People with learning disabilities’ accounts of friendship

Thesis

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People With Learning Disabilities’ Accounts Of Friendship

Volume Three

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Open University for the degree of Doctor of Clinical Psychology

July 2000

19 989 Words

SALOMONS
CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
References


Appendices
Appendix One

Research Diary

July 1999
Managed to get the proposal in early enough for it to go through September ethics.

August 1999
Having a nightmare with ethics as they are unsure whether they will even accept my form for consideration without my supervisor being in attendance at the meeting.

Found out just before I went on holiday that they would consider my proposal on the 22nd September.

September 1999
The ethics meeting was unpleasant, hadn’t realised how personal it would feel to have other people criticising my project.

Why am I having the comparison group? I keep struggling with this. Using discourse analysis is also confusing as no one seems to be willing to state out how you do it.

How am I going to recruit the non-learning disabilities sample.

October 1999
Following Research In Progress conference was concerned that my comparison group would be another disadvantaged group. Talked through with Jan and realised that this needs recognising, but the fact of the matter is that many people who are for instance unemployed do mix with others in the same predicament, whereas for people with learning disabilities this may not be the case. The other difficulty will be matching for living arrangements, as for example it is not common to find two men who live together.

Aware I am more interested in identifying influence of stigma that anything else so that I must be careful to attend also to the theoretical stuff. Maybe I should be exploring more about impact of stigma from research and theory as well, instead of just basing this on the theory of friendship formation.

Piloted interview schedule on two friends. Helpful but not hopeful!!

1st November 1999
Piloted the interview schedule last week. First impressions indicated it went well, but I feel like I’m terrible at interviewing. The good thing that piloting did was bring alive the project. In that one meeting I realised how much it has simply become a piece of academic work, when actually this is about people’s lives and difficulties.

As the interview started I found that I was buying into the participants cheery nature and felt really pleased when he could identify a number of friends. His communication skills were good and this led me into the trap (because I wanted to believe it) that he understood what I was saying, when on transcription it became clear that a lot of what
he has said is in direct response to my very obvious leads. Also I can tell that as the
interview went on I became more and more uncomfortable about talking with him as it
was clear that his definition of a friend and mine were at odds. I knew that this was
possible as this was what interested me, but the reality of it really upset me. When I
got home I felt unhappy about the whole thing really. The enormity of the how little
contact with people the participant actually had struck me. The fact that he identified
as a friend someone who he had helped load a lorry once was quite shocking. In
addition despite having read about the fact they may want to become friends with you
as an interviewer I felt totally floored when he did say this, as well as when he talked
about people calling him names. Since transcribing I have been through many emotions
as to whether I will actually be able to obtain any data from this methodology but I
think with some changes to the way in which I conduct the interview this will be
possible. The hardest bit is going to stop leading and stop being a therapist.

After talking about the pilot with other trainees I wandered whether he had felt the
same as me, happy whilst interviewing and sad later on. I expect it is uncommon for
people to want more information from him about what he does with his friends and
how often he sees them; so rarely is the nature and extent of his social contact exposed
in this rather humiliating way. I expect usually if asked, simply listing people as friends
works – it would make people/professionals happy to hear a list of people. I will phone
Community Support Service (CSS) Team Manager later to talk about ways to deal
with this also. Tonight I am going to go through the transcript and think about what
the issues really are, what do I want – I got a lot of data that I do not need, and the
process of the interview is central to understanding the information I got.

Realised the importance of piloting, has made the project come alive again which is
good but also seems to have highlighted a number of difficult issues around
interviewing people with mild learning disabilities. Feel anxious not to be disrespectful,
not to have either to low or too high expectations of them and the importance of
realising that they are possibly going to find some of what I raise difficult to talk about
for a number of reasons including understanding, and the personal nature of the topic. I
had got it into my head this was not an noxious topic but for people with learning
disabilities it is deeply personal and touches the issue of stigma and difference for them
in a very real way.

Later – I was so confusing in the interview, I ask the same question three different
ways before I’ve even given him a chance to answer. His understanding of time “how
long...” is limited but I didn’t seem to notice. Obtained loads of unnecessary stuff (half
the transcript) about his friends – although this was a good process for me to go
through as it was in doing this I realised the huge assumptions I had been making
about their relationships. Despite the fact I had become interested in this because of
their isolation, I too couldn’t bare to actually acknowledge how limited their networks
are and how frustrating this must be for them. I know not every one will be the same
but I need to be very aware of this when doing the actual interviews. His answers are
very short- is this going to make any analysis difficult – I’ve got 15 pages of transcript
I expect if I worked it out the majority of it is me twittering on in a confused way.
Instead of staying with some of the things he raised or having the guts to ask him
about how little he saw his friends now I avoided the issue. Maybe this is good, maybe
it would have hurt him if I had delved deeper. Was I clear enough also about the
referral route if needed – it may have been helpful to say to him (although I didn’t
know at the time as I was still cheerful myself) at the end that talking to me may stir up
things in him and that he could ask to talk to someone, including myself, about this.

Having just reviewed the interview schedule I’m aware that I hardly stuck to it in the
pilot. Maybe it would be helpful if I did?! Maybe not, but looking at it now with the
experience of the pilot in my mind I am aware that I was so anxious about things like
the tape recorder, my growing awareness of the naivety with which I had approached
the task, and how wrong I was from the first question spending over half the time
talking about who his friends were that I didn’t stick to the schedule at all?
It might be helpful to pilot again, but I don’t really want to!! Time constraints. I guess
I’ll have to try and think of this as an unfolding process and its inevitable that the more
you do the easier it becomes. But sticking to the schedule may help me stop leading
and reframing. I think without the first question it might be a lot better as I clearly
remember feeling I was taking too long over who his friends were and then the tape
started to run out and I became preoccupied with how I was exposing his friendships
as brief (to me anyway) etc.. It all got a bit complicated… but I guess that is the value
of a pilot.

I know that a semi-structured interview is supposed to be open ended etc.. but I think
there is some value in having quite clear questions for people with learning disabilities,
otherwise they may tend to be short lived. I guess for each person I am going to have
to find a way to establish how well they are understanding me, and although it is good
to be led by them I must actually ask the questions I have in order to obtain the
necessary information. Once I have established they are understanding me then what
they do with these questions is of interest – if they avoid or acquiesce then that in itself
is interesting. I remain a little uncertain of how I will identify stigma and awareness of
difference in their answers through analysis? I guess this is the bit about what they
don’t say and how they structure their responses? I think I need quite a lot in the
Introduction about what is known about the impact of stigma and belonging to a
devalued group. How might I expect it to effect what they say as well as effect the
actual theoretical models of friendship formation?

Have just spoke to CSS Team Manager apparently ___ phoned the evening of the
interview and said how much he had enjoyed taking part. I do not want to become
overly sceptical of how cheery he was but I am concerned that this overt “everything’s
okay” attitude is masking a great deal of loneliness. I do not want to be raising
people’s expectations about what I can offer. I guess the cheerfulness is a way of
passing as sociable… look up much more on passing as a means of fitting in. Arranged
to do a check later on the day of the interview to see if they are okay, and to reassert
at the end of interview what they can do if they find they feel a little down later on
after having talked about things with me.

To do:
What is known about the impact of stigma and belonging to a devalued group, how
might I expect it to effect what they say as well as effect the actual theoretical models
of friendship formation?

Plan how to respond to comments about my being friends with them?
Look up much more on “passing” as a means of fitting in.

8th November 1999
Its amazing how I think of things to put in the diary when I’m driving home and then can’t remember them when I get home. From the conversation with Anne last week discourse analysis sounds a little clearer although she looked amazed that I was also going to attempt to do a comparative discourse analysis. Have just spoken to CSS Team Manager and mentioned to her that I may not be interviewing a control group and she felt that there does need to be some means of drawing a comparison. I think that if I set the moral code from mainstream literature and Goffman’s ideas on passing and Stigma that may provide sufficient for a thorough analysis of their experiences of friendship. Need to be much clearer about the literature on stigma and identity as I think that I am growing in understanding of how I want to relate to this within the analysis. Have to be clear that I am not just avoiding the comparison group because I am nervous about recruiting them.

18th November 1999
Interviewed Sue today. She talked a lot about her ex-boyfriend and her concept of friendship seemed to include more intimate relationships. I felt that during the interview she became quite sad and reminiscent about what had happened to her relationship. Whilst she presented as out going and socially skilled she, during the course of talking, also expressed some very negative feelings about herself. As all attempts to explore this further, or inquiries about whether she was getting support for these issues were skirted around somehow by Sue – I guess it is these issues I want to look at in terms of how she manages to construct an account without getting too in touch with difficult emotions. It left me feeling that she felt very alone with her problems. At first I had felt as if Sue was someone you would feel you knew quite quickly then it gradually became apparent that actually she was very select about how far she would let you access “her” in any real way. Towards the end of the interview she turned on the TV, I did carry on to the end as we had nearly finished but I felt this was a clear message that she did not want to talk about any more difficult issues. I feel these interviews are going to be extremely challenging.

25th November 1999
Interviewed Paul this morning. He was a very open person, mentioning quite early on about the problems he and his house mates have with the neighbours. Paul had quite a marked speech impediment which I struggled with, and was surprised about how uncomfortable I was about keep asking him to repeat things – I guess this is something to look at in terms of the two of us managing his difficulties during the conversation. He was so sociable, and then when I listened back to the tape he was also very good at going off course – another management strategy?. I am wondering now how much he understood, when at the time he appeared to follow very well. It is beginning to amaze me, on close inspection, the level of skills involved in engaging in some way in normal interaction. But then again maybe I am being unfair maybe the level of understanding is fine but the issues are difficult – how can I really understand what it is like to be a man
with Downs syndrome living in a neighbourhood with people who vandalise your home.

Later the same day went to meet . She was extremely suspicious of the whole process, and whilst she was happy to have a cup of tea with me she declined to take part in the project. I was actually relieved to find that she was able to be so outspoken about her wish not to participate.

December 1999

Had meeting with supervisor, where we really brainstormed about what the focus of this ever-developing project is! I am clearly more interested in experience of relationships in light of stigma and although it would be great to do a comparative analysis of discourse of two groups we agreed to just focus upon the people with learning disabilities. I have to double the number of people with learning disabilities to eight but not worry about recruiting a comparison group. The rationale for this was largely the shift to focus more on whether there is evidence of how they manage stigma within their style of speech and language use. Maybe if this was a PhD I would have had the time to do such a comparison but it does not seem imperative to address my particular research questions. They are now refined to focus upon the impact of stigma on how they construct accounts of their experiences of friendship.

2nd December 1999

This morning I went and interviewed Andy. He is an older gentleman living in warden monitored flats for older people. He was delightful to interview as he was very open about issues relating to having a learning disability, he was also reflective about how he has changed as he has got older. I was very concerned however during the interview when it became apparent that he seemed to think I was setting up a group to facilitate the development of friendship. He was also very direct in asking who else he knew who had taken part and mentioned names of people he knew I had been in contact with. I was very clear about not setting up a group, but was left feeling very guilty as to how I had given him this impression. He was such a sociable man, who genuinely seemed settled in his new home that I came away from the interview feeling fine, and was as sure as is possible that whilst he had spoken of difficult issues that he has now reached a time when he feels validated by his friends in the warden monitored flats. I did find that I was left thinking about his relations when he was younger. He also spoke of other people I had interviewed as people he had fallen out with and a time when he had been bullied.

9th December 1999

This evening I went to interview Mark. This was the worst interview so far – possibly just in terms of my feelings. I felt unsafe at times, and very concerned about why he thought I was there. As a result at times the interview was hurried and it was definitely the shortest so far. However some of the issues he mentioned were very relevant although he was defensive about anything that might be missing from his relationships – something for the analysis. Actually it’s probably very wrong to say defensive, what do I know – perhaps he really is happy with his lot, its not for me to judge. Anyway I
hope when I transcribe it, it wasn’t as bad as I feel it was now. All being well that’s four interviews done!!

Transcribing is a complete nightmare – it takes three times as long as you think it is going to and as some of the people I have spoken to do not speak very clearly it is becoming apparent that I have missed crucial cues during the interview. As when transcribing you can replay and replay again something which is unclear – and hear the relevance of what they are saying. It is extremely distressing as I expect this is not an uncommon experience for them in day to day interactions and I am beginning to get a much clearer idea as a result, of how impoverished their social lives are and just how much they defend against this being apparent, and how happy I am to go along with “everything’s fine” image.

5

Th January 2000

Transcribing is so embarrassing! But it is making me think about how much I am also caught up in cultural and social attitudes towards people with learning disabilities. I think I’m terribly ‘pro’ them and their rights yet the way I respond to them in the moment can be excruciatingly patronising and defensive, such as when I tell Paul that he speaks beautifully which just wasn’t true he actually had quite a severe speech impediment. Its like I can’t help but deny the difference: is that their discomfort or mine or both? These are the kinds of things that I think (pray) I can pick up via discourse analysis because these are all the things that must effect their abilities to interact in friendships. I think the analysis of what friendship means to them may reflect that their use of this word is very different from mainstream, but there’s some sense of passing it off because we expect them too. I don’t know what I’d do if one of them actually said to me I haven’t got any real friends. I’m sure I’d panic and try and make it all nice. This is what I hope discourse analysis will allow me to look at, these processes. I hope this is because then each interview gives me plenty of material, whereas if it’s got to be all them then I’m stuck!!

6

Th January 2000

Have realised that I have not informed the ethics about the change in the project. Cannot get hold of Jan today, must check with her what I should do. Also completely worried about the fact that I cannot get hold of anyone at the CSS from whom I am recruiting. I know that CSS Team Manager has been off and may still not be back, but I can’t get hold of anyone other than that answer phone which cuts me off!

Later - -have spoken to CSS and lined up some more interviews!! Have also drafted a letter to L-Rec chairman for Jan to see about the changes to the project, i.e. not having a comparison group. Following the last interview I have decided to be much clearer about how I am introduced to the participants. It was not Mark’s fault that I felt unnerved as he actually did nothing wrong it was more that I gained an awareness that I was seeing people in a way which I would never find acceptable for clinical work: and I was doing this all because I am so keen to get the interviews done. Have discussed this openly with CSS and am happy.
13\textsuperscript{th} January 1999

Interviewed today. She lives with someone else I have interviewed and also was someone that Andy mentioned a lot during his interview. She didn’t mention him at all. She was very shy and is clearly upset about living so far away from her family – I was also very uncomfortable about making any direct reference to learning disabilities and it took me a long time to get to it. I was unsure why that was but felt that I had rushed things because it was uncomfortable for her. I find this whole process so unpleasant – friendship is clearly a difficult issue it is not just a simple topic of inquiry and it seems in asking about it I touch on many difficult issues. I want to try and include this interview though, not because it is the best – as it clearly did not generate a wealth of content but I think the process of this one was fascinating. Also I always said that it was their coping methods and defences I was interested in as I was obviously not going to get to (or want to get to) the deeper issues associated with having a learning disabilities. It would seem unkind to just not include what someone has to say because they weren’t really open with me. I also had felt more confident about doing the interview and I am very curious about the extent of my discomfort. I spent some time checking out with whether she wanted me to raise any of the issues she had spoken of during the interview (as I have with everyone, but for her it seemed particularly important) but she laughed and said no she was getting ample support. She has a very gentle nature and yet again I am left hoping that she is ok. Her speech was very unclear however, and I am not sure whether it will be possible to transcribe or glean anything from the transcript – I’ll show this to Jan.

20\textsuperscript{th} January 1999

Interviewed Penny this evening. This interview made me think a lot about how much of the literature stresses their need for social skills training etc etc. How conveniently such an argument locates the problems within the individual. Penny, had excellent and very appropriate social skills – that is until I started to interview her. It is becoming quite apparent that not only has it been harder to identify (for the CSS Team) potential females who would take part, but also that those I have seen have in general been more defensive than the men. I have wondered if it is because I am female, but also does it reflect wider issues of gender differences in friendship, its importance and meaning. When I think of my own experiences, I rate friendship as extremely important, but for much more than just a social life. Whereas speaking to men I know it is clear that being able to speak openly about private issues is much less important to them. I know this is a chronic generalisation, but I think I must consider these issues when doing the analysis. Also I must try and find some literature on gender differences in friendship. I tried before and didn’t find much so gave up rather quickly – look again!!

I felt that Penny was eager to finish being interviewed, and that for her having lived most of her life with her mother who died last year, the whole issue of developing friends was rather current and painful for her. Again she did a wonderful job of trying to make me feel everything was alright during the interview, but at the end I went in to the lounge area to meet with her support worker and arrange another interview and she would not come in. Penny lives in a warden controlled flat and spent much of the interview talking about “mingling in”, then it seemed from this very brief incident in the lounge that mingling in isn’t as easy as she would have had me believe during the
interview. I know this observation at the end of the data collection is going to influence how I look at what she has said - so I must keep it highlighted.

Saturday 22nd January 1999

Broke every rule today and interviewed on a Saturday! Almost as soon as I met it was clear that he has a dual diagnosis of schizophrenia. I feel this means that I will not be able to include this interview. Not for any more sinister reason than he was quite clear that his biggest problem in making friends is related to the paranoia he suffers with as part of his illness. It was a shame as he was very articulate. Although again I must say that this was greatly reduced during the interview. I was with him and his key worker just chatting for about 20 to 30 minutes both pre and post interview and there was (to me) a marked difference in how freely he felt able to talk. Yet again I question how the most successful interview could be achieved - I keep trying to think about how I would feel being interviewed about something quite private by a stranger. I am sure that I too would be very defensive, and resistant to talking openly about things. In Jahoda's study he spent a great deal of time developing rapport with participants before interviewing them. I guess there are pros and cons of doing that but I just feel uncomfortable about being so prying - even though consent has been obtained I still feel like I am in a powerful position and it feels very uncomfortable.

seemed fine about what he had discussed and as I left was organising with his support worker to have a girlfriend over to visit him that evening.

27th January 1999

This morning went to interview . On arrival she was very clear that she did not want to take part as it would bring back too many painful memories for her. Again I was relieved that she could be so open and concerned that she seemed anxious about letting me down. I telephoned her support worker and left a message for him. I spent some time reassuring her that it was absolutely fine for her to say no to taking part, but as I was leaving she asked if she could see me again. I find this all rather heart breaking. I found myself thinking about why she might have wanted to see me again, and how she had interpreted my response no matter how appropriately I had tried to respond. I am very much looking forward to our peer supervision group next week, as it is exactly these sorts of things that I feel I need to talk through.

In contrast to this mornings experience I have interviewed Karen. This afternoon. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole interview. Not only because she was extremely talkative, very open, said some wonderful things about friendship and being “brain damaged” but also because she was really good company, interesting and amusing. She clearly enjoyed talking, and said as much also. She is recently married and this also gave an additional slant to some of the information. In some ways it made me feel a little better about some of the other interviews, in that I don’t think I did anything different I just think for Karen it was easier to be open. I would be interested as to why this is? She spoke at length about her family and it sounds as if she has always had frank information from them about what is different about her from her four sisters. Karen was the first person to ask me to speak to her key worker for some further support. The most difficult thing about the interview was a sense that she did not want it to stop. I question how much of a chance this lady has to talk about the impact of a
learning disabilities on her life. She spoke a lot about how difficult it had been for her father and her sister, also about how jealous she felt and how unfair life was. I got the sense that she would be able, and would like to work through some of these issues, and it was this that she was asking for additional support with. This may be a little personal for the diary but I think she raised some very important issues – and I guess what I'm saying relates to her eagerness to talk, and makes me question how much opportunity she gets.

I have now done eight interviews plus pilot, but have arranged last one (hopefully) for next week as I do not think I can use , because of his dual diagnosis. What ever happens I will stop after next weeks and catch up on transcribing, and then have a look at the data and see if I can use them all. I hope so, as although some have been better than others I think as I sit here now that they have all made some interesting points about the issues I am interested in.

Have sent draft method and intro. topic list to supervisor; meeting with her on 4.2 to discuss it and set more deadlines.

3rd February 2000

Have just got back from the “last” interview. I put it like that as I have enough interviews but I am not sure if I will be able to use all of them and may need to do one or two more, although obviously that is not ideal! And it makes me feel quite bad about excluding the voice of someone who had plenty to say - who am I or anyone else to say that theirs is not “good enough” to be included in my project.

Anyway this final interview went well I think. Tim was someone who was comfortable talking and gave his views well. He spoke predominantly about one very special friendship which clearly meant a great deal to him. My impression was that he is quite an emotional man, who is touched by many things. I don’t know if this right obviously, but his whole way of speaking seemed to represent this. So, naturally when he asked if he could be my friend, I yet again managed to get tongue tied, despite my efforts to practice a response and was left feeling clumsy and guilty, whilst he quickly tried to rectify what he was asking as if he was horrified that he had overstepped the mask. I do not think that any degree of preparation would really be able to resolve the angst attached to this situation. As a result despite feeling that the interview went well I came away feeling that he was either hurt or embarrassed or both. I am unsure of the best way of checking up on this, and making sure he is okay. It almost feels like a situation which is best left alone to prevent further discomfort – but I am unsure again of whether that is my wish or really my perception of his.

6th February 2000

Have been transcribing , which is the interview I am worried about having to replace. I remain very unsure of whether it is possible to use it or not due to the fact that was from another country and her speech was not totally clear. I did however cover all the areas with , and some interesting things were raised. I am sure part of my mixed feelings about using it are more about how crap I am
during the interview. As a result I can bear only to do it in very short periods of time — anyway I aim to get it done by Wednesday so I can start another on Thursday.

I have been reading Goffman’s book on Stigma. I came across this line: “It is said that if he is really at ease with his differentness, this will have an immediate effect upon normals, making it easier for them to be at ease with him in social situations. In brief the stigmatised individual is advised to accept himself as a normal person because of what others may gain in this way, and hence he himself during face to face interaction” (p.145). So does this mean their accounts will reflect their attempts to be normal as a learnt means of being accepted?

This immediately made me think of my interview with Karen on the 27/01/00. I was so pleased with how it went and really enjoyed talking to her and I think I was being blatant about the fact that this was because she was the most able or the least different. I am now left wondering if this is her way of coping with the difference — she has learnt to minimise it, be at home with herself in an explicit way, yet still preferring to remain indoors rather than go out to pubs for fear of having one of “her turns”, and still stating how jealous and upset she is about not being able to have a child. When she said these they didn’t hit with emotional content because I felt like I wasn’t talking to someone with a learning disability. Was she protecting me as Goffman says because this also serves to provide her with an optimum outcome?

3rd March 2000

As I get nearer to doing the actual analysis, I am aware that I haven’t really thought about where I am coming from in terms of views of friendship etc. I am aware that the very reason I was interested in this issue is in part because of the extreme importance in my own life that friendships have had. In the absence of close family etc etc they have taken on a very important role of support, emotional and practical. Furthermore, with my friends I have had some wonderful fun, and shared experiences. It is within these relationships that I feel I have learnt a lot about myself and mastered many of the diplomatic skills in being open and honest with people! The fact that the majority of my friendships stem back to when I was at ten or eleven at school and are of extreme importance to me indicates that I will have certain expectations about the calibre of these relationships. Getting to know people is a very important process for me and I am aware that at times in my life I have got to know people and then distanced myself from them (in a polite way!) because they are too different from, or more obviously because a lot of the interaction has been about them and I have taken on the role of “counsellor” to them which I did not feel was equal. I clearly therefore do have some form of criteria in my head about what is and what is not an acceptable or quality relationship and at the risk of conforming (!) my experience clearly does match much of the theoretical information that I have read about.

With regard to people with learning disabilities I am aware from the clinical experience I had as an assistant and on placement that I am particularly drawn to the needs of people with milder problems. The fact that many of them may have a more acute awareness of their difference and how they struggle with issues of managing this really interest me. My work with on placement was such an eye opener. I am aware that
this was a piece of brief psychodynamic therapy. The supervision received for this provided me with the beginnings of a whole new insight into some of the issues that could be influencing these people’s lives. I am sure that this will remain influential in terms of how I make sense of some of the processes that occur during the interview. I keep seeing Malan’s triangles in my mind when I think about their anxieties and defences! I will need to monitor this as I am actually doing an analysis of their language and not trying to formulate therapeutically for them all.

21st March 2000

Had a phone call from Jan yesterday, have to re-do an interview which is unsurprising but nonetheless a pain! Also managed to look at my timescale properly and realised that I’m supposed to have started my coding and analysis because I was thinking I could do that in April and May so last night started to try and do some coding only to find that it’s going to be a very very long piece of work but work becoming a little bit clearer. I think I need to do coding in terms of process as well as content sort of simultaneously. If I code it and think about the coding in terms of what they’re doing with their speech as well as what they’re actually saying, then I’m hoping it’ll highlight to me how they manage any difference in their experience – minimising it or whatever?

28th March 2000

Had a really really bad day today. Started to try and write my Introduction but suffering the worst writers block I’ve ever known, can’t seem to structure my thinking let alone my words on paper. Don’t quite understand why because I’ve done loads of reading and stuff but it feels like there’s too much to organise in my brain. Anyway hopefully it will get a little bit better tomorrow because at the moment I am feeling rather overwhelmed.

30th March 2000

Interviewed Ann today. She was great to interview and I really did feel that right now she is happy with her lot. She has developed close friendships with her support worker and another lady who is older. These seem to be protective, but then she really does seem to have had a very abusive past. Her little baby boy was lovely and she seemed really content with her husband and family life. The fact that she was quick to say she could talk to me easily was a little uncomfortable, as again it revealed how much I wanted to believe there was no difference between her and I. Then when she said that it was like the difference comes flooding back to me again. Anyway, that really is all of the interviews done now.

9th April 2000

Been coding all morning, trying to work out NUDIST, anyway have really got going on Mark’s interview and one of the first things he says is, when I ask what the word friendship means, he says “quite a lot” and I’ve written down as a preliminary coding “expected answer” and actually that’s terribly subjective. I don’t know maybe it is very important to him. I’m a bit perplexed as to how to code it. Anyway thought I’d better flag it up, as it highlights my assumptions about what friendship means to them.
12th April 2000

Have just watched TV documentary about people with learning disabilities living in a group home. What struck me as I watched it was the way in which the TV presenter and staff interacted with the residents. It reminded me of how a mother interacts with a child ‘as if’ what they are saying makes sense. This seemed to involve a great deal of mirroring what they said, typically by repeating it back to them in some way. By interacting in this way it seemed as if they were having ‘normal’ conversation, which they weren’t, but it protects both from having to acknowledge that neither understands what is being said. Overall child like language and intonation was used, probably unconsciously and certainly with the best of intentions. However, it came across that this was quite infantilising, yet also made the conversation more manageable for the residents. Is this them fitting with the staff as opposed to what they are actually capable of? It is so hard to unravel their difficulties and social processes and the psychological unconscious stuff that is inevitably going on for both staff and clients. Yet by interacting with them as a mother does to a child, intention and meaning is given to what they said – yet this inevitably can only be drawn from the ‘normal’ persons framework of language – the absence of shared meaning that some of what they say may get lost in the interpretation. Hmm – inherent difficulty; would it be possible to get round this in any way? I guess maybe if it was possible to be aware of how one gets drawn into interacting in this way with them.

17th April 2000 – what follows are thoughts whilst coding and analysing:

Andy consistently sets the agenda by cutting across a number of my questions, I don’t remember feeling irritated with him so it must have been part of how the natural flow was maintained, and in doing so the conversation appears to remain manageable for him.

One key theme for Andy is being able to ask for and obtain help in a safe environment where this is not pathologised. By being around other ‘normal’ elderly people with similar needs for assistance he feels less stigmatised when asking and receiving help. Feels safe now.

He is always positive even about difficult things - why? Is this a way of managing the account and the moment: keeping a distance from the actual pain he feels.

20th April 2000

It is striking how they want to know where someone lives as priority when getting to know someone. I wonder if this is what they want to know or one of the social niceties that they have learnt to use to engage in social interaction with people. I also wondered last night how important friendship is to people with learning disabilities. This is a bit controversial but I was wondering if they cannot easily admit to the fact that actually they have gained limited additional experience than that given by family and friends from them. Yet they sort of have to say they value them as the dominant thinking in this culture is that having a number of friends is good and this is upheld by other discourses which uphold beliefs about having friends means you’re popular. Yet I wonder if what they would like is to have their dependency needs met by
professionals who we all frown on them thinking as friends as they are paid staff and who wants to pay to have friends? So their discourse may be quashed because it is not good to a) not have friendships and b) think of people paid to care for you as friends.

Helpfulness is very important to Andy

Line 311 with Andy, he answers my question and skilfully changes the subject so that until you examine the transcript it isn't obvious that he is doing so in a way that enables the flow of interaction to continue. The subject is related loosely and definitely closely enough. Although I do shift the focus back to my question afterwards any awkwardness that could have been cause by him not understanding me is covered beautifully.

Andy is able to say things are difficult for people with learning disabilities because they are worried or nervous about what people might say but it is difficult for him to talk about this further when asked, and I do not press the issue, so I avoid this too.

Andy suggests that people with learning disabilities could help each other by coming together, is he advocating solidarity in numbers?

Throughout I ignore some of the confusion in his answers, again probably because despite his difficulties Andy is very good at presenting everything as OK

I've noticed that when Andy changes the subject for whatever reason I tend to follow him and sometimes not go back to what I was asking as if there was some recognition on my part that if I did pursue the issue I would reveal some aspect of his relationships that revealed they aren't quite as good as he makes them out to be

Lines 579-603 Andy talks about people pushing the buzzer to come in but I think he is talking about people playing knock down ginger with him, that is I make assumptions about him being the victim of teasing. I haven't coded this but it is of interest in terms of the assumptions I make about people with learning disabilities, that there is always some theme of them being vulnerable and picked on.

I've also noticed that most often my unclear questions relate somehow to his having a learning disability, as if it remains a difficult topic to broach. The result however is that as the question is unclear he finds it difficult to answer which I expect I have put down to his difficulty with the topic instead of his difficulty understanding me. So I have been attending to information to support my idea that they find having a learning disability hard, when in fact it is possibly evidence of my difficulty or embarrassment that he is learning disabled and I am not.

Neither Mark or Andy could identify when people come to them for help

Line 697, Andy says his friendships are equal, yet he classes staff and warden as friends because he talks to them about problems and yet no one comes to him for help. Conflicting statements.

22nd April 2000
Already Paul has conflicted himself; he starts by saying he has loads of friends and a special friend, and then very shortly after says that what is missing is a best friend and that he hasn't got many friends in this area.

Just as with Andy it is clear that people are spoken of in terms of where they live and a lot of the description of relationships is based around meeting through segregated services.

Line 89 Paul does it again he refers to having many friends when he has already stated he needs more. However have just thought that what he actually said was he needs more near by to help out with the problems with the neighbours, so maybe he does have a large number of friends he can list but they are not nearby, he doesn't see them and they cannot help out with the difficulties with the neighbours. Again there is a difference between professionals and friends - would it be so bad to accept that they think of professionals as their friends, maybe professionals understandably dislike being thought of in this way because of the meaning they attach to the word friend?

I think that with Paul as with Mark, who both seemed a little less able than Andy there is a lot more process stuff in general which masks the fact that they did not always understand what I said but maintains the social interaction.

Line 125, when asked if Pete was good to talk to after his father died Paul makes it clear that Pete was supportive but was difficult to talk to him because Pete too has speech problems like Paul. And what makes it worse is line 130, I clearly was not understanding what he was saying at the time so I must have missed the significance of what he was saying, silencing him yet again. I feel awful about this now that I've understood what was being said. As a result for the first time I can see how he has had to go along with my misunderstanding and remain unheard as it could only show up more his speech difficulty and lack of articulation if he continued to try and get me to understand what was being said. This feels very significant - how interaction can go so horribly wrong, and how their views and experiences can be overlooked so easily in the desperate attempts by both parties to just keep the conversation going and minimise the difficulties. I yet again am left feeling struck by the plight they must sometimes suffer in attempts to be heard and understood and get the support they need, and struck by how skilful they are at masking some of their core difficulties and frustrations.

Lines 137 and 135 have really distressed me, I cannot believe the impact of his statement and the evidence of how I couldn't bear to hear it so I respond with something positive instead of just being able to hear his distress. I can't believe I could be so flippant, but I remember feeling intense discomfort, particularly as his speech WAS so poor. This again is good evidence of how passing or covering are very much a social process in which the person without the learning disabilities also plays a key role, but also it makes me think of Valerie Sinason's lecture when she talked of how unbearable it was for us to hear their pain and self-loathing. All of these factors reveal the intricacies of feelings and skills that are around for people with learning disabilities when they are attempting to express themselves. Paul couldn't turn to his friend for he too has difficulty with speech, yet when he tries to talk about this I also can't bear to
hear him and shut him up very quickly. I feel dreadful about this. As a result of me making this flippant positive statement Paul has no choice but to go along with it. His discourse about being Downs is closed for good and he has to yet again play with the mainstream discourse otherwise he's excluded. Arghh!!! Can't believe I did this.

I've just thought about how much I repeat what they have said, just as in the TV programme. It works to enable the flow: to keep going, and it gives me time to think, and helps in clarifying what they've said.

24th April 2000

I really did not do a very good job of sticking to themes which Paul introduced. It's like I had one agenda in my head and when I first heard his answer I couldn't fathom how it made sense. So when I ask about the impact of having a learning disabilities he says it makes it difficult because his friend doesn't listen properly which relates to what he had said above. I just sort of skim over this, explore it no further as it can't of been what I was expecting to hear - it's like I was thinking he doesn't know, I was underestimating his abilities to be giving a valid response. This silenced him again. Yet again I feel very bad about this interview. I don't listen to him properly either - probably because of his very poor speech but it just shows how much it does stop his views being heard and addressed.

When we start talking about difficulties making friends Paul speech suddenly becomes much less coherent. A bit of a Sinason moment - he becomes more disabled in a way but this suitably avoids having to talk about possibly painful things such as how it does make him feel to have a learning disabilities and how this effects his ability to form relationships. Of course this is just my supposition, I expect I too was contributing to the difficulty as I have said above I recognise that when I ask these questions I too become very unclear and uncomfortable so it could just be that Paul finds it harder to understand me.

Paul describes himself in a way which makes me feel very sad now, but I'm sure I didn't pick up on all of it at the time, he says he has too many problems and it's as if this is his main agenda and yet I was oblivious to it as I was there with my own agenda, I wonder how much talking help he gets, possibly a limited amount because it is quite hard to understand him.

Line 349, Paul is very clear that he is not the only one who has these types of problems he repeats it twice and I think is very clear that he is not different because of this, despite the fact it is problematic for him. I am so crap at following him and I don't pick up on any of the important things he is saying to me. I am very curious as to why this is. It is when he is saying here that he is not different I just re-direct the questions back to where I want his account to go. I am very clearly pulling him back to my thinking, or maybe mainstream discourse that I want to hear. I again silence his own version of events. This makes me think of when I read somewhere (?) that one of the problems with interviewing people with learning disabilities is the assumption of a shared language, I think I made this assumption during the interview and just fail to attend to the differences in any explicit kind of way – possibly because without the shared language I don’t know how to?
In line 358 it seems to me that Paul did not understand the whole question but did hear and understand the words not like, and has answered another question, this may be what he thinks the question was or it might be his attempt to not have to say I don't understand again but to just keep the conversation going, knowing full well that I'm not going to say No that's not the right answer etc. Line 368 I have coded as if he changes the subject but looking at it actually I ask him about what might help him get to know people and he starts talking about going out drinking in local pubs, maybe it wasn't such a change of subject after all.

This interview is very messy, I know it was one of earlier ones but when he introduces reciprocity I fail to pick it up and make some lame comment about the importance of friends. I think in part my inability to attend to things was how far from my agenda we had drifted. Paul did not know how to answer what help was needed and so he just seemed to keep changing the subject but was clever enough to change it to something else that was directly related and as a result I got caught up in all sorts of drifts of the conversation!

Paul talked about his feelings in quite a concrete way, and I did seem to pick this up and use it with him. He talked about feeling things inside him and referred to his tummy. He likens his feelings to those when you watch a horror movie, I would imagine (now) that he was talking about feeling frightened and anxious.

When he talks about being mugged etc. his vulnerability really comes through but so does the importance of his role as body guard for his friend.

Have finished coding Paul and am starting Tim's interview.

I think the beginning bit, which I may not have well enough reflected in the coding, is him explaining via examples the difference between friend and friendship.

The emphasis here is Tim's feelings for Paul, I feel a bit confused as to how to approach coding this as it seems very different from the others. It's not that he doesn't answer me, nor is it that his answers just don't make sense as if he misunderstands, it's just very different in style. I suppose I'll get used to it. I am also aware that I did not like Tim for some reason. he seemed to be a bit of a "smart Alec", which I know isn't very nice but he was quite difficult to warm to, he took over the interview, and interrupted me and didn't always listen to what I said, which is a bit how Paul described him. But it is really mean because he seemed to genuinely care for people, especially Paul and he was a very emotional man. Hmm, wonder what was going on there then?

25th April 2000

I was wondering if one way of understanding what Tim does is to think of it as a form of downward comparison, i.e. others need him more or can do less for him for one reason or another. One reason, as with may be being explained by Tim as him not being as "nice" a person.
Is time a difficult concept? How long have you known someone with Tim evoked a
time measure in terms of where he met him. Again, I'm noticing that I use repetition of
what they said at times when I did not understand what they said, or when their answer
did not follow and make sense.

When I am asking about how he got to know Paul, very little of it makes sense but he
appears to be attempting to tell his story but at the same time it feels as if this is an
example of him trying to say what he thinks he should say.

Line 253: Although it's not totally related it's interesting that Paul and Tim want to go
into business helping others less fortunate than themselves? I wonder whether that is
some effective way of increasing their own self esteem. In saying this I don't want to
detract from their genuine desire to help, just wondering? ???

4th May 2000

Lines 340-350 or thereabouts I really can't understand what Tim was saying, I don'
think he was just providing an answer I think he was attempting to tell me something
but I couldn't follow it. It highlights again the lack of a shared language and how this
hinders communication and hearing their views.

This lack of understanding continues and the thread of the interview is lost for a while.
I think I may have felt exasperated with him, or at least I do now! I just can't figure out
what he's trying to tell me. Line 428, the plot is completely lost! We are both confused
and it makes for a very difficult interpretation, yet when I was interviewing him I didn't
pick this up very well, maybe it was because he presents as so sociable.

Tim appears to find it much harder to talk clearly about himself, he redirects focus
back to Paul all the time and says how he would like him to make more friends then
when I try and redirect back to him he appears to just go off on a tangent. I wonder if
when I come to look at this again it will be clear as to whether there is a pattern in
when it becomes confused like this, I am wondering if it is when I ask difficult
questions about more painful aspects that the whole thing gets lost somehow. It is very
clear when I ask about the impact of learning disabilities he reels off loads of
information that may be related - about walking tall and holding your head up high -
but equally is also a way of avoiding answering the question (I think).

The fact that Tim does not answer may be as I've said due to difficult topics but it may
also be that he just doesn't understand what I'm saying but does not want to reveal this
so just uses his conversational skills to mask it. But, I am less sure of this as when he
wants he can follow quite complex questions.

6th May 2000

Sue uses the word friendship to refer to relationships with boyfriends as well as
friendships. She answered questions more about boys and her experiences of her one
significant romantic relationship and how this went wrong. Whilst this is different
maybe from what I meant this is what she was referring to with the word friend - so I
shall attempt to code it under existing codes but it is worth noting the different use of
the word between her and I.

The trouble is I don't initially at least acknowledge the difference and I keep trying to redirect back to my meaning without recognising the difference.

Sue's style of talking was very passive: "if they want to be your mates they can".

I avoid difficult topics with Sue and redirect back to my own agenda, why?

Knowing how I felt with Sue she appeared to have a sense that the world was against her probably because in her experiences it was. She was a very negative person and I think the word passive (possibly with aggression!) describes how she made me feel. She did seem quite angry with things - rightly so other people appeared to her to have ruined her chance of a happy marriage. She made me feel I was patronising her at times.

Line 171: I think here you can see a bit of negative feelings towards the service. She is saying she can make friends without them. This is somewhat at variance to what she does but I'm unsure as to whether she actually wants to go out and makes friends - it all seems too loaded for her.

Lines about 193: she is I think quite antagonistic! I just skim over it in a very superficial way! When I ask if there's anyone she would like to be like she laughs and quite clearly says no, and the way I read it is as if she's saying no why would I want to be like anyone else, you're all horrible. I am sure others could read it differently but I cannot get away from my memory of the interview with her and how she made me feel.

Sue uses humour as a way of being negative as well - when she is saying her friends would describe her as a pain and a nuisance she laughs. This is interesting - need to think more about what is going on here.

One constantly appearing theme is the difficulty they appear to have with my question about who they would not want to be like. I should have known this would be difficult - and I think I did struggle on each occasion to ask it in a clearer way but often to no avail, however maybe I do get some of the qualities of those who they would not want to be like, via their description so people they do not like. Hmm... Think more about this too - but this could be something clearly to criticise within the critical review bit!!

Line 265 - "Oh I'm used to it" acceptance of her lot, it's very sad how passive and accepting she has become of being criticised.

Lines 285 - she says she goes out with friends then says she doesn't because no-one asks, and laughs. Actually this was very sad and it seems to me that she manages this by laughing possibly at herself. It's very sad to read it though.

Line 293 - she was so shocked that I should ask if she visits her friends house or vice versa. I failed to explore why this was so shocking which is a real shame. I wonder whether it was due to reliance on others to organise a social life, yet with Sue she lived

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alone and was relatively independent. Hmm, wonder what kept her indoors, and how much exactly she did get out.

Line 299 - in a perfect world, despite being asked about friends she actually tells of her desire to be a housewife rather than thinks of friends. I do get the impression that friendship is not what Sue wants, what she wants is to be married and settled.

Line 320 although it is not directly related to friendship, her description here of loosing her job seems to be a way of putting across what she might have perceived as her failings. It is a very sad story and I am left with a sense of no fulfilment and loads of criticism in her life which she has somehow internalised.

Line 459 - I know I haven't coded all of Sue's account about her relationship as it is not directly about her friendships. However it is a powerful story and at the end when I check if she's Okay, it is very sad when she says she is always thinking about what happened in a very resigned way. What is the effect this account has on me, and on my interpretation of her? What was the function of her telling me in this way? What does it contribute to my understanding of her relationships and the issues that are involved in them, for I think it probably offers a lot, and her bringing this into the discussion creates some impression on me. These all feel very important issues.

One thing that is apparent in this interview is that Sue begins by saying she has a number of friends then it seems she sees very few of these and that she does not go out with them or talk to them at all. Is this, or has this been a theme? I think that a number have said that they do not talk to friends with learning disabilities, although not all of them. It does tend to reflect the situation they are in. There is a desire maybe for acceptance and friendships, yet within these the issue of dependency is very much alive. These people require support to get by and this inevitably changes the dynamics of their friendships.

With Penny, there is a notable difference in that she describes her friends in terms of family (Aunties). The strong theme of the importance of family is prevalent throughout her interview and she often talks of other people by talking about the family they have. This fits in with what I know of her, that is prior to her mother's death she lived with her mother who was her main social company.

Line 37, when I ask if she thinks friends are important she says "I think so", I'm wondering how much Penny actually does think so, her answers sounds a little like it is what she thinks she should say.

Line 69 - What a long response. I need to think about what was going on here as she doesn't actually change the subject but possibly fills her response out with things she is good at talking about and using the general norms of social interaction. Penny was a very able speaking person and possibly used this skills to deal with difficult or painful situations, which possibly the interview was.

I can recognise throughout so far that I am trying not to challenge the notion that everything is alright for Penny living in this home.
The other thing Penny does is rarely let me get to the end of a question - how does this serve her, what function is it achieving. Is it a way of ensuring the conversation is geared toward things she can cope with and is this how she manages the difference between her experience and the dominant discourse.

When I ask her about the impact of having a learning difficulty, as I read her answer her sense of what I perceive as shame is so painful and transparent.

7th May 2000

I collude a great deal with the 'nice social life image". It would have been too confrontational to not do so. It is interesting though that we struggle through this interview when I actually feel that Penny's social life and social network is poor. This is possibly why when I ask questions which probe more into this network of friends she doesn't know how to answer. How can she say how her friends are similar to her, when possibly the great social life is not as real as one could possibly think if taking her description at face value. I know that when I was transcribing I felt that Penny’s don't knows masked her misunderstanding the question, and this could be one interpretation. yet somehow now when I look at it, it makes me feel as I've said above, it is actually because these friendships aren't as qualitatively good as her account could lead you to believe. Her laughing again is a way of making light of how painful all of this for her - possibly?

The other thing that I'm curious about is when Penny doesn't understand a question (which possibly does only become apparent when I ask her if she does - possibly she can't say this herself for some reason) she is apologetic and looks after me saying things like "I know this is awkward for you".

Line 303, I get very tongue tied trying to ask a question about how people are different from one another, and her response of "one's perfect and the other one isn't" interests me? It is, I think a very sad interpretation and I wonder what she felt I was getting at? And her then response of they can't help it can they. All feels very loaded to me. Lines 309 - starts off by talking about imperfections, then her own experience then drifts to talk of others again - what's she doing by doing this? Is she managing her own feelings? Also her story of how she came to be learning disabilities is interesting as she talks about it as an illness.

As I've just started coding Karen, I'm aware she too talks about her family a great deal, and the four sisters who did very well. She uses this account in varying ways throughout the interview if I remember rightly, sometimes it feels like by talking of their success is a way of constructing an identity of being from a successful and clever family, thereby vicariously using their achievements to support her own identity and self-esteem. Later she speaks of feeling jealous of them, and let down by how little they see her. I'm struck that almost immediately I ask about her friends her sisters are mentioned, and how her friends were made via them.

Lines 133 and 121 when Karen mentions how had warned her of things. I am interested in the way that Karen constructs accounts drawing on these other "able-bodied" people. It feels a bit like name dropping, although that makes it sound negative
and I don't mean it that way. I'm just wondering about what the function of these references are. Is this one way in which she manages the difference between her and others? I also think I may have mentioned when transcribing, that Karen is very socially skilled and great fun to talk with. It can seem that she is VERY able, and I wonder how much these skills also mask any underlying problems, yet she is also extremely open about her "brain damage" and the impact this has had on her. Need to think about all of these issues much more.

Line 177: I've coded this to say that her answer about information needed when getting to know someone relates a little to the mainstream discourse. It actually doesn't but I was thinking this was her attempt at doing what she has seen others do, but of course another interpretation could be that this is really what she needs to know and is nothing to do with attempting to use mainstream ideas. ... She is also very interested in knowledge of people dying, and I wonder whether she has some thoughts about this that I have not picked up on.

8th May 2000

Karen's friend without a learning disabilities she met by her mum recruiting her to look after Karen. Line 249, I'm struck, as I was during the interview with how Karen manages everybody else's feelings about her. She is terribly understanding and in this way actually kind of openly admits to a sense of shame of being learning disabilities, as her family has had to suffer it. Obviously this is my interpretation of her feelings.

Line 277, I think Karen does an upward and downward comparison in the same sentence?

Lines 441 and there abouts. This bit needs some thinking about, I think there is a contradiction in her account here, in that she portrays everything as fine and then it becomes clear that actually she rarely goes out and only sees friends if they come over to her house.

11th May 2000

I think that what Karen says about not being able to talk to others with a learning disabilities because they might not know they are "brain damages" is interesting. I should put some thought into what is going on here. It feels a bit of a downward comparison, in that she might be saying I'm more adjusted than them, or other people's family/experiences are not as good as mine are. Also, Line 469 when Karen talks about the impact her learning disabilities has had she appears to avoid talking about impact on her, but talks of it through other's reactions and their awkwardness and embarrassment, maybe as I think Karen does have problems with this aspect of her identity, she cannot own but finds it more manageable to talk of it by constructing an account that she has some distance from. When she finally does talk to me about it, she implies she copes by daydreaming which from my own experiences of daydreaming is one way of experiencing some more pleasant reality even if it's only a dream.
Inherent within Karen's narrative is a theme of little positive self-regard. She tells this all in a very cheery way, but I'm curious about how she says her friends, despite her description of a good set of friends, might think her a lot to cope with.

Karen's dependency, I think, shows a bit when I ask how long it is before she trusted two friends and she replies immediately. I feel this shows some variation from mainstream and is a reflection of the differing needs possibly of this population.

I may have already mentioned it, but I am again struck by the variation in length of response when I am trying to get Karen to talk about herself, she struggles much more when I ask her to think about her own views. I wonder if in part this is because she has to bow to others views so much in her life that she either is not used to thinking like this, or is worried about getting it wrong or saying something that I won't approve of???? It would seem that Karen will talk to anyone when she has a problem. When I ask she gives several differing versions of who she might speak to and then says she's not sure about the order. Does this reflect how exposed her life is, and how again she is reliant on so many other people. What does it say about who is her confidant, and possibly different, certainly to my experience in that it is possible she tells everyone, everything.

14th May 2000

With Ann her responses are quite concrete. When you hear Ann’s story it really is quite clear that one of the people who has been a true friend to her is her support worker, and therefore of little surprise that she blatantly states she thinks of her more as a friend.

Line 369, for much of interview Ann's answers are relatively straight forward, she potentially was the most able person I interviewed. I am not sure how to code the line 369, when she talks of having only just met me but finding me easy to talk to. I think this is an important part of the interview, and must think more about it's role in her constructed account. What's more interesting was my pathetic response of oh that's good. It would have been nice to have been able to stay with that for a bit and discuss with her why that was the case. I think the awkwardness that put in me stopped me from being able to think about it. I've just read on and Ann saves me by lumping me together with her support worker and generalising, this in turn appears to enable me to talk more easily about why.

Is there a theme in her account which implies she rejects or downplays the learning disabilities image, she certainly does have a very full and functional life, but somehow this is drawn out as a dominant part of her experience (which it may well be) but what it also does is mask what the impact of her learning disabilities is on her life and relationships. It is also interesting that she cannot think or verbalise any differences when asked directly and yet throughout her narrative there are many differences which she herself discusses, such as age and ability.

19th May 2000
Am reading and re-reading each interview in detail at the moment – highlighting quotes that I think are of interest and trying to identify how they constructed their accounts. I have used a lot of the notes I have written above when coding and beginning the analysis. It is very difficult to stay on track and just attend to the bits that relate to friendship they all said so much more about their lives, and it feels mean not being able to include it all. However I think I could end up with far too much. Also struggling a bit with what I’m looking at in terms of content versus process. I am also noticing that many of the notes I am writing now are simply mirror images of those I wrote when coding, so I am not sure if I am doing this the right way or not.

1st June 2000

Still struggling with the issues mentioned above. I am aware that I am not making entries about my thinking, but it is so similar to where I was at during the coding process. I know I didn’t collapse my codes but the way in which it highlighted certain process functions has been so helpful when thinking a bit about how they construct their accounts. What I am very unclear about is how I turn this into a results section.

4th June 2000

Right, now I have no idea what to do. I am going through the interviews and pulling out loads of quotes and organising them under the various aspects of friendship formation which I explored. Feel I have lost the thread of the whole project. I keep stopping and writing “why did I want to look at friendship?” then jotting down my thoughts about the impact of stigma. But then I keep asking “why am I doing Discourse Analysis” and then getting very stuck. What am I doing in comparison to what has been done before. Really could do with speaking to Jan.

22nd June 2000

Revisited Karen and Andy today. It was really good to see them again. However, it was quite hard to do any form of validation. I did ask them my three questions and feed back to them some of the general things I had identified about their experience of friendship – such as staff and family being important. However, in terms of highlighting to them some of the issues around how they constructed their accounts, this did not seem possible. Partly as I am only now beginning to really get a grip myself on some of the themes in how they did this – but also this would have felt like I was highlighting their defence mechanisms to them in quite an inappropriate way. What also made this visit difficult was that they both had their own agenda of what they wanted to talk to me about. Andy has a new partner and is struggling with his a new member of staff, and Karen is having some problems with her in-laws which she was very keen to talk about. However in spite of this did get some useful additional information and they did seem to agree with some of the more general themes I fed back to them.

24th June 2000

Have started to write results up, and finding it very hard to know what I am writing. I suppose I know what I want to say but I can’t find a language myself for describing it. I have been able to identify a number of themes, such as their pervasively passive role
in making friends with people. There is almost a complete absence of getting to know people within their experiences, and they simply just accept any friendly advances. This hinder or renders different nearly all of their experiences – for instance similarity to friends may well be an issue for them – but because they do not actively seek out relationships this aspect almost seems null and void. However, seeing Jan in a few days maybe she can help me think about what it is I am trying to say and what are the important aspects of the results that need highlighting!

28th June 2000

Having seen Jan I feel a lot more encouraged! She has helped me find a language with which to describe what I have found – rhetorical devices! Now it feels much clearer as to what I am trying to say. I have described it a bit as if it was a therapy session, whereas I need to focus more on describing how language was used. So I have returned to my process codes to collapse these into general themes and identified a number for participants and similarly a number that I used during the interview. These are the things I have been talking about throughout the diary – such as when they change the subject, or when I repeat things back to them but change the language. This in itself was quite encouraging!! There are so many examples for each of these I need to be selective – at the moment the whole thing is looking far too long. Anyway I have a new deadline for re-writing the results and discussion by Monday.

3rd July 2000

Have e-mailed whole thing to Jan, with some amendments made to Introduction and a rather carried away discussion. I am going to wait for more feedback now as I am in danger of fiddling for the sake of it. I am speaking to her on Wednesday 5th so I shall carry on then. I can get on sorting out appendices etc.

7th July 2000

Have handed in final draft to Jan, awaiting feedback again.

16th July 2000

Final feedback received.

18th July 2000

Have just finished all final amendments, now just need to print out and get copying!
Appendix Two

Interview Schedule

Categories: Meaning of friendship
Who are your friends
Development of friendship
Identity in friendship
Closeness in friendships
Reciprocity in friendships
What might be helpful

Meaning

What does the word friend mean for you? (find and use common language)

How often do you have to see someone before they are your friend?

What makes one person a friend and someone else not?

Who are your friends?

How many people do you think of as friends?

What is important to you about having friends

Have you ever had a best friend?

Can you tell me about this? Are they still your friend?

Why do you think of them as your best friend?

What is special about them?

What is special about having them as your friend?

Getting to know people

What do you do to get to know someone better?

What do you do when you meet someone new? How would you get to know them?

What would you want to know about them?

Can you tell me about a time you have made friends with someone, say the friend we were just talking about?
How did you meet them? Was anyone else involved, or did anyone else help you make friends with them?

Why did you chose that person to make friends with?

How did you first meet them?

Where were you both?

How many times did you see them before they were your friend?

How does having a learning difficulty effect making and choosing friends?

Are there other things that make it difficult for you to make friends?

What are these, how do they stop you?

What do you think might help you with these things?

Do other people choose your friends, or influence who you make friends with? Who? And how does this happen?

How do you feel about other people being involved in this way? (and if others aren’t influential would you like them to be and how would this help?)

How do you think things could change to help you making friends?

Identity in friendship

How are you like your friends?

Are there any people you would like to be like? Why?

What do you think your friends like most about you? Why?

If ___ was here how do you think they would describe you?

Which of your friends are you not like? Why?

Would you like to be more like them?

In an ideal world what kind of person would you want to be friends with? Why? What is it about the qualities of this person? Do you know anyone like this? If “no” then why do you think it is difficult for you to get to know someone like this?

Can you describe someone you would not want to be friends with? Why?
Closeness of friendships

Who can you talk to the easiest?
What do they do that makes it easy to talk to them?
Did you do things with them, spend more time with them, feel more listened to by them, feel more alike to them than other friends, share a sense of humour with them?

What kinds of things might you talk about?

Is this important to you?

Who finds you easy to talk to?

Who do you think knows the most about you?

Who do you know the most about?

In your friendships can you think of a time when you have talked about yourself?
How long had you known them when you started to tell them things that were more private about yourself?
Why did you do this at this stage in the friendship?

What makes it easier for you to talk to/ trust somebody?

Have you ever talked to someone and wished you hadn’t? Why?

When someone has talked to you did it make you feel close to them?

Did you feel comfortable with this?

Do you talk to some friends more than others?

Reciprocity

What do you do to help your friends out? (Also establish who they do things for)

What do your friends do to help you out? (Also establish who does things for them)

Do your friends do the same amount of things for you as you do for them?

Do you ever feel that you do more for your friends than they do for you? What sort of things might this be?

Do you ever feel that some of your friends do more for you than you do for them?
How does it make you feel when someone is doing something for you?

How do you feel about the friendships in which you do more for your friends?

How do you feel about the friendships in which the friend does more for you?

Does it bother you that things sometimes feel unequal? What might you do to make it more equal if it ever bothers you?

Why do you think some friendships can be a bit unequal? Does this matter to you?

Help required

What do you think is missing from your friendship relationships? Does it upset you that this is missing for you? What do you think might help make this better?

Is there anything else about your friendships that you would like to tell me about?
Dear Ms

The Development and Experiences of Friendship of People with Mild Learning Disabilities

Thank you for your letter of 8 October, and a copy of the advertisement to be used to recruit healthy volunteers.

I am now happy to take Chairman’s action in approving the study.

Yours sincerely

Dr
Chairman
Local Research Ethics Committee

(Direct Line)
Appendix Four

Thursday 6th January 2000

Dr
Ethics Committee Chairman
Health Authority

Dear Dr

Re: The Development and Experiences of Friendship of People with Mild Learning Disabilities

Following your letter dated the 14th October 1999 giving approval for the above study, I am writing to inform you of a development to the project. In my initial proposal I aimed to interview four people with mild learning disabilities and four people with no learning disabilities. The aim was to analyse the data using discourse analysis and make comparisons between the two groups. The rationale was to explore the impact of membership to a devalued group in society on the experiences of people with mild learning disabilities.

Through piloting the interview and subsequent discussion with my research supervisor and someone who has previously used discourse analysis as a methodology, it has been decided that it would be more appropriate to focus upon the experiences of people with learning disabilities alone. To this end I am no longer intending to interview people without a learning disability, but instead am doubling the number of people with a learning disability to be interviewed from four to eight.

This is partly due to time constraints: I have been advised that to attempt to analyse the data for discourse about friendship, and stigma and then make comparisons to a “healthy” comparison group, would be too lengthy a task for the time limit within which I have to produce the work. Secondly, through piloting I became acutely aware that the main rationale behind the project was to attempt to access the views and subjective experiences of people with mild learning disabilities and explore how stigma affected their relationships. With this as the central aim of the project it felt more appropriate to focus the interviews on people with mild learning disabilities. I will
continue to make comparisons to the non-learning disabled population by exploring how mainstream theoretical models of friendship formation apply to this population and how these too are affected by the impact of stigma.

I hope that this change to my project poses no problems regarding the ethical approval of it, as no procedural issues have been altered. All the details I outlined in my initial application to you for ethical approval regarding consent, recruitment of learning disabled participants, confidentiality and attention to other ethical issues as they may arise remain exactly the same. The participant information and consent form also remains basically the same apart from no longer stating that I will be interviewing four people with, and without learning disabilities. I have enclosed a copy for you to see.

I would be happy to address any questions that may arise for you as a result of this alteration to the project. If however I do not hear from you I shall assume that you are happy with the changes I have made.

Thank you for you time and interest.

Yours sincerely

Ms
Trainee Clinical Psychologist

Supervised by

Dr
, Consultant Clinical Psychologist

cc.
Social Services Service Director:
Joint Services for People with Learning Disabilities

, Clinical Psychologist
, Joint Services for People with Learning Disabilities
Appendix Five

Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form

My name is and as part of my training to become a clinical psychologist I am trying to find out some more about the friendships people with mild learning difficulties have. I am interested in their experiences of friendship and getting to know people, and any difficulties they have with this. I would like to talk to you about your friendships.

If you would like to join in with my research, this is what will happen. We will talk together on our own for about one hour. I will ask you some questions about what you think friendship means, how you get to know people, things about your friends which you value, characteristics they have which you would like to have too, how easy it is to talk to them about yourself and whether you feel that you and your friends think of the friendship as being equal. I will also be asking about any things that make getting to know people difficult and what you think might help you with this.

It is entirely your choice whether to take part in the research or not. If you do agree to take part, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions I ask you and if at any time you want to stop talking to me and withdraw from the research, you can.

Everything you tell me will be private. So I won’t tell anybody the things you have told me, unless you ask me to do so. I will use a tape recorder to tape our conversation, but when we have finished I will write down everything you have told me and when I have finished the research I will destroy the tape recordings. When I write everything down I will not use
your name so that everything you say remains private. I may write some of things you say to me in my final research report, but neither your name or anything else which could identify who you are will be included in the report.

When I have spent time looking at the information you have given me, I will come back to see you again so that you have the chance to make sure I have clearly understood what you told me. Please feel free to ask me any questions about my research, and what being involved will mean before deciding whether to take part or not.

If you would like to take part in my research, I will need your consent. This means I need you to complete the section below and then I will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Thank you very much for your time.

________________________________________________________________________

I (name)______________________________________________________________

Of (address)_________________________________________________________________

give my consent to take part in the above research project, the nature and purpose of which have been explained to me. Any questions which I wished to ask have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may withdraw from the project at any stage, and refuse to answer any question without giving a reason for doing so.

Signed: ____________________________ Date __________________

Witnessed by:
(Name) ___________________________ Date __________________

Relationship to Participant ________________________________
Appendix Six

Example of a coded transcript

Interviewer: Right Penny I was just saying to you a moment ago about what I'm interested in really are the your experiences of friendships. But I suppose one thing to start off with it's quite important to know what you think I mean when I ask about friendships, what does, you know what does it mean to you
Interviewer /Research Question

Penny: I suppose you get together I s'pose
Penny /Content/meaning of friend/doing things together

Interviewer Hmm hmm get together, and umm what sort of people might, what do you d' you, how do you mean by getting together
Interviewer /Research Question/prompting question

Penny You get to know um (hmm hmm) yeah it didn't take me long here to get to know all the aunties (right) and the uncles (right) but umm it was very strange, (yeah yeah) but when we moved in they're very sweet but er now I've got used to em now
Penny /Content/getting to know someone

Interviewer How do you think you've got to know them, what do you think you...
Interviewer /Research Question

Penny Well we have our little meetings (right) we sit down and have a cup of tea now and then and talk about the weather (yeah) and er...
Penny /Content/getting to know someone/doing things together

Interviewer So are, spending a bit of time with them (yes) yeah
Interviewer /Research Question/question repeating what they said

Penny Not not many offer not many comes down just about three of them comes down have a little natter play with the dog keep her occupied
Penny /Content/social network/number of friends

Interviewer Yeah, yeah. So who are the aunties then, is that a word, I don't...
Interviewer /Research Question/clarifying question

Penny The aunties upstairs and you know
Penny /Content/social network/describing friends in terms of family

Interviewer Are they like wardens, sort of thing?
Interviewer

Penny No they're not
Penny

Interviewer They're actual aunties (aunties, you know) yeah, right, okay. So, a friend to you is someone that you get together with and do things with, is that what, when I say the word friends that's what comes to mind...
Interviewer /Research Question/clarifying question

Penny Well we have a natter, have a cup of tea have a natter
Penny /Content/meaning of friend/chatting with people
Penny /Content/experience of friendship/describing friends
Interviewer: A bit of a talk
/Research Question/question repeating what they said

Penny: Yeah, and they go out and I go out, yes
/Content/meaning of friend/going out together

Interviewer: And do you, do you think that umm having friends is quite an important thing
/Research Question

Penny: I think so
/Content/meaning of friend/Importance of having friends

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, what do you think you get out of having friends?
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny: Relations, they talk about their past you know (yeah) their umm family their daughters and their sons and their grandchildren (yeah) and I do the same
/Content/experience of friendship/sharing stories of family and life

Interviewer: Right share information
/Research Question/question repeating what they said

Penny: We share, we share yes, they went home they went home for Christmas come back Boxing Day (hmm) yes all of our aunties went home Fred went home to see his grandchildren, he's not married but umm he's got grandchildren and he's got a daughter in law, he went home for five days (hmm hmm) he come back. He loves his grandchildren, all grown up mind you and Jeans got grandchildren, she's got she's got eighteen grandchildren and a little one just been born and she loves her grandchildren, she speaks a lot about children
/Process/P. provides response for flow/telling of other's instead of themselves

Interviewer: She speaks a lot about the children (yeah, her grandchildren) yeah. And do you like to hear what they've got to say
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny: Oh yes yes yes. Her daughters' coming this weekend to see her, her other daughters coming and er when she's not working she has them and er yes..
/Process/P. provides response for flow/telling of other's instead of themselves

Interviewer: Are most of your friends now, women or men do you think?
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny: Well got a few men, we got 'bout five men and they're ever so nice, John's nice, he pops in, yes
/Process/P. provides response for flow/taking on collective identity

Interviewer: Do they like to sort of sit and pass the time of day in the same way as ..
/Research Question/clarifying question

Penny: Well they work see they do their work in the morning and afternoons, they come in to see the girls and er, oh he's very good John umm we had a big do on Monday er, Scottish Music
/Process/P. provides response for flow/telling of other's instead of themselves
Interviewer: Oh excellent do you do a bit of Scottish Dancing!

Penny: I do a little bit of dancing

Interviewer: So you were saying Penny that when you moved here it was a little bit strange I'm wondering...

Penny: Well well it was strange but er they didn't know I was coming see, (right) so er its...

Interviewer: How many how many times do you think you had to meet with these people before you felt that they were friends of yours? Or do you feel that they're friends?

Penny: Well I had I did come over to have a look at it, when mother passed away I did come over to have a look at the place, two flats, there were two flats going there was a smaller one upstairs (hmm) wasn't wasn't to my liking, this one's bigger, I said to Ralph I do need a garden he said yes you do You don't need all the stairs, we got a lift but umm, he said no that wouldn't suit you, so he went back and told his boss, he said didn't suit Penny, she wanted this one. I got through from the Trust people and got to to Sue, our Boss, was only one vacancy and this one was on hold cos one of our aunties had this, she passed away (right) before I come and it was empty oh a long time it was empty and she said it wanted doing up and I didn't have a new kitchen, I had to ask for a new kitchen (hmm) got me new kitchen and er Sue said yes its about time you had a new kitchen, so she got hold of the firm to Trust people, and they said yes you must have a new kitchen cos when people move in they get a nice kitchen and I didn't my was all rough and ready but I coped with it for six weeks, coped with it, so Ralph said iniit about time you had a new kitchen I said well its not up to me is it, go back he said its up to the firm so he got onto the Trust people and sorted it out I didn't have to pay for it, I only had to pay for me fridge and gas stove (Right) I had pay a hundred for that, hundred and twenty five (hmm) for that, I had it installed I had to wait for a fortnight for that ......

Interviewer: So, Penny, I just, sorry to interrupt you I'm just wondering so you came over to visit a couple of times and I was just wondering how many times you'd met up with the people who lived here before you felt.....

Penny: Well I met some of the aunties (yeah)

Interviewer: How long before you felt they were your friends? Did it take a while to get to know them or did you feel that they were friends of yours straight away (well) or do you feel that they're your friends now?
Content/getting to know someone/how long you've known them/no. of meetings

Penny

Oh they are yeah. It took a little bit of while but umm
/Content/getting to know someone/how long you've known them/no. of meetings

Interviewer

You had to get to know them you were saying
/Research Question/clarifying question

Penny

Had to get to know em. Now I've got to know em now
/Process/P. provides response for flow/vague answer

Interviewer

Yeah, you feel that they're your friends
/Research Question/clarifying question

Penny

Yeah yeah

Interviewer

Are there any people here who you don't feel are particularly friends of yours
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny

No I like em all (you like them all) and they come to the do's when we have do's some come to the do (yeah) and they all join in so er we all join in (yeah) for Christmas. It was quite a good few for Christmas and some went away (Yeah) for Christmas but, all all mucked in together (quite a nice crowd?) we had a nice crowd.
/Process/P. provides response for flow/defensive statement?
/Process/P. provides response for flow/taking on collective identity

Interviewer

And so you've got friends here, you've got a number of friends here, who live (yes yes)
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny

I've got auntie who lives up the top (yeah) two on the landing (right) and the other two down on the other landing they pop in now again
/Content/contact with friends
/Content/social network/describing friends in terms of family

Interviewer

So the aunties are the people you feel particularly friendly with
/Research Question/clarifying question

Penny

And the uncles yeah yeah

Interviewer

What about friends outside of this house have you got friends...
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny

No no no I go home to see my mother relations (right) I go home once a fortnight but they're on holiday (yeah)
/Content/social network/lack of friends

Interviewer

So you go and see your family but your friends are very much in this home (yes). And before you were living here who who were your friends then do you think when you (no/none very quiet) was it was it very much still a family life, sounds like it was very much a family life
/Research Question/clarifying question
Penny: You get used to it, yeah, yes it took a bit of a time (hmm) to cotton on but I manage (yeah) get me going (yeah)
/Content/problems/coping once family had died

Interviewer: Get used to the different environment?
/Research Question/clarifying question

Penny: yeah yeah that's alright yeah. What's the other questions
/Process/P. provides response for flow/defensive statement?

Interviewer: okay umm I was asking it was you were saying a minute ago do you think having friends is important and you said yes and I'm wondering what it is about having friends that you think..
/Research Question

Penny: You got a laugh, you get a laugh out of it (yes) yeah yeah we had a show on last night and it was very very good (yeah)
/Content/meaning of friend/Importance of having friends

Interviewer: So you get to do some fun things together it sounds like you do here
/Research Question/clarifying question
/Process/Interviewer provides response/pretending everything is fine for them

Penny: Yeah yeah

Interviewer: Okay, I mean we were talking about getting to know people here and you've already sort of said that part of what you do when you want to get to know somebody is chat with... about your families
/Research Question/clarifying question

Penny: Yeah we do we do we do

Interviewer: What kinds of things might you want to know about someone when you meet them for the first time?
/Research Question

Penny: I don't know
/Process/P. provides response for flow/doesn't know how to answer

Interviewer: Don't know

Penny: Don't know but umm I'm I mingle in you gotta mingle haven't you (yeah...?) yes yes
/Content/getting to know someone/by mingling in
/Process/P. provides response for flow/covering difficulty making friends

Interviewer: Do you think its quite difficult to get to know people for you personally? Do you find it quite difficult
/Research Question/clarifying question

Penny: You do when when you first move in yes but umm no they they said oh come again come again so er they wanted me here so they said oh yes we'll have Penny we show here the ropes (excellent) umm second day I moved in on 25th May all waiting at the door, Oh we're pleased we got you (ahh!!) you make us laugh so we want somebody to make us laugh so they took they took it like that (yeah) so er I'm you know (yeah so was it was it....) like it was okay.
Interviewer: Okay, umm. Right. Do you have a special friend here is there someone here in particular you're close to? Is there one person who maybe is a bit closer to you than the others?

Penny: No all all all mingle in all mingle in all mingle in. I like the staff. We got Jean, Sue and the other warden it's her birthday to day Sue's birthday today, she's twenty one, that's our other warden (right) and we had two other wardens, if Sue's away is Jean away she's got somebody stepping in.

Interviewer: I'm curious to know if they feel like they're friends as well

Penny: Oh yes

Interviewer: They do, so they might work here but they also feel

Penny: yeah they do yeah. They got grandchildren so.. (yeah) yes yes yes

Interviewer: It sounds like from just talking to you Penny that people...

Penny: We've had Nancy for two days but she's back over the other side of the river but she's got umm sss eight grandchildren

Interviewer: Right I was just going to say it sounds like family is a big

Penny: Yes she's got family she's got a big family

Interviewer: But I'm wondering with your friends, it's something that that you particularly share, talking about your families and things, and grandchildren?

Penny: Umm I love I love her she's lovely (yeah) yes yes

Interviewer: Are you very close to your family?
Interviewer: And I was just asking about maybe, what makes it difficult or whether it's difficult to make friends, and it sounds like here they really welcomed you and...

Penny: Yes yes, it's like family its like family, yeah it is nice, its its like home it was at the other home, was only me me and mother, and Bert did come over on off chance but umm, here you always welcome (yeah) you know and they have birthdays its um if the aunties got a birthday this month we have bingo play bingo (yeah) and we have a birthday.

Interviewer: How do they make you feel welcome? What do they do Penny that makes you feel...

Penny: You know I mean just the usual you know. Yes yes

Interviewer: You feel part of them?

Penny: You feel part of the furniture don't you (right right, yeah) that's what you wanted yeah. You feel part of the furniture.

Interviewer: Yes, and I'm just curious to know whether having a learning difficulty is something that has made making friends difficult for you in the past.

Penny: Very very quietly, shook head and almost indecipherable: don't think so.

Interviewer: Don't think so, that's fine, that's fine. I'm just curious to know whether when we were talking before we started you know, the interview I was saying I was curious to know about your experiences of friendship (hmm) and whether whether that was something that had helped or hindered or influenced any any of the relationships you've had but you think it hasn't.

Penny: Again very very quietly. No

Interviewer: Okay.

Penny: What else? (umm) is that all or bit more?

Interviewer: Little bit more. Are there any, or we no,

Penny: Are there any what? You can do it
Interviewer: I've asked you that sorry, I'll move on now! Do you think unnn, what do you think influences who you become friends with (I felt uncomfortable). What do you think effects who you become friends with. Does that make sense.

Research Question/unclear

Penny: Put it in another word please (laughs) sorry sorry

Interviewer: No No No what, I'm umm...

Penny: Phrase it for me (laughs again) (yeah) I know it's a bit awkward

Interviewer: No no that's fine, I'm wondering why maybe it's the aunties you have become friends with as opposed to some of the other people...What

Research Question/promoting question

Penny: Well I do, I I'm mingles you know (yeah) I like em all

/Process/P. provides response for flow/everything's 'rosy'

/Process/P. provides response for flow/answers but is evasive

Interviewer: Yeah, But they're not all your friends? Is that what you're saying

Research Question/clarifying question

Penny: Well they are but they do do what they do and I do what I do

/Process/P. provides response for flow/explaining away gaps in friendships

Interviewer: Right so you have more to do with the aunties they...

Research Question/clarifying question

Penny: Yes I have a natter, yes

/Process/P. provides response for flow/everything's 'rosy'

Interviewer: They talk to you a bit more?

Research Question/promoting question

Penny: Yes yes bit more yeah yeah yeah. Yes but I I go out I go out er Monday I go out cos its , I'm free on Monday, free Sunday, I go out I go out. Friday I'm free afternoon, Saturday afternoon I'm free.

/Content/contact with friends/activities with friends/solitary activities

/Process/P. provides response for flow/everything's 'rosy'

Interviewer: Where do you go when you go out?

Penny: Shopping

/Content/contact with friends/activities with friends/solitary activities

Interviewer: Right right

Penny: I go to town (yeah) or I go to, I haven't been to the other town I've got to go there, gets some softies but er I take meself off (right). Ohh! I Know me shopping

/Content/contact with friends/activities with friends/solitary activities

Interviewer: You're quite happy to go...

Research Question/promoting question
Penny: I'm quite happy yeah they know where I go I tell em I tell em I'm off I won't be back a certain time and er, I join a club in er town

/Content/contact with friends/activities with friends/solitary activities

Interviewer: Oh what club, what clubs that?
/

Research Question/clarifying question

Penny: Just a small club, I haven't been there. It's to do with the factory (right) I belong to that club and I been along to our umm near to err the wood yard (yeah) Ralph's club I been there

/Content/contact with friends/activities with friends/segregated activities

/Content/contact with friends/activities with friends/solitary activities

/Process/P. provides response for flow/everything's 'rosy'

Interviewer: So have you got some friends there...
/

Research Question/prompting question

Penny: Yes I got some friends in the club and we go out, we went to the pantomime told you, all (Oh yeah) all met up on the pantomime (yeah) enjoyed it (wonderful) and we got our meeting next Tuesday where to go next time, we go up town once a month (gosh so you do..) I go up to went to Mr Woos twice, since I moved in (yeah) that's, they wanna go somewhere else to like a cinema (hmm) and we got to book something on the, when we get the nice weather they wanna boat on the river to go up to the bridge and back er...

/Content/contact with friends/activities with friends/segregated activities

/Process/P. provides response for flow/everything's 'rosy'

Interviewer: Is that with people here or is that..
/

Research Question/prompting question

Penny: No that's to do with the Club that we were talking about, we get our meeting.

/Content/contact with friends/activities with friends/segregated activities

Interviewer: So do you work at the Factory Penny?
/

Research Question/prompting question

Penny: No I do not (no) I used to work but I don't (right) no, and I'm err, I get out

Interviewer: You get out but you don't work any more

Penny: I don't work.. I have worked (yeah) done part time been to school, done part time but umm I'm just waiting now see what's, I want another little job but I'm waiting for it to come through (right) and that's with the security people in Town, gotta wait what they gonna get me. I have worked in a pub so (excellent) yeah

Interviewer: So the the it sounds like the social club, or the club through the factory (yeah) that sounds like that's quite a social thing that you do all these activities together...
/

Research Question/prompting question
Penny: Well we go every Friday, and when it's Christmas we go.
Christmas, I didn't go Christmas cos I had it here but I go on a Friday.
/Content/contact with friends/activities with friends/segregated activities

Interviewer: Are there, are any of them other CSS Clients, are any of the people in that, who go to that club also CSS Clients, ? you see people like Jim or Mark....
/Research Question/promoting question

Penny: No No No
/Process/P. provides response for flow/Rejection of the image of LD?

Interviewer: Right they're just staff who work there (hmm) oh so you've got quite a nice social...
/Research Question/promoting question
/Process/Interviewer provides response/pretending everything is fine for them

Penny: Yeah I've got a nice social life yes.
/Process/P. provides response for flow/everything's 'rosy'
/Process/Variation

Interviewer: Yeah yeah and you feel really included in everything you get to do (hmm). Yes okay. Umm I wondering whether you, what is similar what is the same about you and some of your friends?
What do you think is alike between you?
/Research Question
/Process/Interviewer provides response/pretending everything is fine for them

Penny: I don't know
/Process/P. provides response for flow/doesn't know how to answer

Interviewer: No, Is it your age or er, its sounds like your interests, you all share interest in families
/Research Question/promoting question

Penny: Yes we do we do (hmm) yes we do
/Process/P. provides response for flow/acquiescent response?

Interviewer: But you can't think of anything else?
/Research Question/promoting question

Penny: No No
/Process/P. provides response for flow/doesn't know how to answer

Interviewer: No okay. If one of the aunties was here what do you think umm she would, how do you think she'd describe you to me?
/Research Question

Penny: I don't know (laughs)
/Process/P. provides response for flow/doesn't know how to answer
/Process/P. provides response for flow/defensive statement?

Interviewer: No
/Research Question/promoting question

Penny: Don't know
Interviewer: Do you know what your friends like most about you?

Penny: Oh they like me and I do I do help out in the dining room (hmm) wash up and er do little odd jobs for..

Interviewer: Yeah and you know they like you but you're not sure what it is about you they like

Penny: Well they they like me they like me, I get me legged pulled and they get their leg pulled, so er umm oh yes we do our little bit for the community (yeah) I do a bit see and er we get a laugh out of it. Yes.

Interviewer: Can you think of any people that you know who you feel very different from? Do you know what that means, d'you know what I mean?

Penny: No

Interviewer: Umm ..

Penny: I know it's awkward for you

Interviewer: No no its not awkward don't worry. Umm I'm wondering like, if you had a twin you'd be the same

Penny: They'd be the same

Interviewer: And the opposite of that is the being different, umm

Penny: They'd be some different

Interviewer: They'd be, I'm using the same word to explain it though, they would be, instead of being the same, they wouldn't be the same (no, ahh). And I'm wondering if you can think of how you're not the same as someone you know? What's the difference? (Pause) Just tell me if I'm not making sense to you Penny, is that not making much, sense because that was a very complicated way of explaining it.

Penny: One's perfect and the other one's not perfect Do you mean soming like that

Interviewer: Maybe yes yes
Well they can't help it can they (no no). See I was brought up in a home (oh right, I didn't know that) Whispers: Oh yes I was brought up in a home. Umm out in Sussex (right) big banana, Doctor banada (banardo's) I was I was about five and I got I had tonsillitis, and I was queer for months and months and months, and something else went wrong and er me mother said Oh whispers something unintelligible on tape.. I wanted to come home to England that's right and er I had bronchitis, I had I've had a very bad illness I got over that when father was alive he said you must bring Penny home I was about seven. When the second war was on I had to be they wanted home er I er Graham my mother adopted Graham cos he lost his mother and father and she bought him up and she said ooh we must go and get Penny, he's married now and er he's got grown up children, two doggies and er his sone works for the airport, his daughter she works up er she's er she works for the British Railways. on she works the computer, yeah she's got a good job, he's got a good job. She's courting he's not married, he's home with mum and dad, umm and er...

/Process/P. provides response for flow/telling bit of life story/of experience of of being LD

Interviewer So your mum brought Graham up
/Research Question/clarifying question

Penny She bought him up when he was small and he said oh go and get her, so he brought me home
/Process/P. provides response for flow/telling bit of life story/of experience of being LD

Interviewer Graham bought you home
/Research Question/clarifying question

Penny Yes he said you're a new button to when I bought you home (laughs) and er now I now, after world war was all over army, he left when he's eighteen he was a draughtsman he wanted to get home to England, cos it was only me mum and Graham, dad passed away with cancer and er we coped we coped, then we had doggies and cats tortoise I haven't got my tortoise now, Matthew got it now and er we co, we managed, we managed... 'til my brother er he saved up to get a house
/Process/P. provides response for flow/telling bit of life story/of experience of being LD
/Process/P. provides response for flow/telling of other's instead of themselves
/Process/P. provides response for flow/Rejection of the image of LD?

Interviewer Were you better by then because it sounds like...
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny I was better I've got over me illness. We brother went courting he went dancing and er Sheila lost her mum and dad during the war and er her brother went courting and got married had children that's them, Matthew and Sally
/Process/P. provides response for flow/telling of other's instead of themselves
/Process/P. provides response for flow/Rejection of the image of LD?

Interviewer So does Graham feel like a brother, sorry to interrupt..
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny Well he's a step brother
And did you feel close to him?

Yes we did we did we did yes yes yes and er so you know we manage we manage. I do ask him how's Graham they said oh he's fine he's fine umm he went to my brother's wedding I been to four weddings I went to Sally's wedding, my brothers wedding and er Graham's wedding I went to another friend if Graham's wedding I been to four weddings but r no I went to Matthew and Catherine's wedding yeah very nice got together with the family other ha, brothers and sisters half of the family, yeah yes

I'd say again that you, obviously you've got strong feelings for your family they're very important?

I have

Would you like to see more of them or do you...

I like to see more of them but I can't but they you know they're so busy but they do phone me or I phone them you know

They're your mother's family so does that, does that mean it feels a bit separate to you?

No no no no

You like to keep in touch with what's going on with them all

Yes yes yes.

Right okay. If you could pick the perfect friend could you describe what they'd be like

I don't know
Interviewer: Would they have, what kind of characteristics would they have, would they be funny, and warm and

Penny: Funny and warm I s'pose. Yes yes I have got a good friend I don't ring him up to often but he he's got a nice he's got a farm I been there once, he's a relation of my mother but he's got he likes animals I'm going again soon but he's very nice, his wife's very nice They've got a little boy.

Interviewer: I know I keep asking it, but what's nice about him? What do you think is nice about him?

Penny: well the animals they're very nice, he's got a married daughter and a married son and the mum and dad's there cos they've got oh a big place, very nice

Interviewer: And you like going there

Penny: I like I like the farm yes

Interviewer: Is it seeing the animals that you like

Penny: Yes yes yes

Interviewer: Okay. What sort of person would you not want to be friends with?

Penny: I don't know. Some are nice some are alright but er , I s'pose you get used to em don't you.

Interviewer: What even people you don't want to be friendly with?

Penny: I haven't

Interviewer: You haven't had that?

Penny: No I haven't had that, no

Interviewer: Who do you find easiest to talk to, out of all the people you know who do you find easiest to talk to?
Penny: Well, Jean sometimes we have a natter, and Sue I like Sue we have a good old laugh and a natter. /Content/Closeness/easy to talk to/staff

Interviewer: Do you think its important to be able to talk to someone? /Research Question/prompting question

Penny: Yes yes, (is that..) I do with Ralph when he comes we have a natter. /Content/Closeness/easy to talk to/staff

Interviewer: And are you likely to talk to him if something's worrying you /Research Question/prompting question

Penny: Oh yes he sorts it out (yes) and Natasha when she comes and er and Jean another come last night to see me, she was very nice she's gonna do Natasha's job, she's another psychiatrist, she only just started (right) she's gonna take over a month, to do a month /Content/Closeness/easy to talk to/why easier to talk to/because they helped (eg. to be more independent)

Interviewer: What do you find helpful about talking? /Research Question/prompting question

Penny: You past I s'pose, you know what you been through and what you haven't been through. Well we don't you know ... /Content/Closeness/benefits of talking to people

Interviewer: You find that quite helpful to be able to talk through the past /Research Question/clarifying question

Penny: Oh yes yes yes yes /Content/Closeness/benefits of talking to people

Interviewer: And probably because you've just met me that would be quite difficult to do (yeah) but with someone like Ralph who you've know a long time /Research Question/prompting question

Penny: I've known Ralph a long time

Interviewer: Does that make it easier or harder to talk about personal things? /Research Question/prompting question

Penny: when you get used to them no /Process/P. provides response for flow/doesn't quite add up!

Interviewer: But is it about getting used to someone and then feeling able to talk /Research Question/prompting question

Penny: Well it was in the first place you know, I had a lot of things on me mind but they helped me to get through it, helped me to get through I've I've been through a bad patch but, I've just got over it and er /Process/P. provides response for flow/related
Interviewer: And you feel that that is something that you're getting enough support with?

Penny: Oh yes I get enough support yes.

Interviewer: There's nothing you'd like me to raise as something.

Penny: (Laughing) no no They know. They know yes they're very good yes.

Interviewer: Who do you think knows the most about you?

Penny: I don't know.

Interviewer: Can you have a guess, out of all the people you know who do you think might know you best?

Penny: Ralph and Corina the secretary, yes they one I think I phone up with such and such, things and they come and do it. They're very good.

Interviewer: Can you think of a time when you have opened up and talked about personal things ....

Penny: I have I have but it didn't go off you know, but I've got down I er I after my mother went I was I was umm it knocked me back I was ghastly, but it knocked me back after, now I'm seem to build up now you know.

Interviewer: Your getting better?

Penny: I'm getting better and I go to me doctors.

Interviewer: Have you ever talked to someone about things like that though and wished that you hadn't, has it ever backfired?

Penny: No I don't know don't know.

Interviewer: I'm wondering I think I might have asked this, what make's it easier for you to talk to Ralph rather than someone else, can you think what make's it easier to talk to him?

Penny: I might get a bit embarrassed but he does understand he put me right he does put me right but er oh yes oh yes. They're pretty good the Teams are both the Teams they come see me now again, yes.
Interviewer: Well we've talked a lot about what you're talking to other people, have you got people who talk to you and tell you their problems?

Penny: No no no

Interviewer: Would you like that to happen or...

Penny: No No (laughs) I might cope but umm I'm coping well

Interviewer: But you don't want to be someone people come and pour their heart out to

Penny: Well I listen I listen and tell em tell em nicely but no no

Interviewer: That's not for you?

Penny: Not for me no

Interviewer: Do you talk to some friends more than others?

Penny: I do when I'm at home, talk to aunties cos they do listen

Interviewer: Do you help any of your friends out?

Penny: No I go to lunch

Interviewer: Right you go, and do you, you were saying earlier you help in the dining room a little bit

Penny: Yes wash up tidy up

Interviewer: That sort of thing, is that the sort of thing you might do for your friends?

Penny: Well yes. Well when we have dos Christmas we're all put chair, all help out, put chairs away tidy up the floors, wash up, all we all wash up, all all all mix together

Interviewer: All chip in
Penny: Yeah all chip in.

Interviewer: And do you, do your friends help you out, you were saying maybe you might phone Ralph if there's something wrong, but are there other things that your friends do to help you out?

Penny: No but I phone Ralph you know.

Interviewer: So if you need a bit of help does it tend to be him that you phone?

Penny: Yeah.

Interviewer: And Carina, she's very nice.

Penny: Right.

Interviewer: Do you ever feel that you do more for your friends than they do for you?

Penny: That was life, this and that, it's in-between isn't it? we do help each other out yes yes, Stella when she comes she's very nice we we like that.

Interviewer: Is Stella a family person or is she?

Penny: Yes she's a family, she's got two doggies.

Interviewer: But she's not your family.

Penny: No.

Interviewer: She's one of the support CSS workers (yes yes) right.

Penny: Yes yes she's very nice.

Interviewer: Is Stella a family person or is she?

Penny: Yes she's a family, she's got two doggies.

Interviewer: But she's not your family.

Penny: No.

Interviewer: She's one of the support CSS workers (yes yes) right.

Penny: Yes yes she's very nice.

Interviewer: What well we're almost finished, I suppose the last thing I'm interested in Penny is do you what do you think is missing from your relationships, what would you like to be different?

Penny: Don't know, really can't tell you, but I'm getting on with support and they're very pleased what I do but er...
More friendship but er see it takes one step ahead if you want friendships

One step ahead gotta take it bit by bit

Yes, and feel your confident yes yes. It did here but I I'm alright here, carry on

How do you know when you trust someone? Do you think you know it?

laughs) don't know but 'em

Is trust important to you?

Hmm but er

Do you know what I mean when I say trust

Well you trust 'em first, how do you mean I trust them? Can you put it another way

Emm like you were saying getting to know someone takes a while...

It takes a while to know 'em then you know you're alright

That's "alright" (yes yes) you know you're alright with them (yes yes yes)

...Outings, who do you go out for outings, and holidays, was that with the people here?

Yes we go out to the seaside, I been to four sea sides (gosh) yes so er yes we do what you would do when you're out
you go shopping, go to the restaurant to have your lunch, then on to the beach, go to museum

/Content/contact with friends/activities with friends

Interviewer
And who do you do that with?
/Research Question/clarifying question

Penny
With staff here, they hire coach and we go out, it's very nice very nice.
/Content/contact with friends/activities with friends/community based

Interviewer
Do you think things are better now in terms of having friendships than maybe when you were younger?
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny
probably but er I got on with me mother alright and er...
/Process/P. provides response for flow/response covers general difficulties and differences of opportunity

Interviewer
Was she the person you spent most of your time with
/Research Question/clarifying question

Penny
Yes, me mother yes
/Content/social network/family as friends

Interviewer
So it must have been quite a shock to move somewhere like this
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny
Well it was but we had aunties popping in and out you know
/Process/P. provides response for flow/everything's 'rosy'

Interviewer
and they knew what you were trying to cope with..
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny
oh yes, they were very good, very helpful yes and em hmm yes yes
/Content/Support needed/support given
/Process/P. provides response for flow/everything's 'rosy'

Interviewer
So in terms of help you do think it would be nice to have more friends but that you have to go at a slow pace
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny
Slow slow slow
/Process/P. provides response for flow/acquiescent response?

Interviewer
Can you think of any help that you would like in making more friendships
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny
I s'pose you got to be there for them and they gotta be there for you I s'pose something like that yes yes
/Process/P. provides response for flow/related/refers to main discourse

Interviewer
So again its about knowing you're alright with someone
/Research Question/prompting question

Penny
Oh yes yes yes yes, when you do trust them, I do trust them yes they're very sweet
/Process/P. provides response for flow/everything's 'rosy'
Interviewer: Well I've asked all the questions I want to ask Penny are there any questions you want to ask me.

Penny: I like it here yes, hmm

Interviewer: We've talked about some quite personal and difficult things about your mum and family and when you were younger and I'm just wondering how you're feeling right now, is there anything you want to raise.

Penny: No no I'm quite happy as I am yes yes

Interviewer: Well thank you for taking part and if later on when I go umm or in the next few days if you find things we've talked about have upset you and you want to talk to someone then there are, obviously there's Ralph and your support workers (oh yes) but they also know how to get in touch with me if you (yes) want to talk to me.

Penny: No it was lovely thanks for coming

Interviewer: No it was nice to meet you thanks again for agreeing to take part.