of research relationship was based on the idea that the parties could be helpful to each other. There was overt mutual interest, but even if there had not been much interest, the researcher would have helped out because of the friendship. However, he would have helped out to a lesser degree, hence self-interest was present along with an altruistic concern for his friend.

Phase II. Momentary Auditions and Testing the Friendship

The interviews and focus groups were fun to do. People were dedicated to the cultural mission of the company and they were interesting people. The problem I discovered related to complex constructions and the sense that various parties were making of each other. As a result of these ways of thinking, people had different priorities. Although they were aware of differences between them, it was difficult for them to see the overall picture or to see why some of the others appeared to be opposed to taking what, for them, seemed obvious steps forward. This was combined with, and amplified by, strong in-group communications and

weak inter-group communication. Within the festivals organizing team there were strong friendships that had lasted years and which had an impact on how people related professionally. However, their relationships with other parts of the organization, such as Finance, Staging and Box Office, were less close. This introduced certain dilemmas for me. To appear to be too close to one side could reduce the possibility of getting open views and information from the other.

The situation was fascinating from a theoretical perspective. From a practical perspective it was solvable. Many organizations manage to function with this sort of irritation, but it was worth trying to improve matters. At a personal level, I developed new friendships in the company, particularly with the CEO and with a middle manager. Momentary auditions were particularly important when my friend was absent. Being sufficiently knowledgeable about music was important. However, having a background in musical *performance* was crucial as it enabled me to ask questions about preparation and performance processes that made it clear that I knew what I was talking about and that I shared their understandings of these processes. I became increasingly interested in the type of music they were promoting, attending performances and becoming a consumer of this particular cultural product. This inevitably led to a deepening of the research relationships as well as the personal ones. I also became very interested in their mission and wanted to help. A short report was produced for the senior management.

Analysis. During this phase the parties were discovering similarities with each other and starting to develop closer relations. The researcher was not detached from the issues although a report was produced that sought to interpret the views of others. The closeness was developing across work boundaries as socialisation outside work and shared musical interests were forming.

Phase III. Engagement

Following initial problem diagnosis, there was a lull in research activity. During this time a high profile problem occurred, and this motivated the senior management to investigate more thoroughly. They gained a grant to fund the research work and embarked upon a deeper engagement. I spent a lot of time in the organization observing, being part of the management group processes and also interviewing various organization members. I was accepted in such settings partly because I had achieved the status of 'friend' in earlier

interactions. It is also highly unlikely that a newcomer to the conversation would have been welcomed during this turbulent time.

The actions coming out of the investigation process involved me in running some workshops, which meant that I had to play a somewhat detached role. More significantly, I was involved in assisting managerial decision making about organizational structure, people's roles and reporting relationships. This meant that some people felt that I acted in a managerial rather than a friendly way. Some people felt angry with me because of this, whilst for others, my standing up and taking these actions led to an increased level of trust and friendship as we had 'come through a difficult time together'. In falling out with some friends, I fell in with others. This intense period of engagement lasted for about four months. It became a dominant part of my life, but it was also significant for the organization as they delayed various decisions and put things on hold whilst the investigation was underway. I was being paid for the work now, but I actually did far more than I was being paid for because of my friendship and personal connection with the people. At one level I felt that I had a personal responsibility for trying to make things work. The process was not one of writing a report and walking away. Rather, I became part of the management team, albeit a semi-detached member.

Analysis. In this phase of the friendship the researcher was strongly influenced by research participant friends in carrying the investigation beyond the agreed bounds and in seeking to mediate to produce a constructive outcome. The research participants were also influenced by the researcher and in subsequent conversations discussed how the changes made at the time have had an impact on what they do and how they see themselves. Equally, the experience and relationships have had an impact on the researcher and led to a redirection of his research focus. Being friends meant going beyond the normal role boundaries of researcher/investigator and research participant in time/effort and emotion/attachment.

Phase IV. Separation

Eighteen months from the start, major changes had been made, and I was no longer officially engaged in the organization. However, I couldn't just walk away. I remain friends with the CEO and the senior manager, and I am also in touch with the middle manager and give informal advice on how to take things forward in implementing the changes. I am still interested in them and their product. I am also fascinated by how the relationships are working out. We look out for opportunities to work together, and I have been back to the

organization to do some 'how is it going now?' follow-up sessions. I do not really feel that I am disengaged from them.

Analysis. Although a stage came when the series of activities initially agreed came to an end and there was a 'signing off' of activities, there was a deliberate effort to maintain contact, and subsequently, further opportunities were taken/created to work together. It is arguable that in this example there is not friendship separation. The question of whether either party owes something to the other does not arise, at least not in the mind of the researcher. Answering the question 'am I acting reasonably' instead focuses on maintaining the friendship beyond the work and research relationship.

Concluding Discussion

In this chapter we aimed to elucidate an aspect of engaged research: friendship. We described four phases through which friendships could pass: coming into being; passing through a testing phase; development; and finally decline. We have linked these phases to the extant literature on friendship and to a series of ethical questions that reflect both altruism and self-interest.

We then described two of our experiences of research, using the phase framework as a template for characterizing them. In our reading of the illustrations, both went through phases one to three, but it is arguable that only the first illustration went through all four phases. As the friendships moved through the phases it was notable that attributed status, shared interest and mutually oriented action occurred. The exertion of influence on and for each other also occurred. In our illustrations actors on both sides of the friendships carried out actions that went beyond a strict definition of their functional roles, and as Leach (1982) would expect a degree of trust and emotional bonding developed. However, in illustration one, as Nietzsche (1977) would predict, there was a drifting apart as different tasks took those who had been in friendly relations in separate directions.

Along with mutuality and altruism, the relationships were useful for the friends, and there were utilitarian outcomes for all concerned. This does not detract from the friendships; in fact, we were glad that we could be of use to our friends. Therefore, we argue that whilst the utilitarian aspect of friendship might become an irritation, this is probably more likely

when there is a lack of balance between the friends. However, there were times when there was an appearance of balance rather than genuine equity; in particular, there was a degree of faking and fudging in the build up of the relationships. For example, the impression that there was greater agreement on the character of a former colleague than was actually the case was used as a way of passing an audition in illustration one. For many this might be seen as a normal part of lubricating the wheels of friendship, and it is not necessarily problematic as long as it does not imply that disagreements are tacitly forbidden, particularly on important matters.

The intention in proposing the phased model of research friendships was not to argue that all such relationships would pass through all four phases, in order and with no reversals. Indeed, one of our own illustrations did not pass through all of the phases. Rather, the intention was to provide a way of reflecting on the experience of friendship in research such that both researchers and research friends can be more aware of what is going on and decide how they want to answer the ethical questions associated with their experience of the relationship at any particular phase. We hope that this will be a useful reflective tool for those who are serious about pursuing engaged research.

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Table. The phases of friendship and ethical questions that can arise.

Invitation and relationship formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ how helpful can we be to each other? ▪ How should we engage with each other (e.g. how long might this relationship last)?
Momentary auditions and testing out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How close should we get?
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How far should I follow my friend's influence? ▪ How far should I try to influence for my friend? ▪ Do we agree what friendship means in attitude and behaviour?
Separation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Am I acting reasonably? ▪ Is there appropriate balance between us?