Constructions of personal relationships: Older women in conversation

Thesis

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oro.open.ac.uk
Jane Marie Montague
BSc (Hons)

Constructions of personal relationships: Older women in conversation

PhD
Faculty of Health and Social Care
Open University
September 2005
Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine how older women construct their relationships in talk with three features distinguishing the study: a) myself as a member of the group of conversationalists; b) observing and recording relationships as talk-in-interaction; and c) using visual stimuli as a topic for talk. The report is located primarily within an ethnomethodologically based interest in talk-in-interaction, which influenced both the choice of participants and the methodology. Conversations about relationships are generated between older women known both to the researcher and to each other. Two types of occasioned talk of a purposeful nature are audio-recorded – semi-structured interviews and conversations focusing on personal photographs. The talk is then transcribed in detail and the resulting data closely analysed. By examining both sequencing and membership categorisation, aspects of the talk become hearable as relationships-in-interaction. Several features are reportable from this micro-analysis of the talk. One is indexicality – the talk is located in a particular context and links in detail to the particular women talking and the specific topic being talked about. Another is the shared knowledge and understanding that the participants make relevant and hearable in the different identity constructions that are used. Remembered accounts are significant in the conversations and one of the ways in which these memories are presented is in the form of stories and second stories, from both the researcher and from the other conversationalists. In summary the research makes possible a discussion of relationships-in-interaction between women who know each other. Their relationships are made hearable through storied remembering prompted by questions and personal photographs. This discussion builds on previous work that investigates personal relationships and identifies a novel means of generating talk-in-interaction.
Acknowledgements

I have many people to thank for their support. First I should mention my eight participants – Kate, Rebecca, Helen, Millicent, Marie, Stella, Audrey and Ellen – for the many interesting hours of conversation we had. I could not have reached this point without the patience of my supervisors Pam Shakespeare and Bill Bytheway: both have taught me such a lot in the last four years. I have had many interesting conversations about research with my colleagues in CABS and QWIP. I would like to thank Stephanie Taylor and Mary Horton-Salway for their very useful comments when the going was tough and special thanks go to Sally Wiggins and Caroline Holland for being my ‘critical readers’.

I have made many great friends at the Open University but would particularly like to thank Sarah Seymour-Smith, Rebecca Jones and Masaaki Morishita for making me feel so welcome right from the start and Carina Paine for our mutual pep talks throughout. My time in the office would not have been anywhere near as enjoyable without my regular office buddies – Jackie Topp, Kat Stothard, Liz Tilley, Katherine Owen and Nina Nissen – and of course thanks to Andrew Clark for visiting regularly with coffee and biscuits!

I have a great family and lots of friends who have contributed so much to me being able to complete this research. Thanks to my long-suffering children who probably think their Mum will be a permanent student: Melissa, Carrie and Jamie and especially to Mel and Tony for providing a base for me when I needed to be down south. Also thanks to Mum and Dad, Linda and Paul, Spook and Nikki, Deb and Tim, Mick, Matt, Becky and Cressi, Gina, John and Dan who have provided me with much needed emotional, financial and alcoholic support! A special mention for Katie and Abi who have brightened my life for the last two and a half years and I’m sure will continue to do so. My final thanks go to Jay for providing me with the time to finish my thesis and the laptop to type it up on!
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is about personal relationships. More specifically it is about how older women who are members of a relationship network construct their relationships in and through their talk. The thesis also documents features of my own relationships with these women, both as a researcher and as a member of the network. I present this introductory chapter in four sections. First I briefly discuss some background to my research decisions before I look in more depth at how I chose the people who populate my thesis. Next I introduce and discuss the three research questions that the thesis addresses. Finally I outline the structure of the thesis summarising each chapter and some links between them.

1.2 Background

Three main areas of concern informed my initial choice of research topic and the research approach I adopted. The first was my perception of, and opposition to, what appeared to me to be a bias in much social psychological research toward the study of individual aspects of relationships using a realist epistemology (e.g. Ickes & Duck, 2000b). The limitations and constraints accompanying this approach have become a common focus of
critique for researchers beginning from contrasting epistemological positions (Miell & Dallos, 1996; Shotter, 1992). My own engagement with an alternative way of exploring relationships has led to a more positive and rounded view of the older women I investigated.

A second issue (and one that particularly informed some of my methodological decisions) was what I perceived to be the generally pathologised account of older people made available through gerontological and psychological research. Coupland, Coupland and Giles (1991) asserted that the elderly do not consistently feature within social psychological research and a more recent review of a range of social scientific literature on older people (Phillipson, 1997), on the whole highlighted their negative construction. The main aims of research Phillipson discussed were, for example, to discover ways of enriching older people’s lives, to help them cope and so on. Of relevance here too is the work of feminist researchers. They also argue against the largely negative view of older people that is available through both academic and popular literature (see for example Bernard & Meade, 1993). Some of these arguments have also been addressed more recently by researchers from a discursive psychological perspective, such as Nikander (2003) and Paoletti (1998), and from a social gerontological standpoint such as Burholt and Wenger (1998; 2001) and Bytheway (1997). The research reported here is intended to supplement this more positive slant by using a novel means to explore the conversations of a group of older women.

The third area of concern was my role as the researcher. ‘Researcher’ may seem a straightforward category but the role carries all sorts of implications for the progression of the research and prompts many questions about it. There are of course a series of practical questions. Is the researcher actively involved in the data generation or does she take an observational role? Is she overtly researching her chosen topic or is her role covert? She may choose to research existing data and if so how do decisions around which type of data
to use affect choices of what to include in a research study and what to disregard?
Moreover there are issues around the positioning of the researcher in the research
endeavour. How is she to be integrated into the research? Historically, within positivism,
objectivity has been a guiding principle, but many preoccupations within qualitative
research nowadays privilege reflexivity and problematise the place of the researcher within
the research (Banister, 1999; Lynch, 2000).

In this thesis I comment on my place in the research. This discussion is partly
informed by ethnomethodology – a branch of social scientific research that has taken an
interest in exploring how familiarity or non-familiarity can affect qualitative research. For
example one might conduct research with ‘strangers’ – much research in experimental
social psychology is done in this way. Alternatively, research can be undertaken as a
stranger. Insights for this type of approach were first suggested by Schuetz (1944; 1945)
and later adopted and extended by Garfinkel (1967) in his design of ‘breaching’
experiments. By interacting in well-known situations as someone unfamiliar with the
required behaviours (i.e. breaching the familiar patterns), the often unnoticed, daily
features of life are brought to light.

Familiarity too can provide an excellent analytic resource as is demonstrated in a
range of traditional ethnography. The ethnographic researcher, for example, immerses
herself into the community in which her research is conducted (Hammersley & Atkinson,
1995; Van Maanen, 1988). Her aim is to become part of the group being studied in order
to understand everyday features of their life. Investigations such as those that Denzin
(1989) calls interpretive ethnography foreground the process of being an ethnographer and
demonstrate how this informs being in the field. At the same time this approach enables
the ethnographer to use her personal self as a resource (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000;
Silverman, 1997).
One of the key features of this thesis takes account of this discussion of familiarity and unfamiliarity by investigating my duality as both a researcher and a member of the network I am investigating. Taking this feature into account, along with the ethnomethodological approach that I adopt for my analysis, my research forms a link between social psychological and sociological investigations into relationships. I am interested in exploring the personal relationships that form the usual focus for investigation in social psychology, while also wanting to look at how these relationships are constructed in interactions between the co-conversationalists.

1.3 Recruitment

A great deal of research in psychology has looked at the beginning or ending of relationships, investigating features such as attraction and the formation of relationships (Berscheid & Walster, 1978) and their breakdown (Harvey, Wells, & Alvarez, 1978). Instead of looking at these macro features my interest is in exploring how protagonists maintain the everyday, ongoing aspects of their relationships. There are a number of ways in which I could approach this topic, such as looking at how people already in relationships behave toward each other or exploring particular non-verbal interactional details of relationships. However, my overall research aim is to explore how the network members’ relationships are constructed in and through their talk. What do they make relevant in talk to the continuance of their ongoing relationships? Clearly this sort of interest orients to minute aspects of conversational interaction rather than generalising to a large population. Consequently I decided to study a small group of women in depth.

At the same time as I started to make these methodological decisions, I was also reading around the development of ethnomethodological tools of analysis, based in the work of Garfinkel (1967), Sacks (1992a; 1992b) and other ethnomethodological scholars (e.g. Schenkein, 1978; Silverman, 1998). The epistemological ideas underlying this
approach helped to firm my decisions about the participant network. Ethnomethodologists focus on exploring how people make sense of and understand their world. I discuss this more fully in the next chapter but basically ethnomethodologists are interested in the taken-for-granted features of talk in everyday interactions. Developing Garfinkel's (1967) initial ideas Sacks (1984a) emphasises the effectiveness of studying the 'machinery' underlying the ordinary, mundane talk that makes up all of our conversations. He also highlights the importance of building up ranges of examples of different conversational devices. The data for my research spans more than 12 hours of talk, generated through eleven conversations, therefore giving an abundant corpus for this type of analysis (see Appendix B).

In my attempt to address these ethnomethodological principles and to add a new dimension to the social scientific understanding of relationships I speculated that a group of women who already had established relationships with one another would provide a conversational richness around mundane aspects of relationships not available in an experimental context. In addition, concentrating on a relationship network of which I was a member would enable me to take part in the conversations as a familiar person as well as being there as a researcher. This membership of the network would in turn alleviate some of the problems I was beginning to identify in designing the research process.

One of the features of existing relationship research I had identified as problematic for example, was the concentration on researching relationships through the interactions of strangers. Though extremely informative as far as establishing rapport, getting to know one another and beginning a relationship was concerned, this type of research did not address my area of interest – the maintenance strategies of long-established relationships. To this end it made sense to research a network of women who were already familiar with one another. I was also concerned to address the positivist notion of objectivity. Researching a group in which I too was a member would help address this issue. Any
long-term relational strategies displayed would be present within the whole of our interactions – I would be integrated into the talk as a co-conversationalist and be involved not solely as a researcher. My membership would allow my contribution as a person familiar with events and people being discussed and any questions of clarification would be as someone at least partly familiar with the topic under discussion. My aim as someone who had (and still has) ongoing relationships with all of the women who agreed to take part in my research – either as friends or family members – was to lessen some of the effects that my presence as researcher may have on the ensuing conversations.

The aim to be integrated into the research process as more than merely the researcher highlighted a range of issues – both during the conversations and then later in the analysis – that I had not previously considered. The strangeness of the ‘different-from-usual’ nature of our interactions that make up my research data is something I draw attention to in my empirical chapters and was documented in my research diary where I noted the nervousness with which I approached the first set of conversations with the women. Considering that some of these are close family members (e.g. my mother and two aunts) and others are longstanding family friends, this nervousness is not something I usually encountered during conversations with them. But these conversations were not the usual ones that we had. In them the participants were to some extent being directed by me about what they could and should talk about, as well as having everything they said recorded. This had two effects on the resulting data. First, it meant that the relationship talk generated would almost certainly be different from that which would occur in a more mundane setting – it would no doubt be more focused because it was part of a task rather than just a ‘chat’ over a coffee. Second, it also meant that even before the conversations took place they were imbued with a sense that we had to ‘get them right’ – there would be no chance to go back and do them again.
This was demonstrated in a mix-up with Kate, my first participant, over the
interview time I had arranged with her. She had tried to cancel but I had not received her
message so when I arrived she was not prepared for the interview. She insisted on going
ahead however, and would not consider rearranging the meeting because I had ‘taken lots
of trouble’ to set it up and she wanted to ‘be as helpful’ as possible. The unusual nature of
the conversations was also sometimes explicitly oriented to in the recorded talk so that a
participant might ask whether she was ‘doing it right’ or whether she was ‘saying’ what I
wanted her to say. In this way therefore, despite my aim to generate a set of ordinary,
everyday conversations around relationships these are quite different from those
conversations that might take place between us on a day-to-day basis. The complex
connections we have as a familiar group, as well as those linking us as women brought
together for research purposes all had a part in shaping the talk that took place. These
connections and the range of identities we adopt in the course of the conversations are
explored in my analysis.

I intended, as part of my consideration of ethics when initially planning the
research, to give each of the participants either a copy of their taped conversations with
me, or a summary of what they said during our conversations. In the end I decided against
giving them written transcripts of their interactions as these are generally quite difficult to
follow when constructed for a discursive analysis. As the research progressed and I
became more aware of the overall unusual nature of our conversations it seemed even more
important give them some opportunity for feedback and to be able to come back to me on
any issues that they felt concerned about after listening to the tapes. I asked each of the
women at our second meeting if they had any comments to make about the tapes. Most of
them had none and it was not always clear whether they had even listened to the tapes.
Only one commented that she had begun to listen to herself but couldn’t believe she
‘sounded like that’ so put the tape at the back of a drawer. I had to conclude from this that
none of the participants had any concerns about what she had discussed with me in our initial meetings and indeed, when asked, each of the women said no.

Before outlining the recruitment procedure two other points regarding ethics and related issues are important to note: my use of pseudonyms throughout the thesis (except for myself) and the distinction I make in my writing between my roles in the research process. It is clear that anyone with an interest in discovering the actual identities of my participants would not find it too difficult to trace them through their relationships to me. Nevertheless, throughout the thesis I replace any actual names, localities and so on that appear in the conversations. My initial reason for this was to address the general ethics of conducting a research study (See Appendix E for Consent Form). I drew attention to the issue of anonymising the data explicitly with each of the women, both through the consent form that they signed at our first meeting and through a discussion of why I was asking them to sign it. None of the women expressed a concern about this issue and I was asked why I thought it necessary to change their names (one of them even remarked that she would be famous!) However though each of the women gave her full permission for me to use her words in any way I needed, and none of the topics we talked about were marked by them as confidential, it seemed appropriate to protect their identities as far as possible. Consequently I made the conscious decision to adopt pseudonyms in order to maintain my participants’ anonymity as much as I could. My decision was informed by a book written by Rachel Simon (2003) about her disabled sister in which she acknowledged that keeping her sister’s identity totally secret would be impossible. However, through disguising names of other people and any locational details she addressed the issue to some extent. Once I had made this decision and begun to implement it my analysis highlighted a particular advantage of the use of pseudonyms. As detailed I have a personal connection to each of the women who took part in the study. Using pseudonyms to identify each of them helped me maintain a personal distance during the analysis that would perhaps not have
been possible if I had used their actual names. Therefore even though the subjectivity of my approach is acknowledged, this distance gave a certain amount of objectivity when exploring the talk in detail and helped me ‘forget’ the women as I knew them and to focus on their talk and on them as research participants.

The effectiveness of the distancing created by the identities I have constructed for them became obvious once I began my analysis. When meeting participants who I don’t regularly come into contact with, I have sometimes had to stop myself using their pseudonym to address them and ask myself what they are actually called. Related to this is the personal closeness I feel to these women in writing the thesis. I am immersed daily in aspects of their lives, but one of them – who I had not seen for over a year during the research process – had to be reminded who I was when we met recently.

The distancing made possible by using pseudonyms relates to my second point of discussion here. Though I do not adopt a pseudonym for myself, in writing my thesis I use different terms of address for myself. With these I create a distance between myself ‘the researcher’ who reports the process, and myself ‘the participant’ who was a co-conversationalist. So I write about myself in my research role using the personal pronoun ‘I’ – it is ‘I’ who has conducted the research and ‘I’ who is writing it up. However, in analysing my own conversational contributions alongside those of everyone else I found that referring to myself as an equal co-participant – as ‘Jane’ – facilitated my analysis in the same way as my use of pseudonyms did for the others. The separation of my research and co-participant identities has enabled me to explore my talk similarly to that of the other co-conversationalists, a feature I demonstrate in more depth in my empirical chapters.

1.3.1 Recruiting the participants

As I have noted previously, given my specific interest in the construction of personal relationships through talk I decided to base my research on a group of which I had been
part all of my life – family members and long-term friends. I had previously conducted research with some of them and all who took part had expressed their eagerness to do something similar in the future. As one (Polly) remarked ‘We don’t usually get to talk about ourselves like this’ and another (Helen) echoed this when she said she would ‘love to do something else’ for me. This enthusiasm gave me a suitable group of potentially willing participants. Though my focus was narrowed to one specific relationship network, it offered links with many potential participants. Much work has been done on network analysis (Boissevain, 1974; Boissevain & Mitchell, 1973; Brandes & Erlebach, 2005). In social gerontology this examination of networks has been adapted by, for example Clare Wenger and Vanessa Burholt (Burholt & Wenger, 1998; Wenger & Burholt, 2001) and by Miriam Bernard and colleagues (Bernard, Phillipson, Phillips, & Ogg, 2001; Phillips, Bernard, Phillipson, & Ogg, 2000). The latter group in particular has explored how friendship – a concept central to my thesis – is an important network constituent. Though network analysis is not a concept that I problematise here the idea of unboundedness first coined by Barnes (cited in Boissevain & Mitchell, 1973) sums up the flexibility of the network I explore and can be seen in the choices I made around possible participants. I could have chosen exactly the same group of women as I had interviewed for my previous study for example. Instead I recruited a sample of participants, starting with two of the women in this earlier study, and then approaching others who they suggested might be willing to take part. This indicated both my recognition of the flexibility of networks and that they are active entities constantly being redefined both by the people involved in them and the circumstances surrounding them.

One of my previous participants, my mother (Marie), seemed to me the obvious person to consult initially about potential participants. We have a close relationship – talking and visiting one another every week. In addition to being familiar with my research interests, she was friendly with all of the women who had been part of my
previous project. Consequently, I thought she might be able to tell me whether they were still available, as well as indicating whether she too would be willing to participate. I was effectively approaching her as an informant who would be able to 'read the situation' and propose a strategy of engagement with other potential participants that heightened the chances of collaboration. This was a particularly interesting process. Marie has no experience of doing research herself but through her member’s knowledge of the group had an expertise in choosing the participants hinging on her understanding of what was required for the research. The role that she took can be understood as a 'translation role' where two different cultures are mediated and is near to the role of 'informant' in traditional ethnography. Acting as a filter for my ideas she helped me form my initial list of possible participants.

1.3.2 Introducing the participants

Here I include some general information about the women and their network (see Appendix A for a selection of biographical information about each of them). As a result of my initial conversation with Marie, and after speaking to some of the other women who had previously taken part, I sent introductory letters about my research to some who had not formerly been involved (see Appendix D). I recruited Kate and Rebecca after Marie suggested them, and my recorded conversations with each of them featured an exchange of ideas about who else might participate. Apart from Marie, and later Millicent, each participant was recommended by at least one of the others. Using this iterative process the final group consisted of women suggested by each other rather than solely chosen by me. From the range of suggested names the final group was partly contingent on who was available at the time and partly recruited through some focused decision-making. For example, it was particularly important for the second stage of my research to have women who had close personal friendships with each other. In total 17 names were finally
Chapter 1: Introduction

suggested as potential participants. Out of these eleven were invited to participate, three refused or were unable so the final number taking part was eight. Constructing the sample in this way reflected my overall aim of conducting research largely 'undirected' by me and after Marie, Kate and Rebecca, I went on to recruit Helen, Millicent, Stella, Ellen and Audrey, all of whom were connected through familial or social links.

I aimed to generate data using two methods: I wanted to speak to each participant individually but I also wanted to bring women together who already had close relationships with each other within the network, a decision that determined the final group. To this end I ‘paired up’ suggested names of women whose relationships were fairly close and invited them to talk together. I planned conversations involving: Kate and Rebecca; Helen and Marie; Stella and Millicent; and Ellen and Audrey. The conversation arranged between Stella and Millicent did not take place however, because soon after her participation in the first stage Stella’s husband became seriously ill.

As introduced earlier in the chapter, my interest was in talking to a group of women who remained independent and who were still able to take an active role in their families, their local community and so on. The plan to conduct two stages of research with such an active group brought with it difficulties that I had not accounted for in my original planning. For example, Stella led a particularly busy life and I found it exceedingly difficult to arrange a date for her first interview where we were both available. Similarly, some of the other women had very busy social lives as well as a range of family commitments, all of which impeded the progress of the research project to some degree. This resulted in some of the fieldwork days being very intensive: one day, for instance, I conducted three separate interviews (with Helen, Millicent and Marie). In contrast the conversation with Audrey and Ellen took place some time after the rest of the fieldwork had been completed. Ellen had been abroad to visit her daughter and Audrey to visit her son both for substantial lengths of time. These absences prevented them being available
for the planned joint interaction until several months after the others had been recorded. (See Appendix G for fieldwork timetable).

Early in the research process, however, it struck me that despite these minor timetabling issues my strategy was proving well chosen. As I began to transcribe the first conversational interviews I quickly discerned that a range of people and events familiar to me were talked about. The same names regularly appeared in the accounts of the women's relationship networks. The personal connections between the eight chosen participants were important to my final decision. For example, the length of time that each pair had known one another was revealed in their conversations: Kate and Rebecca are long-standing friends who live close by each other and have known each other for 20 years; Helen and Marie have been friends for more than 20 years and worked together for a long time; Ellen and Audrey met through work and have lived nearby and known each other for nearly 30 years.

My data, then, are these series of research conversations (approximately 12 hours in all), transcribed using the conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (see Appendix B). Above I have drawn from the conversations to provide information about the participants using the information as a transparent account of their lives. On the whole in this thesis, however, I use the data as a topic of investigation rather than as a transparent factual account. For example, the women's shared knowledge was evident within the conversations, such as in the ways they talked about the people they both knew. On other occasions such as when one referred to someone not known to the other I was struck by their ability to connect their accounts to their shared histories.

1.3.3 Who makes a good participant?

One of the features that became apparent during my first conversation with Marie about possible participants was that certain women would not make ‘good’ participants for
research. This feature was also evident in other conversations and particular explanations were offered about why these women would be unsuitable. For instance, I proposed Beryl who Marie discounted because ‘she never talks’. This lack of talkativeness was echoed in my conversation with Kate who observed, in regard to a potential participant, ‘she’s the loveliest person that you could possibly meet but she’s so quiet and reserved’.

This suggests a shared understanding that a ‘good’ participant is someone who ordinarily finds it easy to talk and so would not have any difficulty talking in the contrived setting of a research conversation. Researchers often discuss at length the question of who makes a ‘good’ participant but there is rarely any acknowledgement that prospective participants have views on this themselves. But, of course, views about ordinary social competence and, indeed, about expert competence are part of the common currency of conversation – it is usual for people to become ‘expert’ on a topic after only a brief encounter with it. Though Marie had no experience of conducting academic research herself, she is part of what has been termed the ‘interview society’ (Silverman, 1993). Not only this but she also had ‘inside knowledge’ of a concrete example on which to base her opinion – she took part in my previous study and so had some knowledge of what I might expect in this new project. Claiming or disclaiming competence or judging it, is an ongoing identity issue in talk and here the women claim some competence in understanding what constitutes adequate participation in the research project.

The common-sense understandings of research were demonstrated in all of my research conversations and also occurred during the recruitment process itself. I approached two of my previous participants – Ethel and Kitty – who had said I should get in touch if I ever needed to talk to them again. However, neither was able to take part in this research. Ethel was apologetic in declining the invitation but her increasing hearing problems made conversation difficult for her. She said she was particularly conscious of having to ask for things to be repeated, implying that a ‘good’ participant should be
someone who can hear and respond clearly as well as talk. Kitty cited failing health of a
different kind: she agreed at first to take part but subsequently changed her mind because
of her increasingly frequent stays in hospital. In each of these cases it was the woman
herself who problematised the issue of accessibility. However, accessibility of a different
kind was an issue with one of the women I had recruited. Despite being very willing to
take part, it was extremely difficult to set up a first meeting with her because she led such
an active social life. This issue was recognised by other participants as a ‘problem’ and I
spoke to at least one other participant where we agreed that a ‘good’ participant should fit
into the research timetable easily and should be available for the research whenever
required.

The women’s common-sense notions of who made a ‘good’ participant, when
linked to some of the more general issues of taking part in a research project, were relevant
for my research strategy. I definitely wanted to include women who would feel
comfortable talking in the presence of a tape recorder. Additionally, given the limited
amount of time I could allocate to the fieldwork, I needed to include women who would be
available when necessary. The data generation process is generally acknowledged to take
place in some kind of context with conditions for ‘successful’ data generation being
adhered to. People know that the conversation is not going to be casual, that it is going to
be for the record and that in research this is to be expected. And we can extrapolate from
various preliminary conversations that these conditions are about a proper record of the
event, ‘enough’ talk, and data generated within a timetable which springs basically from
the researcher’s own obligations.
1.4 Research questions

In this section I turn to the questions that directed the course of my research. Stated simply, they are:

- How are conversations indexical and in particular how is talk occasioned by viewing personal photographs?
- How do the participants orient to my contrasting identities of being a researcher and of being a member of the relationship network and how is this made relevant in the talk?
- How do the participants orient to relationships amongst themselves and make them relevant in the talk?

The first question links to my chosen research method of promoting occasioned talk through the use of personal photographs. I used this method, focusing on artefacts familiar to the woman, hoping that the resulting conversational data would be more mundane, situated and natural than the type of conversation facilitated in interviews. My reasoning was that talking about photographs is an ordinary interaction familiar to most people. Asking each of the invited participants to bring along their own personal photographs gave them more control over the discussion – the people who populated the photographs and the events pictured, often led them to talk more freely about other aspects of their relationships. The question I wanted to address was not how people talk about photographs and the relationships portrayed, but rather how relationships are revealed in conversations that are occasioned by them.

Using photographs as a basis for locally occasioned talk raised indexicality as a key issue. Garfinkel (1967) and others (e.g. Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1978) assert indexicality as part of conversation. I discuss this concept in more depth in Chapter 2, but simply put an indexical term is one that takes its meaning from the surrounding talk: context is an inevitable resource for understanding what is said, and knowing what to say
next. Using photographs presented a complex context, first of how to talk about the people in the photographs depending on the speaker’s relationship to them, and second to the other people in the research conversation. Third there is the issue of talk oriented to artefacts (such as photographs), which are referred to indexically; for example, ‘What’s that written on the back?’ or ‘Look here what’s this?’ People interact in an indexical way in a complex environment, and part of my research aim was to see how this was accomplished.

My second question reflects my interest in exploring how my roles as a member of the relationship network, and as someone who is researching it, affected the recorded conversations. I had two connected aims. One was to generate and support conversations in which the participants would feel at ease. The other was to occasion talk in which my own presence would not be considered unusual and would therefore be less intrusive than that of an unknown researcher. Both of these underlying aims spring from an ordinary member view that networks of familiarity generate easy conversation, and that lack of familiarity is likely to generate less easy conversation.

The third research question relates to an examination of relationships through an in-depth analysis of talk-in-interaction. Much psychological research using discursive methods examines interviews carried out by a researcher talking to participants who are known to them only through the research context (e.g. N. Coupland et al., 1991; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). My intention in choosing an existing network of women was to ensure that conversations would flow more easily than they would between women who had only just met. Also I hoped, not only that talk about relationships would occur, but also that the relationships between the participants would be made visible through their interaction.
1.5 Thesis outline

In Chapter 2 I review a range of literature pertinent to the aims in my thesis. This includes some of the research relevant to an exploration of relationships, from social psychology, ethnography and ethnomethodology. I also outline my theoretical approach of using conversation analysis and membership categorisation analysis, influenced by insights from both discursive psychology and ethnomethodology.

I expand in Chapter 3 on some of the ideas introduced in the first two chapters, drawing on literature that specifically links to my analytic concerns. Here I introduce discursive psychology and review a selection of research that has looked at relationships from an ethnomethodological perspective. Following this, I go on to explore conversational devices such as remembering and story telling, both prominent in the conversational data generated for this research.

In Chapter 4 I discuss issues that influenced my choice of two methods of data generation. The two methods resulted in a proliferation of data and in this chapter I outline my approach to transcription in the research.

Chapter 5 marks the beginning of my analysis. Here I concentrate on the use of personal photographs as a topic to talk around. I highlight a variety of positive features of using photographs in generating talk about relationships exploring features such as indexicality and membership categories.

In Chapter 6 I explore in more depth some of the issues I have introduced above (section 1.3) around the relational identities constructed in the talk. I look at how the different roles of participants— as researcher and participants and as family and friends – are made relevant, and how all of the participants orient to these roles during the course of the conversations. These roles take precedence at different times and are introduced into the talk in a variety of ways.
In Chapter 7 I focus on the means by which remembering is accomplished in conversation. On many occasions the co-conversationalists either explicitly refer to or implicate relationships or events located in the past. In these references they make use of a selection of conversational devices that highlight the remembered relationships under discussion, as well as the relationships between them.

Chapter 8 is my final empirical chapter. In it I discuss one particular strategy employed throughout the conversations – story telling. All of the participants tell stories about themselves and others to illustrate the points they are making, and my particular interest here is to explicate the use of second and subsequent stories. I demonstrate how telling a second story generates support and understanding in relation to the conversation that has preceded it.

I summarise the thesis as a whole and my conclusions in Chapter 9. My focus here is the contribution this study offers to the study of personal relationships. I also make some suggestions for future research using a similar ethnomethodological approach.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

My interest in the topic of relationships was initially stimulated by social psychology. The traditional approach of social psychology however, did not engage with mundane ongoing aspects of relationships and was generally only interested in talk as a transparent account of knowledge. Instead I found this set of interests catered for by the ethnomethodological tools of conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorisation analysis (MCA) and by the adjacent literature developed by discursive psychology. As I noted in Chapter 1, in planning my research I decided to focus on a network of women of which I was a part. This decision suggested that ethnographic literature would be a rich field, particularly the cusp area of ethnomethodologically informed ethnography.

In this chapter I address these interconnected areas. First I briefly describe how social psychology informed my initial decisions in the thesis before, second, looking at the ethnographic literature that guided my fieldwork. Third I consider the pertinent ethnomethodological insights that led to my choice of analytic tools. Fourth I briefly explore some significant examples of relationship research taking an ethnomethodological perspective.
2.2 Social psychology: Contextualising dynamic relationships

Much of the social psychology literature in personal relationships that initially interested me adopted a realist perspective (e.g. Acitelli, Duck, & West, 2000; Duck, 2002; Ickes & Duck, 2000b). One of the major theorists in the area of close relationships in social psychology is Steve Duck (e.g. Duck, 1994a; Duck, 1998, 1999, 1994b; Duck & Gilmour, 1981; Ickes & Duck, 2000b; Wood & Duck, 1995). He has drawn attention to under-researched areas (Wood & Duck, 1995), for example, the significance of day-to-day communication (Duck, Rutt, Hurst, & Strejc, 1991) and the lack of research attention into the detail of relationships (Acitelli et al., 2000). More recently Duck has called for an integration of aspects of historical context into relationship research (Duck, 2002: 44). He has suggested that, by incorporating participants’ own understandings of what has been said (Ickes & Gonzales, 1996), or by asking partners to discuss their own relational behaviour in order to illustrate its complexities (Acitelli & Holmberg, 1992), researchers’ understandings of the intricacies of relationships would be enriched. Duck and others (Ickes & Duck, 2000a; Miell & Dallos, 1996) also suggest that rather than viewing relationships as a ‘fixed’ entity their dynamic nature should be acknowledged. I found all of these approaches liberating but I was more concerned still with the mundane, ongoing and micro aspects of relationships.

2.3 Ethnography: The role of the researcher

As detailed in Chapter 1, I decided to focus on a group of women with whom I had close personal links. One of the reasons for this was purely opportunistic in that I had interviewed some of them previously and they had, at that time, expressed an interest in taking part in any further work that I decided to undertake. A second was that this community of women (including their connections to me) represented a very good ‘living’ example of the type of network I wanted to research. They presented me with an
opportunity to explore the place of the researcher in the research, specifically the issue of being an insider, of already knowing the people participating in the study. To do this I have used some ethnographic insights. Van Maanen (1988) defines ethnography as:

Written representation of a culture (or selected aspects of a culture). It carries quite serious intellectual and moral responsibilities, for the images of others inscribed in writing are most assuredly not neutral. Ethnographic writings can and do inform human conduct and judgment in innumerable ways by pointing to the choices and restrictions that reside at the very heart of social life.

(Van Maanen, 1988: 1)

In choosing to focus on a group of women with whom I am familiar I presented myself with an even denser version of this issue. My relationships with them would continue long after the research project was over and the thesis written. How to undertake and report it was significant to the continuance of our 'good relations', and my procedural decisions formed the very heart of the research project itself. In the following section I examine this 'insider' perspective through a look at some examples that focus on the different roles that a researcher may adopt during the research process (e.g. Gold, 1958; Kanuha, 2000; Olson, 1977)

2.3.1 Inclusivity in relationship research

My decision to focus on participants familiar to me brought to the fore a set of issues around my dual roles in the research. I was both participant and insider in the network in which the research took place, and researcher and outsider in introducing a set of concerns that almost certainly would not have been addressed in the network had I not chosen to adopt the researcher role. The effects of these roles on the fieldwork were important to acknowledge, not least of which was the question of whether I was reporting as insider or outsider. Although a growing number of ethnographic studies involve detailing aspects of one's own culture (c.f. Taylor, 2002), research remains less commonly reported from a first-person experiential point of view (Tedlock, 1991). However, this personal viewpoint was extremely relevant to me – particularly the effect of my own research role on the
conversational data generated. I was interested in whether my aim to direct the conversation in a particular way was possible with women I was familiar with and in whether they would relate to me as a researcher or as a friend. I also wondered whether the detailed talk of relationships would become 'lost' in more general talk about people familiar to us both and how much it would matter if this did happen. A further interest was in what would happen if I intervened with direct questions ('Could you tell me more about ...?') or used what someone said as a prompt to return to something relevant ('It's funny you should say that, I was just wondering why ...'). These are not 'normal' ways in which our conversations would proceed so I assumed they would have an impact on the ensuing interaction.

The issues of subjectivity and objectivity have been the focus of much debate in the social sciences. A common assumption is that 'insiders' can produce subjective information on feelings, behaviours, perceptions and so on – they are the experts on themselves. On the other hand 'outsiders' can give a more objective perspective on the question being asked – they are able to stand back and give a less 'biased' opinion. Many researchers have questioned this dichotomous position. Olson (1977: 118), for example, in his examination of relationship research, suggests that a more productive view is to consider subjectivity and objectivity as opposite ends of a continuum. In this way different levels of 'insider' and 'outsider' can be included in research. He argues that both subjective and objective knowledge are important to an overall view of relationships, with a variety of positions available along this insider-outsider continuum. However, the aim of much positivist/realist social scientific research is objectivity, and it is assumed that by maintaining some distance between the researcher and the researched more scientifically rigorous conclusions can be achieved (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Silverman, 1997; Taylor, 2002). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 130-131) suggest that it is important to acknowledge the role and influence of the researcher, and that researcher influence should
Chapter 2: Literature Review

not necessarily be regarded as a source of bias that needs to be removed, a point also argued within feminist critiques. It is more important to acknowledge the role(s) that the researcher plays, the possible effects on the data generation process and the kinds of insights that insider research can produce.

Researchers such as Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) have closely explored the role of the researcher and how power imbalances can greatly affect the data generated for the research. For example, particular issues have been highlighted and widely discussed in researching groups who in some way may be classed as 'Other' (e.g. by Burman, Alldred, Bewley, & Goldberg, 1995; Frith, 1998). These can include cultural differences (white women researching Afro-Caribbean women), gendered differences (women researching men) and even age differences (young women researching older age groups). One way of addressing this issue is to research 'similar' groups. In my own case this issue was addressed by researching women from my own cultural background, all of whom were engaged in ongoing relationships both with each other and with me. However, there is still a question of how the power imbalances that inevitable accompany any research relationships are to be addressed.

This issue is widely debated in relation to adopting a qualitative methodology. The research relationship of researcher and participant implies a certain amount of 'active participation' from the researched group, no matter who they are. This active participation may take many forms and participants can even become co-researchers in the research project (Peace, 2002). This type of discussion also impacts on the roles available to the researcher herself that form the focus of the next section.

2.3.2 'Being native' in the research

A common practice in research is to categorise oneself – and to be categorised – as a particular type of researcher. This has long been a pre-occupation in ethnography. Gold,
for example, discusses four possible roles that can be taken in research – the complete participant, the participant-as-observer, the observer-as-participant and the complete observer (1958, cited in Burgess, 1984). However, Burgess argues that distinguishing the researcher’s involvement in the research process in this way is very simplistic and that different roles take precedence at different times: “Research roles are constantly negotiated and renegotiated with different informants throughout a research project.” (Burgess, 1984: 85). My own research role(s) illustrated the simplicity of Gold’s distinctions and proved difficult to locate into one of the four categories. Indeed my own assessment of the ethnographic experience is of a far more subtle set of encounters that are difficult to categorise. The traditional role of the ethnographer in the field has essentially been as an apprentice acquiring expertise from others (informants). In writing up her fieldwork the ethnographer re-presents and re-organises her experience as expertise for the academic community. Though my experience of the latter half of this process is perhaps conventional, the fieldwork element was less like being an apprentice because much of the time I knew as much as the others. Where I did not know as much (or knew more) this was part of the ordinary currency of conversation: people swap knowledge and news and are sometimes in the know and at others finding things out.

As I show in my empirical chapters my part in the conversations was flexible – I frequently moved from researcher to niece, to daughter, to friend. This highlights the difference between my study and an observational ethnography that might have been generated by following people round, for example, village events or sitting in on suppers and teas. The shifting roles can be seen at various points. Sometimes I participated more or less in these purposeful conversations. Similarly, all of the other participants at some points took a back seat. This may be through a lack of knowledge where one or more of us were receiving some novel information. At others, for my own part, it was because the talk was about relationships that were ones peripheral to my own experience as part of the
network. Though not totally novel information my own knowledge of the people discussed was different from that being discussed at that point of the interaction. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) and Burgess (1988b) point out these shifts in role take place constantly in response to the requirements of the process at that specific time. They become apparent on close examination of the data and often the shifts themselves cast light upon relationships. As such they form an important part of the analysis.

One researcher in particular was significant in drawing attention to some of the issues I might encounter regarding my shifting roles in the conversations. Indeed her analysis prefigures part of my analytic stance, of conversation analysis with its frequently cited description of conversation as context shaping and context renewing (Heritage, 1984b). Kanuha (2000) suggests that a native researcher is distinguished by the necessity of being “situated at all moments in the dual and mutual status of subject-object; she is both the subject of her study and the participant object being studied.” (Kanuha, 2000: 441). Rather than thinking of the group as separate from herself, the researcher should recognise that she is a full and participating member, and should fully consider this when analysing the data. Researching her own social identity group as a ‘native’ social worker, Kanuha illustrates the problematic aspects of maintaining a balance between her personal and her research roles. In her study she explores being both an insider (with intimate knowledge of the study group) and an outsider (in her capacity as a researcher). She argues that her role is dependent on both her initial reasons for undertaking the research, and also her development through the research process. Kanuha identifies difficulties in trying to create a difference between her ‘personal’ self and her ‘researcher’ self, which in turn sometimes resulted in her distancing herself both from the material and the research process. She adds that she often did not pursue important points at the time of speaking because the information alluded to was already familiar to her and so seemed unnecessary to follow up with further questions. As she acknowledges, sometimes participants were
not allowed or required to finish "sentences, thoughts, or descriptions because I knew implicitly what they were referring to" (2000: 442). She recognises that insider knowledge may be reported as the 'accurate' picture of a situation under examination rather than just one of a number of possible perspectives, arguing that being a native or an insider of the group does not necessarily mean that all of the particular – and situated – experiences of every group member can be understood (2000: 443). It is necessary to address this range of perspectives through analysis, and to acknowledge them in research reports.

The development of my own role resembled the process Kanuha describes – I set out to conduct research looking at talk about relationships with my own native group, uncertain of the part I would play in the resulting data. However my input into the conversation – and how it in turn linked to the identities that I brought to the process – became as important a part of the analysis as that of any of the other participants. Like Kanuha, once I began my own analysis I noticed that I often failed to pursue something interesting that one of the other participants had said because I was familiar with the people or the situation being discussed. For example, one experience discussed in some depth in one conversation was divorce. Though at the time I empathised with the emotions being discussed, in analysing that part of the conversation I realised that opportunities arose where perhaps more information could have been elicited. However, this was less important for my research than it was for Kanuha. I was not concerned, as Kanuha was, that I might miss vital information by not following up on important points. This is a belief based on the idea that a full account of whatever is being studied is necessary for research purposes. My aim however, was to explore how the talk in these interviews made relationships relevant and indeed, how the relationships were the talk in many respects. While I could validly ask questions and make comments it was not up to me to demand a 'perfect' version of the relationships, but merely to observe and analyse what the participants made relevant in the talk. Consequently, though there were interesting
features of divorce talk that could have been pursued at the time these were not significant
to the progression of the conversation at the time it was happening. In order to
successfully observe and analyse what was made relevant I therefore needed to
acknowledge my own conversational input as much as that of any of my invited
participants. To be able do this effectively I turned to a further body of work –
ethnomethodology.

2.4 Ethnomethodology: The mundane detail of everyday life

Harold Garfinkel developed ethnomethodology in the 1950s as a direct reaction to the top
down approach dominant in sociology at the time (c.f. Parsons, 1937, cited in Heritage,
1984b). Influenced by the writings of Schuetz (e.g. Schuetz, 1944; 1945) he devised a
means of looking at ‘the methods of the people’ – ethno-method-ology. He was interested
in the day-to-day reality of members’ lives and how they understood, interpreted and
reacted to the events going on around them. Garfinkel emphasised the necessity of
examining the seemingly insignificant occurrences of daily life that affected them – what
he called the “seen-but-unnoticed” expected background features of everyday scenes
(Garfinkel, 1967: 36). To explore this he proposed a method that emphasised “the local
moment-by-moment determination of meaning in social contexts” (Heritage, 1984b: 2).
He directed his investigations toward answering a specific question: “how do social actors
come to know, and know in common, what they are doing and the circumstances in which
they are doing it?” (Heritage, 1984b: 76).

Garfinkel adapted the knowledge he gained through his early investigations – for
example, of jurors’ understandings of the requirements of being a member of a jury – to
various other contexts (Garfinkel, 1967; 1974). He argued that the ‘taken-for-granted’
background features of everyday life are immediately noticeable to a stranger. However,
for them to become apparent to someone familiar with them on a day-to-day basis they
must be made problematic. One novel way he achieved insight into members' mundane, everyday social actions was through what have become known as 'breaching experiments'. Garfinkel described these as demonstrations designed as “aids to a sluggish imagination” (1967: 38). In them he started with the familiar and attempted various disruptions of it in order to examine the consequences. Through them he also began to investigate the complexities of language. One method of inquiry involved asking for clarification of utterances during a conversation, to the point where the person being continually asked to explain what they meant by a remark would often become extremely irritated. Another method involved students amplifying in writing each utterance made in a conversation – a method that clearly illustrated how much information remains unspoken during any ordinary interaction (Garfinkel, 1967: 35-75).

The appeal of looking at everyday features of relationships in my thesis was influenced by my consideration of research in social and discursive psychology, and by reflecting on my own role as a native researcher. Bringing into awareness the background features of everyday interaction seemed to me a very useful way of examining how relationships get done in everyday life. Exploring these features, combined with the inclusion of myself as a full and participating member in the fieldwork, suggested an interesting extension to the existing body of work examining relationship networks. However, even given these constraints my research could have followed any of several paths. A particularly significant feature of Garfinkel’s work, for example, was the non-verbal interactions between people either familiar or unfamiliar with one another, a focus that a study of relationships could easily have taken. Another route may have been to concentrate more intensely on the social networks that the women occupy and activities that take place within those networks. The focus of a relationship study taking this stance could have been on how these social networks are formed and continued through the joint activities of the women involved. Rather than the networks themselves or the non-verbal
ordering of relationships, my own interest was in the verbal interactions through which the women's relationships were maintained. This focus on talk had formed a peripheral part of Garfinkel's explication of ethnomethodology. However, his insights were taken up and adapted by other researchers who concentrated solely on talk-in-interaction.

2.4.1 Talk in context: indexicality

In the 'breaching experiments' as well as in his further investigations Garfinkel outlines the importance of talk in observing and reporting aspects of everyday interaction. Highlighting it as being "a constituent feature of the same setting that it is used to talk about" (1974: 17), he draws attention to one specific feature of talk that is influential in my thesis. This is his adoption and extension of the notion of indexicality.

A range of words such as 'here', 'there', 'it', 'this' and 'that' – known as indexical or deictic expressions – have been investigated in depth, (for example in linguistics, e.g. Levinson, 1983). Their exact meaning is difficult to identify because of the flexibility with which they are used. The group can be used in conjunction with innumerable referents. As such they give endless possibilities for meaning. As Heritage points out (1984b: 142) the utterance "That's a nice one" will have very different meanings depending on whether the referent is a photograph, a diamond ring or a lettuce. However, the matter is more complex than this. Heritage outlines how Garfinkel extended the consideration of indexicality to include far more than just these well-researched expressions. For example, taking the descriptor 'nice' from the above example, Heritage argues, how do we know what it means? As with 'that's', its exact sense is not available solely from the term itself. Instead the context in which it occurs – for example in relation to a photograph, a diamond ring or a lettuce – will be referred to by both the speaker in using it and the hearer in understanding it.
Garfinkel emphasises that language can only be understood if each individual utterance was recognised as an action "constructively interpreted" in relation to its conversational context (Heritage, 1984b: 139). The sense of any utterance is hearably linked to many other qualities such as who uses it, in what circumstances, where in the conversation it occurs and the relationship between the speaker and the hearer (Garfinkel, 1967: 4; Heritage, 1984b: 139-140). So all language should be considered to be indexical – each utterance is "reflexively related to the circumstances in which it appears" (Nikander, 2003: 66). Garfinkel uses the term 'indexical' to illustrate "that the sense of ordinary descriptive terms is powerfully influenced by the context in which they are uttered." (Heritage, 1984b: 143). By extending indexicality in this way Garfinkel proposes that all utterances become understood procedurally through methods employed by both speaker and hearer. These methods involve the use of common-sense knowledge and of context as resources with which to make sense of a situation.

Many of Garfinkel's methods focus on causing a 'breach' in order to examine its consequences. My interest, in contrast, is to examine interaction that takes place in as 'straightforward' a setting as possible, rather than one that is breached in some way. Also, in my research I specifically aimed to examine how the topic of relationships is made relevant in and through the conversational data. Garfinkel, on the other hand, examines aspects of conversation as a side issue to his main research focus at the time. Taking these comments into account I focus on a development, partially linked to Garfinkel’s work that is particularly relevant to my own research: conversation analysis.

In the 1960s Harvey Sacks and his colleagues Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson developed conversation analysis (CA) which overcame many methodological problems identified in Garfinkel's work (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998: 30-37). Sacks concentrated on exploring the detailed conversational aspects of interaction, a focus facilitated by his use of tape-recorded material. In his own words, with CA he aimed to:
see how finely the details of actual, naturally occurring conversation can be subjected to analysis that will yield the technology of conversation. The idea is to take singular sequences of conversation and tear them apart in such a way as to find rules, techniques, procedures, methods, maxims (a collection of terms that more or less relate to each other and that I use somewhat interchangeably) that can be used to generate the orderly features we find in the conversations we examine.

(Sacks, 1984b: 413)

In CA Sacks addresses precisely some of the elements of relationship research that were later problematised by Duck (1994b: xii) from a social psychological perspective. These include aspects such as examining how conversation is managed, how relational knowledge is deployed in conversation, how individuals know whose turn it is to speak, and so on – in other words: how participants orient to each other in talk. By focusing closely on the conversational features of interactions Sacks shows how being a social actor gets done through talk. However, rather than using Garfinkel’s technique of causing a breach in order to examine the consequences, Sacks approaches the examination of everyday conversational interaction as something that is interesting in its own right.

2.4.2 ‘Being ordinary’ in everyday life

In one of his most influential papers – ‘On doing ‘being ordinary”’ (1984b) – Sacks suggests that ordinary behaviour is a social accomplishment brought off successfully by most people. He emphasises people’s ‘ordinariness’ examining it from a completely new perspective. Rather than the usual approach of thinking about someone as being ‘an ordinary person’ – as if it were a specific characteristic – Sacks suggests an alternative view that considers people as ‘doing’ being ordinary as part of their interactional work. Just as schoolteachers or policemen go about their daily activities in that role (e.g. schoolteachers teaching pupils or policemen questioning criminals) so someone being ordinary goes about activities demonstrating their ordinariness – they spend time “in usual ways, having usual thoughts, usual interests” (1984b: 415). This is not to suggest that schoolteachers and policemen are not ordinary people. Rather it distinguishes the activities
associated with those roles from the activities associated with being an ordinary, everyday person. Having an awareness of the usual forms of behaviour in whatever aspect of life is being examined, informs us that some ways of behaving, in some situations, are not ordinary. Also 'ordinariness' is highly dependent on the person doing the reporting or, alternatively, on the person who the report is about — it is indexical to the context in which it occurs.

These ideas suggested a very effective way for me to research relationships. I was keen to avoid taking a realist perspective with its assumption that relationships are something to be 'discovered' and categorised in some way. By examining conversations between people in this much more detailed manner the construction of relationships in talk could be explored. Furthermore, my concern to examine the mundane, day-to-day aspects of relationships, under-researched in social psychology, was also addressed. By carrying out an ethnomethodological exploration the construction of relationships in ordinary, everyday life — how the conversationalists oriented to and made relevant particular relational aspects — could be more clearly perceived. Sacks' ideas, detailing how people relate to each other, have been explored in depth by many researchers since. Before turning to specific examples of research looking at relationships I draw attention to specific areas of Sacks' work on conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorisation analysis (MCA) that inform the focus of my analysis in the thesis.

### 2.5 Conversation analysis

Conversation — described by Heritage and Atkinson as the "most pervasively used mode of interaction in social life" (1984: 13) — is defined by Lynch and Bogen (1994: 95-96) as a stretch of talk in which speaker change occurs without speakers having been pre-selected. So conversation defined in this way is different from talk that occurs in interviews or debates. Sacks' project was to concentrate on the local occasioning of this type of
conversational talk and to examine how it comes to be managed in specific ways interactionally. His concern with examining conversational organisation prompted his conception of CA, a concern that is well documented in his series of lectures presented to students at UCLA, and later transcribed and edited by Gail Jefferson (Sacks, 1992a). In these the foundations of CA (and MCA) can be identified. In planning this he outlined a method that others could use in order to identify the same patterns no matter what the conversation being examined.

Sacks’ earliest observations focused on a series of tape-recorded telephone calls to a Suicide Prevention Centre. His detailed analysis of these calls led him to the recognition that talk can be examined as an object in its own right. His aim was to “find rules, techniques, procedures, methods, maxims” (1984b: 413) to outline a ‘machinery’ of conversation (Sacks, 1992a; Sacks et al., 1978). This was a novel approach to looking at language, which till then had merely been considered as a “screen on which are projected other processes” (Schegloff, 1992: xviii). Using as an example the first few turns of a telephone conversation, Sacks made two initial observations regarding ‘procedural rules’ of conversation. First, whoever speaks first chooses their form of address and so chooses the form of address that the other uses. Second, that each turn constitutes part of a pair – the first turn provides a ‘slot’ for the second, setting up an expectation of what should ‘properly’ follow (1992a: 1: 3-11; Silverman, 1998). Sacks’ interest in this type of observation formed the early stages of work that culminated in the explication of a set of ‘rules’ that people use in conversation (Sacks et al., 1978). These rules, seen most clearly in the model of turn-taking formulated by Sacks and his colleagues, are demonstrated in various ways in conversation. For example, in two-party conversation the sequence A-B-A-B will generally be followed, where A speaks first and B follows. There will be times when A and B might talk simultaneously, or when there is a silence where neither speaks, but in general the format outlined above will soon be reinstated (Schegloff, 1984). Within
this sequence there are two possible ways for speaker to change during conversation, both
of which are relevant for my analysis. The first is that the current speaker selects the other
person to speak in some way. This might be by the introduction of a question or other
device that invites the current non-speaker to speak (Schegloff, 1968). The second is that a
speaker self-selects for some reason – for example, they may correct what has been said or
add something to it (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977).

2.5.1 Sequencing in action

To illustrate the turn-taking features relevant to my analysis I reproduce an extract from
Mandelbaum’s (1987) examination of couples telling stories.

Extract 1

25. Vicki: He m(h)ade a right- It wz:: in Sanna
27\* Moniga. You know ha:ve-the ha:ve
28 Shawn: Oh: shit
[     ]
29 Vicki: all those (b)right
30 Shawn: I made a left- [left-
31 Vicki: they ha:ve (. ) m one-way street:ts
32 and everythi::ng? (0.4) and then two-way streets?
33 he ma:de- (0.4) a left turn from a one-way
34 street. (0.8) into a two-way street, (0.5)

(Mandelbaum, 1987: 157)

The line numbering and names on the left hand side of Extract 1 show the order in which
the utterances occur and who speaks when – Vicki alternates with Shawn throughout. This
short sequence also demonstrates some of the other features that Sacks et al. discuss. For
instance, Shawn self-selects in line 28 resulting in both he and Vicki speaking at the same
time (lines 28 and 29 indicated by the square brackets). This overlap is very short and
though the turn-taking system is briefly disrupted it is soon resumed. In Vicki’s final
utterance (lines 31-34) there are short pauses when no-one speaks (indicated by the
numbers in brackets). At any of these points it would be possible for Shawn to take the

1 The line numbers are reproduced as they appear in the article.
floor and continue the account in his own words but instead Vicki continues to tell the story.

The pattern of conversation however, is not always as straightforwardly illustrated. Though the turn-taking system copes with different lengths of conversation and different numbers of people by only organising two turns at a time, differences arise when more than two people are present (Sacks, 1992a: 523; Sacks et al., 1978: 22-25). In multi-party conversations it is not usual (or necessary) for them to follow the same turn taking procedure as two-party ones (e.g. A-B-C-A-B-C) and Sacks highlights multi-party conversation as being a distinct phenomenon (1992a: 1: 523). In conversations where three (or more) people are present the possibility to become the next speaker is “no longer guaranteed” (Sacks et al., 1978: 23). As Sacks et al. argue the distribution of turns becomes relevant in these conversations because there are always at least two possible candidates for ‘next turn’. This conversational sequencing is one of the features I concentrate on in later empirical chapters of the thesis. A further feature of talk I consider is the participants’ use of membership categorisations in their talk.

2.6 Membership categorisation analysis

MCA (again outlined in Sacks 1992a, 1992b) focuses on “the local management of speakers’ categorizations of themselves and others” (Stokoe, 2003: 321). The use of categories in conversation is an ongoing interactional accomplishment between speakers and hearers. Categories chosen (for both ourselves and others) are not passive labels but are used to organise “knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, tasks, moral relationships” (Jayyusi, 1984: 136). Sacks notes that membership categories may be initiated in the early parts of conversations with such questions as ‘What do you do?’ and ‘Where are you from?’ In answering such questions people inevitably offer information about themselves that they understand to be relevant to that context. This means that those features attended to are not
necessarily the same on each occasion – each account is situated (Lepper, 2000).

Surrounding contextual details, such as who is asking the questions, why they are being asked, and so on, influence speakers’ choice of categories. For example, if asked ‘What do you do?’ by a new acquaintance at a party or by a prospective employer at an interview, the information that is given will almost certainly be presented very differently on each occasion. Taking these attributes into account it becomes obvious that not only do the features attended to vary but also categories do not automatically carry exactly the same meaning each time they are used. Instead members hear them as being related in some way in that particular context and at that specific time (Psathas, 1999).

Sacks argues that the initial conversational questions through which people learn about one another generate answers that exhibit three properties. First, the answers relate to ‘category sets’ such as sex, age, race, religion, occupation and so on, each of whose constituent categories classify any member of a particular population. Second, the categories contained within these sets are ‘inference rich’. Much of the knowledge that people have about the society they live in is carried in terms of these categories. Third, any member of a category cited will be presumed to be representative of it and as such to know the answers to any questions they may be asked about it (Sacks, 1992a: 40-41).

These three properties make up the membership categorisation device (MCD). Sacks defines this as:

any collection of membership categories, containing at least a category, which may be applied to some population containing at least a member, so as to provide, by the use of some rules of application, for the pairing of at least a population member and a categorization device member. A device is then a collection plus rules of application.

(Sacks, 1974b: 218-219)

For example, in my thesis I use the MCD ‘family’ to define a collection of kinship categories such as brother, sister, cousin and so on. However the MCD family could also be used “in the sense of ‘species’ or ‘genus’, as in a ‘family’ of roses or other plants. Alternatively, a ‘family’ might mean a religious organization or community, such as a
church. It might also refer to a type of criminal organization or to the 'human family'” (Hester & Eglin, 1997a: 18).

2.6.1 Categories in action

Sacks' classic example of the MCD is illustrated in his discussion of the fragment of a child's story: "The baby cried. The mommy picked it up." (1992a: 1: 223-231). He asks why everyone hears a connection between the mommy and the baby in that this particular mommy is the mommy of this particular baby. He claims that our knowledge and understanding of the MCD 'family' enables us to make this connection. His claim is supported with a number of 'rules of application' that enable this specific hearing rather than any other (1974b: 219). He proposes the 'economy rule' by which "a single category from any membership categorization device can be referentially adequate" (Sacks, 1974b: 219). So categorising a person by, for example, their occupation (a teacher) or their family role (a grandmother) gives enough information to be able to recognise specific things about them. The given category carries certain expectations. In Sacks' above example these expectations are contained in the inference rich quality of the categorisations 'baby' and 'mommy'. A further proposal is the consistency rule. Here if one person talked about is heard as belonging to a particular MCD then other people introduced on the same occasion are also assumed to belong to it.

Where there may be ambiguity – for instance 'sister' could be a family category or part of a religious order – other conversational information is also drawn upon in forming a decision. In Sacks' example it is possible to hear the categorisation 'baby' as either coming from the MCD 'family' or alternatively as part of a 'stage-of-life' MCD (Nikander, 2003; Sacks, 1974b: 220). However, once paired with the category 'mommy' this ambiguity is diminished and they become hearably linked together as part of the MCD 'family'.
Sacks makes a further claim for these categories. He suggests that the MCD ‘family’ is one of a series that are ‘duplicatively organised’ so that each set of categories is integrated into a unit or team (Sacks, 1974b: 220). Consequently categories occasioned in the same conversation are hearably linked together as different parts of the same unit. So given the utterance: ‘The researcher gave the document to the secretary to type’ the assumption is that the categories ‘researcher’ and ‘secretary’ are connected in some way (e.g. through the MCD ‘work colleagues’). The ‘researcher’ has not just walked into an unknown office to give something to the ‘secretary’ who happened to be there. Further they belong to the same ‘team’ – in this case work organisation. In Sacks’ example then, the categories mommy and baby are not only both heard to belong to the MCD ‘family’ but, he proposes, are also heard as belonging to the same family.

Extensions of Sacks’ work have detailed further characteristics of categories that encourage members’ understandings of them in a particular way. Jayyusi (1984) outlines the links between different person categories and particular actions – category bound activities (CBAs). For example, a builder is connected to the action of building, a plumber to plumbing and so on. Similarly categories can be linked to specific characteristics. Termed ‘natural predicates’ by Jayyusi (1984), Cuff identifies these as modifiers that, when attached to particular categories, identify differences between them (Cuff, 1993). So a ‘miserable baby’ is understood to be different in some way to a ‘contented baby’ or a ‘caring mother’ is different from a ‘neglectful mother’.

In Sacks’ example the ‘baby’ is linked to the activity of crying and the ‘mommy’ is linked to the activity of picking up. Whereas these are usual activities for those involved – babies cry and mommies pick them up – reversing the categories within the fragment would render it nonsensical. Categories are often presented as standardised relational pairs (SRPs) such as husband/wife, mother/child and so on. These SRPs contain within them
certain rights and obligations so, in Sacks’ example, a mother is obliged or expected to pick up a baby who is crying (Silverman, 1998).

In my analysis I look at how categories are integrated into the accounts of relationships and how they come to be used at particular times in the conversations to illustrate specific points of view. I also investigate how different identities are constructed through use of categorisation and drawn upon by the co-conversationalists, either with regard to themselves or in talking about others.

2.7 Combining CA and MCA

To this point in the chapter I have considered the sequencing and categorisation that occurs in conversation as separate phenomena. This separation of the two echoes the general pattern of development in CA studies. Housley and Fitzgerald argue:

whilst both CA and MCA have their origins in the work of Harvey Sacks, Sacks's development of MCA and subsequent studies in this field have often been seen as a distinct, if not specifically separate, methodological approach to the study of talk.

(Housley & Fitzgerald, 2002: 61)

However, this distinction is problematised by many writers. Watson (1994; 1997) argues that it is false and suggests that Schegloff’s (1992) argument that Sacks abandoned the study of categorisation in favour of the sequential organization of talk is misleading. Citing two concerns running throughout his lectures – recognisability and description – Housley and Fitzgerald argue that Sacks maintained “an interest in the holistic organization of interaction pursuing an integrated analysis of talk.” (2002: 61). Watson (1997) also suggests that the separation between sequencing and categorisation arises because taking one of them as the focus of study reduces the consideration of the other. Further emphasis is added to this view by Hester and Eglin (1997b) who argue that greater concentration on the sequential aspects of CA has led to a disregard of the importance of categorisation. They suggest that “sequential and categorizational aspects of social interaction inform each
other” so a more successful strategy would be to give them both analytic space (Hester & Eglin, 1997a: 2). They point to a small number of studies that integrate the two to varying degrees – a number that has continued to grow since the publication of their book. In the remainder of this chapter I focus on a selection of studies that combine sequencing and categorisation and provide a basis for my analysis in later chapters.

2.7.1 Categorising ‘the opposite sex’

For each of the following articles I present my own gloss of the in-depth discussions given by each original author. The first example is taken from Sacks’ lectures and involves a segment taken from a group therapy session (1992a: 2: 98-103).

Extract 2

| Ken: | So did Louise call or anything this morning? |
| Dan: | Louise? No. |
| Ken: | No? |
| Dan: | Why, didju expect her t'call? |
| Ken: | No, I was just kinda hoping that she might be able to figure out some way t-to come to the meetings and still be able t'work. C'z she did seem like she d-wanted to come back, but uh she didn't think she could. |
| Dan: | D'you miss her? |
| Ken: | Well in some ways yes, it's-it was uh // nice having- |
| Roger: | (No he thinks if uh-) |
| Ken: | -having the opposite sex in-in the room, you know, havin' a chick in here |

(Sacks, 1992b: 98)

The data extract is only roughly transcribed in the lectures and Sacks’ reporting of it varies between them (Sacks, 1992a: 60, 461, 597; 1992b: 98). Any overlaps, pauses and so on that may have been part of the exchange are not clearly documented. However, the pattern of sequencing I discussed in section 2.6 is plainly evidenced through Ken and Dan taking turns to speak. Opportunities for speaker change are demonstrated in the question and answer format of the majority of the extract (though Ken’s initial question is answered by Dan with one of his own). Three different categorisations of the person under discussion appear here – ‘Louise’, ‘the opposite sex’ and ‘chick’.
Sacks’ discussion of these three different categories concentrates on the usefulness of moving from the specific (Louise) to the general (‘the opposite sex’ and ‘chick’) in order for Ken to be able to ‘safely’ voice a compliment. This compliment is made possible in two ways. First, in answering Dan’s direct question ‘D’you miss her?’ Ken could have replied with a direct answer of either yes or no. Instead, however, he hedges his reply with ‘In some ways’. He also avoids referring to ‘Louise’ personally, changing the categorisation to one that indexes her gender as significant. By making relevant an impersonal feature of her – a ‘chick’ of ‘the opposite sex’ – Ken safeguards himself against any teasing from the others that he may be interested in her.

Second, Ken’s orientation to Louise’s gender separates her from the rest of the group who are all males. Sacks argues that this separation contributes to the possibility to compliment her safely. To support this he suggests that instead of the female/male distinction other features (such as sense of humour or intelligence) could have been introduced to illustrate Louise’s difference. However, other members of the group could have challenged these other features as unsafe grounds for the compliment. Any one of them could equally have been categorised as funny or clever but none of them could be categorised as female. As Sacks argues “one aspect of a compliment being ‘safe’ or ‘weak’ turns on the fact that a category is used as part of the compliment, and that category has no other local incumbents.” (1992a: 1: 598).

The sequencing of the exchange takes on a greater significance when the categories used become the focus of analysis. If Ken’s initial question had instead been ‘So did that chick call or anything this morning?’ Louise’s categorisation would have been very different from the one that appears. Similarly, the move from the specific – ‘Louise’ – to the general – ‘the opposite sex’ – serves to present the more general category of female as being an acceptable part of the group. It is not Louise herself who Ken misses but rather someone of the opposite sex being part of the group. Further it is not just anyone of the
opposite sex but a particular category of female, i.e. 'a chick'. Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998: 189) discuss the use of the term 'chick' in another of Sacks' lectures (1992a: 44). They point out that at the time Sacks’ lectures were written ‘chick’ tended primarily to be a male description pointing to sexual attractiveness and as such carried with it certain implications. If Ken’s categorisations are taken sequentially it becomes apparent that, though orienting to Louise’s attractiveness, his use of the impersonal categories, ‘opposite sex’ and ‘chick’ do not commit him to voicing this directly.

This link between the categorisations used and the sequence in which they are introduced is one that is evident in all types of talk. In the remaining examples in this section I examine the ways in which categories are oriented to in talk generated through interviews as well as in more ‘naturalistic’ conversational data. Differences occur in the structure of these interactions – interviews consist of a relatively regular question/answer format whereas ordinary conversation is made up of a more varied turn-taking arrangement. Nevertheless, categories are introduced and made relevant through the sequencing of the talk in all interactions.

2.7.2 Categorising kin members

Isabella Paoletti explores how speakers orient to kinship categories in talking about their experiences of caring situations (Paoletti, 2001: 296-297; 2002: 809-810). Examining data generated through survey interviews she looks at the introduction of categories as standardised relational pairs (SRPs, see Section 2.7.1). SRPs constitute “a locus for a set of rights and obligations concerning the activity of giving help” (Paoletti, 2002: 810). So Paoletti discusses caring as taking place because of the relationship between the carer and the person being cared for. In the following exchange the interviewer has been running through the possible answers to a multiple-choice question asking why the interviewee cares for her mother.
Extract 3²

20. I um um social norms force me to do this
21. A well no no
22. I because it is economically convenient=
23. A =no absolutely consider
24. I because I am happy to care for her
25. A yes that’s so (0.3) certainly
26. I to pay her back for what she did in the past
27. (0.6) or for other reasons (1.1)
28. A solely and exclusively because she is my
29. mother and because I live with her (0.4) that’s
30. it I wouldn’t (0.9) I wouldn’t have other other
31. reasons (0.9) not for money nor for anything

(Paoletti, 2002: 810-811)

The typical question and answer format of a structured interview is evident throughout this exchange. Questions are planned in such a way that the whole question must be asked even when a positive answer has been given as at Line 25. The interviewer states what each choice of answer might be (Lines 20, 22, 24 and 26-27) so that the interviewee is given the chance to either agree or disagree. This type of interview format disrupts the turn-taking system as it occurs in everyday conversation. In an everyday exchange when a question is asked it is usual to wait for an answer rather than to keep adding more possibilities. Here however the interviewer carries on until the whole question is stated.

The use of this type of structured interview questionnaire has been problematised by several writers (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000; Suchman & Jordan, 1990). However, what is notable here is that Ada emphatically aligns herself with one in particular of the options available (Line 25). Avoiding the constraining nature of the range of possible answers to the question she instead gives an explanation of her own. The SRP mother/daughter is offered as her motivation for caring (Line 28-29). She emphasises the importance of this relationship by saying she has no other reason for taking on the caring role. Using the extreme case formulation ‘solely and exclusively’ (Line 28) Ada emphasises her reason for looking after her mother. As Paoletti points out here, caring is a CBA bound to particular

² Though Paoletti presents her data in both Italian and English this is not necessary for my own discussion here (Paoletti, 2002: 810-811)
kinship categories – generally female. Paoletti’s discussion is important in drawing attention to the occurrence of SRPs in interview conversations.

2.7.3 Categorising age

Here Pirjo Nikander (2003) explores how interviewees orient to age in “jointly constructed” talk (2003: 16). The talk is generated through the use of a set of interview questions. Nikander argues that throughout these interactions the interviewer’s role changed from “a more active role...to parts where the interviewee talked at length” (Nikander, 2000: 339).

Extract 4

1. PN um (1.2) like I think (0.2) I may
2. have said in the letter (.) when I
3. sent letters to those of you who
4. [con]tacted me=
5. L [mm]
6. PN =I think I must have (.) mentioned
7. that that I was interested in what
8. people in general think or
9. [feel ] about age and ageing
10. L [yeah]
11. PN but do you remember w-what
12. initially made you (.) reply
13. to the feature in (.) Anna
14. L It was mainly this that
15. I’m (0.4) maybe simply that this
16. fiftieth birthday is coming so (1.0)
17. so I was like (1.0) uh >naturally
18. the idea in itself is one
19. to sort of like< (0.2) makes you
20. think about age =
21. PN mm
22. L =but I think there’s (.) I’ve felt
23. that there’s a real big difference (.)
24. in how I feel about myself at work
25. and how I feel at other times

(Nikander, 2003: 96)

The extract occurs at the beginning of one of the interviews with both interviewer and interviewee speaking in almost equal proportions. PN introduces her general interests and asks her first question (Lines 1-13) and L responds with her answer (Lines 14-25). In the above examples I have discussed the construction of gender and SRPs. Here, one of the
most evident features is the adjacency pair format of question and answer. In the survey questionnaire, the question consisted of several parts with only a limited choice of answer that could be given. Even though an answer had been offered the question was continued. Here PN asks a straightforward question (Lines 11-13), which L is able to answer at length (Lines 14-25). This particular format – where an answer can be expanded upon – is common in this less structured type of interview.

The categorisation of the participants – both in PN’s question and in the response from L – is also evident in this example. First of all, using the formulation ‘those of you’ (Line 3), PN locates this particular interviewee within a larger group who contacted her about participating in the study. This formulation also categorises PN and L in the SRP of interviewer and interviewee. Each of these roles carries certain rights and obligations, such as the right of the interviewer to ask questions and the obligation of the interviewee to provide answers. A second feature Nikander discusses that is relevant to my own analysis is how age is made relevant in the conversations. Early in the exchange PN makes clear (Lines 7-9) her interest in exploring how people ‘think or feel about age and ageing’. With this expression of interest she introduces both the topic of the research and the instruction for the progression of the interview. L takes up this orientation in her response. She cites the approach of her fiftieth birthday as the reason she has been thinking about her age (Lines 16-20). Echoing the word ‘feel’ (Line 9) she says that she feels differently about herself both ‘at work’ and ‘at other times’ (Lines 24-25). Nikander points out that L talks about turning fifty as an abstract concept that is likely to put pressure on anyone not just herself. She generalises it using terms such as ‘this fiftieth birthday’ (Lines 15-16). The pronoun ‘you’ (Line 19) orients to its impersonality – it is discussed as possibly significant for anyone.
2.8.4 Categorising gender

My final example focusing on the sequential presentation of categories is taken from a study by Stokoe (2003). The previous examples have included talk taken from conversational and interview data. Here Stokoe explores neighbour relationships through looking at neighbour mediation data and televised disputes. She particularly focuses on the emergence of morality and its relation to gender through situated category use: “morality is explored interactively as it emerges in the turn-by-turn organization of talk.” (Stokoe, 2003: 319).

Extract 5

1. G  y'know it's getting- it's getting real serious this is (.) but the
2.     lad keeps getting away with it (.) unfortunately (.) his mother hasn't
3.     got a bloke there (.) so she is talking in [front of the children
4.     [she's not living there half
5.     the time is she=
6.     G =no she's out at night and they are using it as a- a rendezvous for the
7.     gang

(Stokoe, 2003: 326)

This extract focuses on G and L’s alternating turns in which they discuss a lad who ‘keeps getting away with it’ (Line 2). They construct a story in which his behaviour is ‘getting real serious’ (Line 1) laying the blame for this firmly with his mother who ‘hasn’t got a bloke there’ (Lines 2-3) and is ‘not living there half the time’ (Lines 4-5). G sets the scene for the story in lines 1-2, which is confirmed and expanded by L through self-selection and overlap (Line 4). The sequence of turns builds up a picture of a family that is not behaving as they should – in Sacks’ terms: the rights and obligations of the family as a unit are not being fulfilled (Sacks, 1974b: 220).

Stokoe suggests this is achieved through invoking a variety of categorisations that are tied to particular CBAs (Stokoe, 2003: 326). One category she highlights, for example, is the ‘good mother’. Citing Sacks she argues that because particular activities are category bound attention is drawn to absent (as well as present) activities when talking about a particular person. So in this instance the behaviour of the son can be blamed on
things the mother is not doing: ‘not living there’ (Line 4), ‘out at night’ (Line 6) and so on. The implication is that if she was living there and wasn’t out at night – activities that a ‘good mother’ would make sure she was doing – things would be different. These activities can be drawn upon as reasonable grounds for expecting things to go wrong.

Stokoe argues that a further possible explanation for the bad behaviour is offered through the use of the SRP husband/wife (or a variation). The fact that the woman in question ‘hasn’t got a bloke’ is a further absence in her life. Again the implication is that if she fulfilled the norm of being part of a couple the family’s situation would probably be different.

2.8 Chapter summary

My aims in this thesis differ from those that would be based in the realist perspective on relationships that has tended to dominate social psychology. In order to make a contribution to relationship research, rather than taking the popular course of examining the inner processes of individuals in relationships, I instead explore the construction of relationships in and through talk. The key influences to my approach are taken from an ethnomethodological perspective, particularly the insights developed by Harvey Sacks (1992a; 1992b) and those authors who have based their research on his work. Some of those who have contributed to psychological insights of relationships are reviewed in the next chapter. My analysis is conducted through the ethnomethodologically based tools of conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorisation analysis (MCA), some uses of which have been considered in the final section of the current chapter. I briefly discussed four examples of data that illustrate the value of exploring a combination of sequencing and categorisation when looking at talk. Both devices shed light on what is going on in the talk and when used in combination give greater insight into the complexities that are
present. In the next chapter I move from this discussion of theoretical concerns to consider some of the diverse relationship details that have been considered ethnomethodologically.
Chapter 3 Ethnomethodological Studies

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss how ethnomethodological researchers have analysed talk. In particular I consider how they have identified specific features through which relationships come to be constructed, foregrounding some of the issues and concepts I address in my analysis. A common strategy in social psychological research based on a realist standpoint is to ask people about specific times or events in their relationships (Duck, 1993). Often the focus for investigating the process of relationships will be first meetings, or major events such as moving job or getting divorced. However, taking an ethnomethodological approach, the everyday detail of relationships and the minutiae that make up processes of change become the focus of analysis. Though the discussion may remain focused on the same people and events, the overall aim of the analysis is very different, foregrounding ordinary aspects of relationships that may not be discovered by other means. I outline a range of research from discursive psychology that looks at relationship features and foregrounds some of the issues I explore in my analysis.
In addition to looking at the fine detail of talk one of my overall aims in my thesis is to contribute to the development of a view of older women that differs from and complements those that examine some of the more problematic interactions of some older people (e.g. Buchanan & Middleton, 1995; Shakespeare, 1998). Though my specific interest is language, my aim is to add to the growing body of more positively focused social scientific research into older people in general (e.g. Andrews, 1999; Uhlenberg & De Jong Gierveld, 2004). Some language research has focused on the type of ordinary, everyday conversations that older people have, such as the conversational use of categories related to old age (N. Coupland et al., 1991) and how people age successfully (Hummert & Nussbaum, 2001). There is also a range of ethnomethodologically based studies of older people's conversation that are particularly relevant to my thesis (Boden & Bielby, 1983, 1986; Nikander, 2000, 2003; Paoletti, 1998, 2001). Through reference to these and other studies I explore the conversational devices of identity construction, remembering and story telling in talk and the relevance of these to the analysis of the conversational data generated by my research.

3.2 Discursive psychology: Constructing relationships in talk

A growing body of research in social psychology takes a post-modern, social constructionist approach. Starting from this epistemological base discourse analysis researchers examine various psychological topics through the use of language (Wetherell, 2001). One of the main ideas of this approach is that language is both constructive and constructed. It is constructive because people construct different versions of the world through their use of it: though innumerable descriptions of an object or incident are available at any one time only one will be chosen to represent or construct it (e.g. Wetherell & Potter, 1992). For example, a particular relationship may be categorised through the length of time it has lasted, by the people involved in it, or through perceptions
of its success or failure. On the other hand, language is constructed in that people actively use it to convey a particular point. In Edwards' words it is "pervasively rhetorical" and is "oriented to alternative possible ways of describing things" (1998: 16). So, in talking about their relationship a couple may give very different accounts of it. This does not necessarily mean that one is telling the truth and the other not — merely that they are each accounting for it at that time for that specific conversation.

A discursive approach developed in the late 1980s by Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) is relevant to my thesis. Discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992b) has been further developed through Potter's more recent work (1996a; 1996b; 2000) and through that of Derek Edwards (1994; 1997; 1998) as well as their joint enterprises (Edwards, Ashmore, & Potter, 1995; Edwards & Potter, 1992a, 1992b; Potter & Edwards, 2003). Discursive psychologists put forward a critical approach to social psychology, citing the influential role that theorists from other areas of research have had — and are still having — on recent developments in the field (Potter, 2000).

Drawing on ideas from Wittgenstein (1953), Garfinkel (1967) and Sacks (1992a) Potter argues that the focus of (social) psychology should turn from attempts to identify what cognitions are, to instead examining "what people do" — their "situated practices" (2000: 36). Rather than looking at psychological topics such as memory from an individual viewpoint, the focus should instead turn toward social interaction — people's accounts of these topics should be explored (Edley, 2001; Edwards, 1997).

Studies in discursive psychology typically use a variety of methods of data generation. These include semi-structured interviews (Day Sclater, 1997; Lawes, 1999) or recorded conversations (Middleton & Edwards, 1990a; Stokoe, 1997). They also have a range of analytic concerns such as the construction of age (Nikander, 2003), how children learn to remember (Edwards & Middleton, 1988) and family talk (Billig, 1997). However, several implicit epistemological features link these explorations. Language is seen as
social action and not merely as reflecting inner thoughts and feelings. Researchers are anti-essentialist, proposing that there is no given, determined nature to the social world but instead it is the product of social processes. They are also anti-realist. Instead of believing that there is a 'true' version of whichever psychological topic is being studied to be discovered – that somewhere there exists objective fact – they accept that all forms of knowledge are relative to the time and place in which they are located. The discursive psychological view of language is thus an epistemological stance rather than merely a method of analysis (Edwards & Potter, 1992b).

My thesis is located within the boundaries of this epistemological framework – through my empirical exploration of features of relationship construction in talk, I seek to contribute to the growing body of psychological research that draws on features of ethnomethodology. At the same time, I aim to explore personal relationships by attending to their more mundane, everyday aspects – a focus that has been taken up to some extent already by psychologists concentrating on discursive elements. Studies such as those by Day Sclater (1997), Edwards (1998) and Lawes (1999), for example, explore features of relationships – either of their formation or of their breakdown – through talk about them. In the rest of this chapter I consider instances of relationship research that have this ethnomethodological approach as their basis.

3.3 Relationships in interaction

Relationships are employed as a resource in many different ways in the construction of conversation (Nofsinger, 1991: 162-165). They are invoked through the design of utterances in a conversation – 'I love you' spoken between boyfriend and girlfriend will be interpreted differently than if spoken between parent and child. Utterances may be designed to invoke shared knowledge, or accounts may be jointly constructed between speakers. Maynard and Zimmerman (1984; 305) argue that “rather than approaching
relationships as a reality lying behind and influencing members’ face-to-face behavior, we can investigate them for how, in the course of time, they are accomplished within everyday interaction".

Harvey Sacks (1992a; 1992b) draws attention to the importance of relationships and how their features are manifested in people’s talk. Using various extracts of data he illustrates, for example, resistance to establishing a relationship (1992a: 3-11), conveying some occurrence to a friend (1992b: 229-248) and how identities are constructed through talk (1992a: 568-577). In one particularly relevant investigation (1992b: 437-443) Sacks looks at the ways in which a married couple interact in front of another couple. ‘A couple’ is a particular type of standardised relational pair (SRP) associated with a range of rights and obligations. Sacks argues that spouses tend to tell each other things that have happened as soon after they happen as is reasonably possible, especially those that may affect them as a couple. However, if one of them hears about something from a third party, when it could have been reasonably recounted to them by the other partner, or it is told to a third party in front of them rather than directly to them, then some sort of trouble may follow. As part of the SRP each of them has the right to know things about the other before anyone else and, conversely, the obligation to impart such information to the other before telling anyone else.

Another of Sacks’ investigations focuses on the usefulness of the inclusive pronoun ‘we’ for performing several different activities. He argues that ‘we’ may represent a specific group of which the speaker is part or, alternatively, it may represent a generic group to which the speaker feels affiliated. So ‘we’ in one utterance may refer to an SRP and in the next to an ill-defined group such as a generation or a community. Using the inclusive pronoun ‘we’, also implies that there exists another group ‘they’ with which the speaker feels unconnected (1992a: 1: 568-577). In relationship talk these terms are very
commonly drawn upon. Their use distinguishes different groupings of people enabling speakers to align themselves with (or distance themselves from) particular groups.

The investigation of these and other conversational devices highlights the attention that Sacks gives to relational aspects of talk. These ‘seen-but-unnoticed’ features of relationships have been fore-grounded by researchers building on his ideas.

3.4 Categorising relationship identities

Derek Edwards (1998) explores conversational data taken from a relationship counselling session. Drawing on Sacks (1992a: 169-174) he concentrates on the construction of identities within the exchange. He analyses how the participants categorised one another and themselves in order to construct a particular argument. This approach contrasts with much of social science where the analyst takes on the task of doing any relevant categorisation. Edwards approaches the topic of relationships in conflict and the processes involved in maintaining relationships from a different starting point than social psychologists such as Duck et al. (Section 2.2). He looks at how different identities are made relevant and what effect these have, both on those involved in the interaction and on analyst understanding. He considers how the different identities invoked in the exchange, such as being part of a married couple, may “provide grounds for claims, stories, and complaints based on marriage vows and responsibilities, commitments, expectations of fidelity, and so on.” (Edwards, 1998: 22). As with Sacks’ discussion of SRPs, he draws attention to the rights and obligations that accompany being a part of a couple. He also demonstrates how both the counsellor, and the couple who have come for help with their problems, jointly orient to a range of categorial aspects in constructing the problematic aspects of the relationship. Edwards (1998: 31) concludes that in studying categorisations such as these as flexible types of “empirical phenomena occurring in talk” researchers can discover how talk performs particular actions in any given context.
In another study, focusing again on similar conflictual relationships, David Greatbatch and Robert Dingwall (1998) explore identity construction in data taken from a divorce mediation session. They also draw on CA insights and show how multiple identities can be invoked in complex ways during conversation. Charles Goodwin (1987) argues that these include both discourse identities — arising in relation to the local conversational context — and social identities such as gender or occupation. In one utterance taken from a short extract of data they show how the wife, addressing the two mediators present, formulates an accusation against her husband:

Extract 1

W: You know. And (.) because he were- he'd come in and he was so drunk he never heard her

(Greatbatch & Dingwall, 1998: 123)

Greatbatch and Dingwall assert in this short utterance that the speaker makes relevant the following discourse identities:

Extract 2

W: Speaker, report producer and accuser
M1: Addressee and non-aligned report recipient
M2: Addressee and non-aligned report recipient
H: Overhearer and accused

(Greatbatch & Dingwall, 1998: 124)

They argue that all of these discourse identities are oriented to the task in hand – divorce mediation. So, in addressing her comments about her husband’s behaviour to the mediators, W aligns herself to the conversational task of trying to settle their dispute. Further, Greatbatch and Dingwall demonstrate how, within the same mediation session, the adoption of these discourse identities invokes a range of larger social identities. Throughout the interaction, for example, the mediators construct themselves as ‘facilitators’ who adopt a neutral position in the mediation process. W aligns to this construction by invoking the identity ‘non-aligned report recipient’. Along with H, she
also contributes to this construction by not treating the mediators as supporting either one of them, nor by asking their personal opinions or comments on what is being said. All of these social identities relate to the institutional setting in which the interactants find themselves. Greatbatch and Dingwall further argue that the identities invoked are not limited to roles implicit in a divorce mediation session. Rather the talk makes relevant a range of other social relationships such as being parents, (ex) spouses and so on.

Pirjo Nikander (2000; 2003) and Isabella Paoletti (1998; 2002) are two researchers who adopt an ethnomethodological approach to study the talk of older people. Using CA/MCA methods, both examine different aspects of ageing. Nikander interviews people close to their fiftieth birthday to examine the ways in which they “make sense of, accomplish and manage their membership in a particular age category.” (2003: 10). She aims to investigate how people ‘do age’ in their interactions particularly relating this to Sacks’ notion of stage-of-life categories (Sacks, 1974b). Her analysis indicates that her participants employed various devices to accomplish their membership of a specific age category and used these to both “acknowledge and by-pass factual notions of change.” (Nikander, 2003: 207). In other words, the devices employed are used to perform a variety of actions rather than having a fixed use – they are indexical to their local context. Much of the talk in these interviews centres upon ideas about age-appropriate behaviour reflecting experiences in relationships with other people. So, in one extract a woman talks about flirting: although, given her age, she does not feel like “flirting too much any more” but if someone should “come right at you” she might be willing to “joke around a bit” (Nikander, 2003: 140). In this way, in the context of the interview, she is articulating how her position in relation to other people has changed with age.

Isabella Paoletti examines the production by women of the identity of ‘older woman’, taking recordings of interactional encounters from “institutionally organized settings” (Paoletti, 1998:14). Following on from earlier work by Coupland et al (N.
Coupland & Coupland, 1998; N. Coupland et al., 1991) she examines how age categories are utilised – or resisted – in her recorded conversations, concluding that these specific interactions occasioned different uses of the categorisations identified. So, the use of ‘old’ as an age category may be linked in one utterance to negative attributions such as accounting for ill health or for frailty and in the next to be a device to distance or deny ageing. Paoletti focuses on the use of age categories and in particular how they are “embedded in members’ practical activities and in specific institutional contexts.” (1998: 16). She contrasts their stability as a form of shared social knowledge with their variability of use to a particular conversational context. She asserts that people generally invoke categories either to forward stereotypes or to be adapted for use in new ways. The intention is either to claim common ground and to sustain relationships or to dissociate and to deny.

These studies of identity categorisations in talk are particularly relevant for my analysis. Though my focus is not on conflictual talk, or on talk about ageing as such, my data features many instances of similar types of identity construction, relating both to those who are talking and to those who are talked about. Edwards’ attention to rights and obligations is something I explore in my analysis. Two ways in which relationships are constructed in the data are through the rights and obligations linked to the research context and those tied to friendship and family. My analysis also features the fluidity of discourse identities, as explored by Greatbatch and Dingwall. At certain points in my conversational data Jane has the identity of ‘non-aligned report recipient’, whereas at other times she is the ‘report producer’ and the other conversationalists are cast as ‘report recipient’. Finally the insights of Nikander and Paoletti into age identities are also relevant to my research. An orientation to age is available from the outset as my initial invitation to participate indicated that I wanted to study relationships with a group of older women. As speakers they construct age in specific ways in their conversations to illustrate the points they are
making. In addition to exploring these specific types of identity construction in relationship talk, I also study the conversational resources through which these identities are constructed.

3.5 Social 'remembering'

The first of these resources is the process of 'remembering' in talk. In contrast to the aims of much cognitive psychological research that examines how people recall and recognise objects and events, my interest is not to compare input (what was experienced) with output (what is remembered of that experience) or to look at the structure that is generally termed 'memory', but to look at the activity of 'remembering' and how it is achieved through the local, rhetorical management of talk (Edwards & Potter, 1992b; Norrick, 2003). A series of studies to this end have been conducted since the mid 1980s by David Middleton, Derek Edwards and colleagues (e.g. Buchanan & Middleton, 1995; Edwards & Middleton, 1986, 1988; Middleton & Edwards, 1990b). Concentrating on the social features of 'remembering', rather than the mechanics of 'memory', they expand on ideas outlined in the early writings of Frederick Bartlett (1932; Edwards & Middleton, 1987).

They point out several aspects of the activity of remembering that are important to the progression of social interaction and, in particular, conversation. First, the practice of remembering is viewed as a joint, social activity demonstrating a shared understanding of experience. Second, it is easily achieved in talk – remembering is a "familiar discursive practice" for conversationalists (Middleton & Edwards, 1990a: 26). Context is important to the construction of remembering. Middleton and Edwards draw attention to the significance of the broader socio-historical background in which the participants are situated. They also point out that remembering is reliant upon the local context of its production – it is "occasioned by the developing context and purposes of conversation." (Middleton & Edwards, 1990a: 29). Further, they show that the activity of remembering
serves different purposes at different times and particular ‘memories’ will be oriented to
differently, depending upon their relevance to the talk at the time. The conversation need
not necessarily be focused specifically on past events and experiences but these may be
drawn upon in order to inform the current topic. So, for example, a conversation about
current relationships may draw upon ‘memories’ of shared experiences and of relationships
that are ‘past’. The work of Charles Goodwin (1987) is important to note here. He
explores how co-conversationalists manage having been co-present (or not) at events, a
feature highlighted in my analysis when I explore how shared or individually remembered
instances are used as a resource to elucidate something about the history of relationships.

The work of Deirdre Boden and Denise Bielby in the 1980s is also important
because they set remembering in the context of conversations between older people.
Employing a CA perspective, they focus specifically on remembering, exploring both the
structural aspects and the content of older people’s talk (Boden & Bielby, 1983, 1986).
The popular academic view (supported, for example, by a wealth of psychological work
examining the cognitive deterioration that is assumed to accompany ageing) is that older
people are less competent in conversation in various ways. Boden and Bielby show that
the complexity of conversational structure in older people’s talk is comparable with that of
younger people and that this does not conform to “common stereotypes of elderly speech
patterns” such as rambling (1983:312). They identify significant differences in the content
displayed in the talk of the contrasting age groups. For instance, older people are more
likely to draw upon such diverse aspects as autobiography and geographical origins as well
as using more personal address terms than younger interactants. Boden and Bielby also
identify that dyads of older people will often take their experiences from the past and make
them relevant to the present pointing out that topical talk consists of an interweaving of
“the distant past with the present in an effective and highly collaborative manner.”
In other words remembered past events and experiences are used to guide conversations about the present.

Several of the points raised in this section are significant to my thesis. The conversations I generated for my research took place between a group of women of a certain age group, located in a particular time and place and talking about a specific topic. All of these factors made some impression on the ensuing conversations. Rather than being taken as a demonstration of the cognitive workings of memory, or as representing the talk of a particular type of person, the occasioned nature of the women’s remembering takes on a much greater significance and adds another dimension to be gained from this type of investigation. Speakers incorporated both relationships that were current — including those between themselves — and those located in their pasts with parents, school friends and so on. Though occasioned by the research task the inclusion of such phrases as ‘I think I’ve told you before...’ and ‘Can you remember me saying...’ served at least two purposes. They denoted the micro management of current relationships, delicately serving to adjust the relationship in terms of the ongoing development of this specific conversation and they marked aspects of the relationships on previous occasions. However, it is almost certain that this particular selection of relationships — and the way in which they are remembered here — would not occur alongside each other in precisely the same way at any other time. As Middleton and Edwards suggest, the remembered accounting of particular relationships may be significant at different times and in different ways for the speakers.

3.6 Storytelling in conversation

In this final section I focus on one particular way in which remembering is achieved. I concentrate on the insights into storytelling that have been explicated in conversation analysis. As before these insights are drawn from the work of Sacks and other researchers who have followed him. The sequential aspects of conversation, shown in the turn-by-turn
pattern of conversation are particularly significant in the analysis of stories and second stories. Although stories require “long turns constructed from multiple units of talk by a single party” an opportunity that is “interactively achieved” between the parties involved (Mandelbaum, 1993: 252), they are also an integral part of the surrounding talk and are made relevant in the context of what is being talked about at one particular time in the course of one particular conversation (Edwards, 1997).

Sacks (1974a: 337), proposes “three serially ordered and adjacently placed types of sequences which we call the preface, the telling and the response sequences”. So, stories are proposed by the teller using a story-preface (Sacks, 1992b: 17) and require acceptance from the recipient that allows the teller permission to continue. Acceptance is demonstrated with response tokens and continuers such as ‘mm’, ‘yeah’ and so on, and then at the end of the story, according to Sacks, the recipient signals understanding by their response – perhaps by echoing words from the beginning or by responding in a different way than they have so far (Sacks, 1992a: 766). As Goodwin (1981) and later Mandelbaum (1993) suggest, recipients as well as tellers are integral to the progression of stories and like ordinary conversation storytelling is a collaborative activity. According to Schegloff (1997a: 102) “Even if recipients stay blank (and perhaps especially then), their presence and conduct enters into the story’s telling”; they are an “irremediable component” of the telling. A consideration of both contributions to the collaboration is central to a balanced analysis of how stories fit into conversations. In my analysis in Chapter 8, I explore some of the ways in which recipients demonstrate their conversational orientation to the stories being told.

The design, construction and delivery of a story are shaped by who the recipient is, how many there are, what they already know and how they are related to the teller and to each other (Schegloff, 1997a). Just as every conversation is different so it is with storytelling: what Schegloff describes as being “an organic part of its interactional
environment” (1997a: 101). Each time a story is told it will be told to ‘fit’ a specific situation with several aspects influencing the telling. Stories are recipient designed: the teller invites the recipient to be actively involved in the telling and the utterances of the recipient become an integral part of the storytelling. Storytellers will use particular devices to display that the story is being told on this occasion for this particular recipient. They may attempt to establish mutual knowledge between interactants, for example, or pauses may occur where the recipient can display understanding of what has been said (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). A story told to a group of several recipients may mean that general information is fore-grounded and personal information minimised. Alternatively, if the recipient is familiar to the teller ‘already known’ information may be omitted and, if the story has been told many times before, it will be oriented to the particular conversational context (Schegloff, 1997). Similarly, recipients may respond in different ways. Participants in the story being re-told may add information or may counter claims if they are negatively portrayed whereas those absent from the story may ask for more information or for repetition or clarification (M. H. Goodwin, 1990). Schegloff (1997a) also draws attention to stories told for different reasons: they may be told in response to an enquiry or request, or may be intended to change the course of a conversation and launch a new sequence.

Jennifer Mandelbaum (1987; 1993) explicates how being part of a couple is made apparent in conversation, focusing specifically on the joint telling of stories and how this might illustrate the couple’s relationship. She points out that because it is so easy for others to recognise when people are in a relationship (part of an SRP) this is generally taken for granted and is rarely remarked upon (Mandelbaum, 1987: 146). As Garfinkel (1967) comments it is only with the creation of ‘trouble’ that the ‘ordinary’ is identified and considered.
Mandelbaum extends Sacks’ discussion of spouse talk (section 3.2) by looking closely at the interactional problems that two couples had in telling stories during a mealtime conversation, and particularly how they achieve this through their joint conversational activity (1987: 147-148). First, one couple tells a story and then a second follows from the other couple. She argues that by sharing the storytelling it is obvious from the beginning that there is a knowing recipient of the story: the other teller of the story, someone who was involved in what is being told. Who actually gets to tell the story is determined during its telling. It is achieved through each of the possible speakers doing particular things whilst the story is being told (1987: 155). Illustrating Sacks’ ideas (1992b: 242-248) she suggests that the co-construction of the story is achieved in three ways:

(a) when one potential teller narrates, and the other “dramatizes,” (b) when details specific to each interactant’s participation in the event are narrated simultaneously, and (c) when one participant tells, and the other indicates how recipients might react to the telling.

(Mandelbaum, 1987: 159)

She suggests that this collaboration informs the audience that they, the tellers, are performing as a team: their co-operation – who speaks, who adds detail and so on – demonstrates the relationship between them. However, this constitution of ‘coupleness’ is not necessarily something that is done consciously. Rather it is consequential to telling a story together (1987: 163) and an example of how conversation can make relationships seem real.

### 3.6.1 Constructing second stories

When a topic is introduced into a conversation it is followed by something that ‘fits’ with it: “items are placed where they belong in conversations, by virtue of things that occurred immediately prior...persons seem to be definitely orienting to putting something in as a second utterance.” (Sacks, 1992a: 537). One type of second item that appears is a ‘second story’: a story that, in the course of a conversation, immediately follows another (Sacks,
Sacks discusses the ways in which this second story picks up points of the first – the ways in which they ‘fit’ together. He argues, for example, that the teller of the second story is not merely picking up on the topic of the first having recalled one on the same or a similar topic. Rather, the second story is ‘about’ the people involved in the conversation – it reflects the local context of its production. Therefore, the experiences one is reminded of in relation to the first story are linked to its actual telling, as well as to its content. This means that though not all of the important features of the first story will necessarily appear in the second, there will be similarities and connections between them.

These connections can take several forms. The choice of characters is key – though they may not be exactly the same in the two stories but they will be matched with links between the first and the second. So, for example, Sacks (1992a: 769) suggests that if a first story has four characters: “like ‘my neighbor,’ ‘myself,’ ‘a man down the street,’ and ‘a little girl.’”, then a second story will have a range of characters that categorically tend to match these (i.e. it is unlikely that the second story will involve George Bush, Tony Blair and the meeting of other world leaders). A further constraint to the choice of second story may be the ordering of these characters. If the teller plays a particular part in the first story then the teller of the second story will perform the same or a similar role. Sacks illustrates this point with a story where the teller witnesses a car accident, sees it as news and then looks for it in the newspaper. The second teller is then reminded of a story where she takes on the same character (i.e. a witness of a car accident) and performs the same actions (i.e. listened out for it on the news). A further characteristic of second stories is that they perform an activity in the conversation – they do some sort of interactional business. For example, they may be produced for a number of reasons such as to ‘do’ agreement, to ‘do’ argument and so on (Sacks, 1992a: 770).

In conversation understanding can be conveyed in a variety of ways, for example by the co-selection of particular words, by answering questions or by following on with
similar experiences. A major source of items that can be drawn upon to demonstrate understanding, and a common feature of second stories, are things already known. In my analysis in Chapter 8 I explore how this stock of knowledge is utilised in the construction of second (and subsequent) stories. I also look at where they appear in the recorded conversations and who tells them, as well as how they serve the purposes of the talk at that particular time. Mandelbaum shows how telling stories co-operatively constructs relationships between people and Sacks discusses in depth specific connecting features of first and second stories, such as the characters, the role of the teller and the actions performed. These are all important aspects of how relationships are ‘done’ in conversations and so are central to my thesis.

3.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have provided an empirical grounding for the analysis of my data. I have summarised a range of ethnomethodological investigations looking at relevant features of talk. The studies by Edwards (1998) and Greatbatch and Dingwall (1998) both introduce relevant features of identity categorisation in talk while Nikander (2003) and Paoletti (2002) complement this with a focus on talk among older people. The discourse identities that are constructed by the participants in my research are a particularly significant feature explored in my analysis. The familiarity constructed by the conversationalists, and the means by which they move between positions of talking as familiar people and of talking as participants in a research context, are aspects that I discuss. Remembering and storytelling are two patterns of talk that appear regularly. My research participants use both devices widely in their talk about relationships, and though I look at them as separate processes they are often tied closely together. Middleton and Edwards (1990b) and Boden and Bielby (1986) all explore how remembering is constructed in relation to particular relational identities, while Mandelbaum (1987) and Sacks (1992b) look at the construction
of stories and second stories. In Chapter 4, I turn away from discussing literature relevant to my topic and theory to look at the data generation methods I used in my research.
Chapter 4 Methodological Issues

4.1 Introduction

As with psychological research looking at ageing, much of the research into older people that begins from a feminist perspective has been criticised for taking a similar pathological view (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Though older people overall are an under-researched group, that research taking a positive perspective on their lives is even less apparent. Feminist researchers have argued that this approach, largely ignoring a whole section of society, leads to a much less thorough view of older women in particular. They argue that the concentration on the roles of women in general in society has tended to be within a context of caring – either as carers or as receivers of care – with older women usually located in this model as the receivers (Bernard & Meade, 1993: 15-16; Finch & Groves, 1983). This research focus contributes to the common stereotypes of older people as reliant on other people and less able to lead independent lives.

In my research I utilise a feminist methodology, first proposed by Shulamit Reinharz (1989) and more recently discussed by Bernard and Meade (1993), through which I aim to forward knowledge and understanding about women and their day to day lives. My aim is to make visible some of the everyday relational experiences that older
women encounter in order to extend social scientific knowledge in the area, and particularly to illustrate those features of their lives in which they are active and independent.

With this, and other previously highlighted concerns in mind, I combined two methods of data generation in this research. The decision to do this was prompted partly through the discovery, gained in my previous research, that how participants talked about their personal experiences and relationships in one-to-one conversations was very different from how they talked as part of a group. A further concern was that, although topical talk about relationships interested me, I particularly wanted to focus on how relationships were co-constructed in talk. I speculated that interactions that followed the format of mundane conversation rather than the standardised research interview might reveal how collaborative constructions of familiar relationships emerge. Consequently I decided to initiate and record two kinds of purposeful interactions – open-ended interviews and conversations about personal photographs.

In this chapter I discuss each of these methods and the resulting data. The first stage of my fieldwork consisted of a series of one-to-one open-ended interviews with the eight participants. In relation to this stage I first review research that has used interviewing as a research tool and then introduce specific ethnomethodological examples. In the second stage of fieldwork I brought the women together in pairs to talk about their selected photographs. I discuss specific examples of research that have used photographs as a topic of investigation. The final section in the chapter focuses on the decisions I made about transcribing the recorded interviews and conversations.

4.2 Interview talk and techniques in research

Talk underpins much social research: “a key element in social and educational research where investigators collect, analyse and report the conversations they have conducted.”
Chapter 4: Methodological Issues

(Burgess, 1988a: 137). Though its importance is widely acknowledged, talk tends to be seen in social scientific research as a resource for study, rather than a topic in its own right. An important feature of the realist view in psychology, for example, is that talk can be used to access the inner processes of the person or group of people being studied – that language is a transparent medium (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). Adopting an ethnomethodological approach, I was interested in studying the whole of the ensuing conversation, taking the talk as a topic for study in its own right rather than as a resource to access other aspects of human life (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Taylor, 2001).

One of the most popular forms of talk used in social psychological research is the interview – Briggs (1986) estimates that ninety per cent of all social science investigations use it in one form or another. Holstein and Gubrium (1997: 113) describe interviews as “special forms of conversation” where talk is used in very different ways to do a variety of things. Interview techniques can be placed on a continuum ranging from those that are rigorously structured and designed to generate quantitative data to those that are unstructured, with open-ended questions producing qualitative information. The former are linked most closely to conventional ‘scientific’ psychological research taking an objective perspective while the latter are often adopted in research aimed at producing a more in-depth understanding.

The aim of research taking a realist epistemological stance is to access ‘reliable’ and ‘valid’ information about the topic being investigated. Interviews are standardised and carefully monitored. Procedures have been developed to minimise potential sources of bias such as interviewer effects and leading questions. Interview schedules are rigorously implemented in order to reduce the risk of misunderstanding or the effects of variations in presentation by different interviewers. Bias can also be reduced, it is argued, if interviewers and participants are strangers to each other.
Though still a concern, these issues are less important in qualitative research and questions have been raised about other ways by which interviews might generate data (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Greater emphasis is given to the interview process and to ways in which meaning is "actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter." (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997: 114). One of the more popular methods of generating qualitative data involves using a semi-structured question schedule where the questions are introduced into the interaction as and when appropriate. Unlike the rigour of the structured interview, researchers using this method can 'play it by ear' – they can vary the order or the wording of the questions according to the interaction taking place (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). This generates a more fluid and flexible view of the interview relationship and opportunities to study the nature of talk.

Moreover, Silverman (1993) argues that as culturally competent members of an 'interview society' many interviewees have some idea of what goes on in an interview – they understand the roles of researcher and participant and the particular types of behaviour that are appropriate in the interview context. So, the researcher is aware that the general pattern of the interaction is one that consists of her introducing herself and her topic, and then continuing with whatever procedure she is adopting. Slight deviations may occur but by and large the format will be the same whatever the topic. Similarly, in the role of interviewee, each participant is also aware of this general pattern and after the initial introductions and project outline she awaits the questions to be asked. She may interject with questions of clarification but generally the expected format is followed. Ways of analysing the resulting data have been developed, acknowledging this collaborative construction of the interview process and leading to sophisticated forms of research. However, some problems remain.
4.2.1 Interviews or ‘naturally occurring’ interactions?

Though talk is acknowledged as a central aspect of social life in general as well as in interviews (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997), there has been much discussion about what actually constitutes ‘a conversation’. Although, as Gaudio (2003) remarks, the actual criteria defining conversation often goes unstated, some researchers have attempted a definition. Schegloff (1968: 1075) includes a whole range of likely interactions: “chats as well as service contacts, therapy sessions as well as asking for and getting the time of day, press conferences as well as exchanged whispers of ‘sweet nothings.’” Nofsinger (1991: 1) extends the definition to include a list of ways in which conversation can be used to “contact and influence other people: to enlist their help, to offer them companionship, to protect ourselves from their demands, to establish important relationships with them, and to present ourselves as having the qualities that they (and we) admire.” Both definitions demonstrate the wide range of talk available for analytic attention, from the most insignificant exchanges to those that are life changing. They also demonstrate that, in addition to the dominant means in social science of generating talk for analysis – the interview – there are very many other settings in which conversations can be recorded and data generated.

Recently theorists advocating different discursive traditions have discussed what constitutes the ‘right’ type of talk for analysis (debated in depth in a recent volume of Discourse Studies: Lynch, 2002; Potter, 2002; Speer, 2002a; Speer, 2002b; ten Have, 2002). This debate problematises what is being referred to when terms such as ‘naturalistic’ and ‘naturally occurring’ when used to describe talk. In planning my research I conducted an Internet search to find out how other researchers define their studies as using ‘naturalistic’ or ‘naturally occurring talk’. Though I found many examples of the terms in use very few researchers included definitions. Studies such as those carried out by McKechnie (2000) and Wareing and Newell (2002) use the term and, though no
distinct definition is given, do at least outline why their studies can be considered to have
generated naturally occurring data. The majority of studies that I found however, describe
their data as ‘natural’ in some way but fail to explain this description in any depth.

An exception to this is Andrea Golato (2003: 96) who collected data that was “non-
elicited, audio-taped or video-taped face-to-face encounters and/or audio-taped
spontaneous telephone conversations.” This definition echoes a distinction made by
conversation analysts, and more recently, by discursive psychologists, where ‘naturally
occurring’ data can be distinguished in terms of the part that the researcher plays in
generating it. As ten Have suggests, the general CA recommendation is that recordings of
talk should “be ‘naturally occurring’, that is ‘non-experimental’, not co-produced with or
provoked by the researcher.” (1999: 48). In support of, and expanding this definition of
naturally occurring data, Potter suggests that it is:

spoken language produced entirely independently of the actions of the researcher, whether it is
everyday conversation over the telephone, the records of a company board meeting, or the
interaction between doctor and patient in a surgery. It is natural in the specific sense that it is not
‘got up’ by the researcher using an interview schedule, a questionnaire, an experimental protocol or
some such social research technology.

(Potter, 1997: 148-149)

It is possible to demonstrate that all sorts of data – including interview data – may be
included within this broad definition. For instance, it is interesting to compare the work of
Paoletti (2002) and Nikander (2003) since both are based on interview data. Nikander ‘got
up’ interviews specifically for the purposes of her study, whereas the data examined by
Paoletti were generated through a series of survey interviews conducted for another
purpose. Taking Potter’s definition, are we to assume that Paoletti’s data are in some way
more ‘natural’ than those analysed by Nikander? Similarly, material analysed by Sacks
(1992b: 98) and Stokoe (2003) was generated in the course of other non-researcher-led
activities. Does the fact that their data was generated in this way, rather than through
interviews, make it more ‘natural’ than that introduced by Paoletti? These questions
influenced my own thoughts about data generation methods and prompted me to look more closely at how ethnomethodologists had dealt with them.

4.2.2 Interviews as topic: Taking an ethnomethodological view

All of the interview techniques discussed so far have one major feature in common – they are based on interactions that were used as a resource through which to generate data for research (Hester & Francis, 1994). In contrast, an ethnomethodological approach focuses on interviewing as practical action, finding out how it gets done by looking at the “local, here and now, occurrences” (Hester & Francis, 1994: 679). Each research encounter – no matter how rigorously monitored – is a unique construction between that researcher and that participant on that particular occasion (Schegloff, 1997b). Various interview formats have been considered from an ethnomethodological perspective, such as standardised survey interviews (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000; Paoletti, 1998; Suchman & Jordan, 1990) and interviews that are semi-structured or open-ended (Hester & Francis, 1994; Lee & Roth, 2004; Nikander, 2003; Rapley, 2001).

One issue that has been closely examined is the way in which the interview format disrupts the normal flow of conversation. Suchman and Jordan (1990) highlight topic choice as being one of the main differences between ordinary conversation and standardised surveys. In mundane conversation the speakers choose the topic of talk whereas in interviews the topic is chosen for them – perhaps by someone from outside the interaction. Further, in mundane conversation the speakers’ “local control” over the conversation is what keeps it going – they talk about it “to whatever depth they choose” (Suchman & Jordan, 1990: 233). In interviews however, the time allocated for discussing a topic is constrained: survey schedules and semi-structured question schedules are designed to fit a set-time frame. Finally, the ways in which questions are asked often disrupts the conversational flow, particularly in standardised survey interviews. For
example, questions that allow only yes or no answers deny the interviewee any opportunity to add personal opinions or assessments (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000). Sometimes, even though the interviewee is able to answer a question before it has been fully asked, standard practice requires the interviewer to complete the question. An example of this, taken from Paoletti’s work, appeared at the end of the Chapter 2. There the carer continued to be presented with further choices even though she had already indicated her answer.

The opportunity for interviews to generate conversational episodes is more likely in semi-structured and open-ended formats than in surveys. These types of interviews are designed to encourage active interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, allowing the topic under discussion to be more fully explored. Nikander’s work is one example of this type of investigation. Another is the work of Hester and colleagues on the local organisation of a sociological interview (Hester, 1992; Hester & Francis, 1994). They emphasise the inadequacy of trying to “characterise the interactional nature of interviewing in some generalized way” (1994: 689). Instead, they argue, a close examination of each individual interview interaction is necessary in order to explicate the collaborative nature of its local management. Where one interview may result in long and detailed exchanges in relation to the questions asked another using exactly the same questions might be much shorter. Neither of these exchanges gives ‘better’ data. Rather, each should be explored, they argue, as an individual interaction in its own right.

A further way to analyse the interview interaction as a whole is to focus on the means through which it is generated – the props that are used. Often an interview centres on a question schedule. This can be used in a variety of ways – it may be held and completed by the interviewer without the interviewee seeing it, or the interviewee may be shown cards displaying a range of answers or prompts. Alternatives to questionnaires have also been examined. Hester and Francis (1994), for example, look at the ways in which the cases discussed in an educational psychology interview shape its structure. Cases are
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represented by files consisting of a set of referral letters, forms and reports forming a pile on the table. Hester and Francis outline how the order of the interview is organised around the presentation of this material. At the beginning of the interaction the case materials are introduced sequentially according to their order in the pile. Subsequently however, other cases may be introduced as relevant topics arise. So, the physical mass of the pile provides an initial ordering but then the ways in which talk is linked to specific cases makes others in the body of the pile ‘conditionally relevant’ – accountable features of the case under discussion provide a context in which the next can properly be selected and discussed.

These debates helped me decide to generate data through two different types of ‘occasioned’ talk. My interest was in exploring how interaction unfolds through the joint construction of talk, looking at both sequencing and categorisation, and how the researcher and the participant jointly collaborate in producing it. Several points arising from this review of how the analysis of interviews has been debated were relevant to the decisions I took. First, my interview questions (Box 1 below) were designed so that the participants were able to present their personal opinions about their own relationships and were encouraged to include as much information as they chose. I was not only interested in talk about relationships but also in how this talk was worked up in the interactions – how specific co-constructions were achieved and discourse identities displayed.
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Box 1 Question/prompt schedule

1. Who are the people you have personally known that have had the most influence on you? Why? Who do you think you have influenced?
2. What are, or have been, the most central relationships in your life? Why?
3. How have significant relationships changed over the time that you have been involved in them?
4. What do you think makes some relationships last and others not?
5. Is there anything that you feel is important about relationships that I haven’t asked you about or that you would like to talk about?
6. How would you define a relationship?

Second, in the analysis of my interviews I acknowledge that the conversational data generated is occasioned by this particular situation and that under different circumstances the conversation may take a very different form. Third, Hester and Francis’ (1994) discussion of the organisation of interviews around a material focus was particularly relevant in planning my research. Both of my stages of data generation relied on a ‘prop’ around which the talk revolved – a short question schedule in the first and photographs in the second. In the next section I discuss a variety of ways in which photographs have been used in social scientific investigations.

4.3 Visual images and social science

Early in the process I learnt that personal objects – and particularly photographs – have been used successfully in various types of social scientific research. For example, in an investigation looking at people’s experience of a stay in hospital, Radley and Taylor (2003) asked patients to photograph important aspects of their ward and then discussed the
significance of the photographs with them. In another study Spanish bullfighting was examined through a series of photographs (Pink, 2001). These studies demonstrate the two strands through which photographs have been used in the social sciences: the first implements photographs as a topic through which experiences or events can be examined and shared; the second uses photographs as a resource through which interesting phenomena can be explored (though Harrison (2002b) discusses the relative lack of this type of research).

Photographs are a publicly available medium that can generate discussion and create a sense of community (Horrocks, Milnes, Roberts, & Robinson, 2002). Schwartz (1989: 120-121) suggests: “viewing photographic imagery is a patterned social activity shaped by social contexts, cultural conventions and group norms.” Taking account of comments such as these Harrison (2002b) argues that when using photography as a method for eliciting data, researchers should be aware of the ‘usual’ reasons for which photographs might be taken. Taking the topic of illness as an example she argues that this is not something that is typically photographed (though see Radley and Taylor (2003) for an effective demonstration of how an unusual topic can be used). Rather, in everyday photography, we tend to concentrate on pleasurable occasions or events. Our cultural knowledge of photographs, coupled with their wide availability within Western society, means also that we have many common sense assumptions about them: we understand them in specific ways. So as well as typically photographing a limited range of particular occasions, we know, for example, that a black and white photograph represents an image of an actual ‘colour’ person or scene; we also realise that the two dimensional image in a photograph represents something that was three dimensional at the time of taking it; we know that the image we are looking at is not (often) life-size and so on.

Photographs are widely used by researchers in botany, biology and archaeology. However, with the exception of anthropologists (e.g. Bateson & Mead, 1942; Collier &
Collier, 1986), social science writers have tended to focus attention on language rather than image (Wagner, 1979). Life stories, for example, are organised around various forms of writing rather than visual images (Harper, 1994). Writers draw attention to the problematic or complex nature of visual imagery for social science, widely criticising it as under-developed (e.g. Cronin, 1998; Musello, 1979; Pink, 2001; Prosser, 1998; Wagner, 1979). Wagner (1979) speculates on reasons why "visual images which permeate and organize our daily lives generally lie 'outside the frame' of social science enquiry." (Wagner, 1979: 13). Photographs may have a wide range of possibly ambiguous meanings and are often significant to people for different reasons. In relation to their research uses, there is a lack of consensus among social scientists about the techniques that may be used and how photographs can be applied to social scientific research. Despite these uncertainties, social scientists have incorporated the use of photographs in a wide variety of ways (e.g. Chalfen, 1987; Musello, 1979).

More recently, researchers have continued to develop their use of photographs (e.g. Harrison, 2002a; Malson, Marshall, & Woollett, 2002; Plummer, 2001). Harper (2000) and Plummer (2001) outline a variety of research strategies where photography is used to perform different functions. Harper discusses an empirical strategy where the object/subject of the photograph and the specific point of view are both selected by the person taking it. Consequently the photograph records a particular moment in time and any analysis that follows is contingent on the decisions made by the original photographer. Another strategy Harper considers is the use of visual narratives. Here a sequence of images (or even a video) may be used to expand a previously chosen category. This type of work is becoming increasingly common, demonstrated in the recent growth in popularity of broadcasting 'video diaries'.

In his discussions of visual theory and documentation Ken Plummer (2001) describes similar kinds of investigative strategies that use photographs to illustrate other
forms of research data, rather than as stand-alone investigative methods. He considers the cultural norms that surround taking and presenting photographs, arguing that photographs do not necessarily represent reality. Advances such as digital photography, which enables the easy manipulation of images, can produce fabricated images that are in turn used to invent stories. Contrasting with Plummer's technical discussion, Harper explores a very different feature of photographic research. He looks at the phenomenological and subjective meanings and experiences of the individual photographer as expressed through the types of photograph taken, a feature also explored by Kuhn (1996). A recent distinction in the body of work focusing on photographs is discussed by Rose (2003). Whereas the general focus of photographic studies has been on the content of photographs, cultural understandings of them, or their meaning for the people taking them (Corbus Bezner, 2002; Pink, 2001), Rose instead examines their use in the home. She looks at which photographs are put on display, how these displays are organised and how decisions are made about which photographs come to be circulated amongst family members. These mundane uses of photographs and the functions they perform in everyday life is something I decided I would feature in the second stage of my research. My interest was not in what photographs meant for people or who had taken them. Instead I was interested in what the photographs 'did' – how they made relationships relevant and how the talk around them was constructed.

4.3.1 Making use of photographs

Two methods of using photographs for social research purposes were relevant to the design of my research: photo-elicitation – the practice of using photographs as interview stimuli (e.g. Collier & Collier, 1986; Wagner, 1979) and the 'home mode' (Chalfen, 1987; Musello, 1979) – the study of collections of family photographs.
Generally in studies using photo elicitation photographs taken for a specific purpose are presented in conjunction with a semi-structured interview so that “the chosen images will have some significance for interviewees” (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998:124). In this way the subjective meanings that are attached to the photographs can be explored (e.g. Heron & Williams, 1996). Family rituals and history have been investigated using this method (Munro & Madigan, 1999). Since the publication of Wagner’s collection (1979) it has been applied in a wide variety of investigations (Harrison, 2002a; Horrocks et al., 2002; Prosser, 1998). There are several advantages to this approach. First, photographs can be introduced as a topic for talk either to supplement or replace questions in the research process. Second, as Robinson (2002) suggests, photo-assisted interviews may reduce the power differential present in the interview process. Further, as a result of talking around photographs rather than being asked to respond to questions, the participant may introduce accounts not anticipated by the researcher in designing the question schedule.

Christopher Musello (1979) coined the term the ‘home mode’ to refer to the collections of family photographs that have received a limited (though continuous) amount of attention in social science (e.g. Chalfen, 1987; Collier & Collier, 1986; Rose, 1996; 2003; Spence & Holland, 1991). As with other areas, the photographs produced and accumulated within the context of family life tend to follow a similar pattern (Rose, 2003); what is considered ‘suitable’ to photograph is dependent more on social conventions than on individual decisions. So, as Harrison (2002b) remarks, some occasions (such as birthdays and weddings in the family arena), are typically photographed and represented extensively whereas others (such as funerals), are not (Corbus Bezner, 2002). This tension between what photographs people consider appropriate and inappropriate is emphasised by Musello in discussing “the personal and private process” of family photography (1979: 105). He illustrates how in day-to-day life these collections of photographs are often used
to facilitate social interaction. Their display and distribution, as well as their taking, forms connections between people.

4.3.2 Family photographs

Musello (1979) argues that family photograph collections tend to include only a closed circle of family and friends, featured in a narrow range of settings and activities – they are selected representations portraying ‘appropriate’ elements of family life. As Kuhn (1996) suggests, they are about stories of a shared past carrying with them a circular process – not only does the family create the images but the images themselves create the family. So family members photograph specific occasions and people, and these images, and the discussions accompanying their showing, become the view that others are given of ‘the family’. This argument underpins this thesis. In initiating conversations I requested no particular photographs except that they should be chosen to represent personal relationships. All those that were selected portrayed family occasions such as the ones mentioned above, as well as holidays, parties and similar gatherings. The few exceptions to this were commented upon in the conversation. For example, in Extract 1 Marie draws attention to a photograph of her mother working in a field and wonders how she came to take it:

Extract 1

1. Helen that’s your mum
2. Marie yes and Esther and Jim me and Esther
3. Helen she’s a bonnie baby
4. Marie I mean what what what photographs did I take me mother
5. pulling brussel sprouts off the
6. Helen yeah but they’re good photographs
7. Marie and that’s me going
8. Jane it shows what life was like as well
9. Helen yes it does

In addition to the dominance of a small range of family occasions Wagner (1979) adds two more types of image that present family identity within the family photograph collection.
The first is the idealised, formal, posed images that are often seen in school photographs, or those of the family taken in a photographic studio rather than by another family member. The second set he identifies is of images of family members in ‘alternative’ situations, for example asleep or dressed in unusual ways. These are often presented as silly or funny, and provide amusement by giving another level of characterisation to the person portrayed. All three categories were represented in the photographs brought along as part of my research. Extract 2 provides an example of an ‘alternative’ situation. It relates to a fancy dress party that Ellen and Audrey had both attended where Audrey and Ken were dressed as two well-known television characters, Norah Batty and Compo:

Extract 2: Ellen, Audrey and Jane

1. Audrey there’s Ellen in the middle yeah
2. Jane oh let’s have a look
3. Ellen oh yes [I remember
4. Jane [did you go together then]
5. Audrey [ Ken and I were no (. ) ] [no that was (. ) Ken and I=
6. Ellen [well we
7. Audrey =were Norah Batty and::der::r (. ) Compo
8. Ellen oh God I didn't recog- [(laugh) it was it was when=
9. Jane [(laugh)
10. Ellen =whatdyac- (. ) er who lived [(.) opposite (.)] h- who lived
11. Ellen opposite (. ) Don and Ann

In looking at photographs of such occasions, many studies of family photography point out that the family is represented in particular ways – generally happy and at leisure with no representation of tension or conflict (Prosser, 1998; Rose, 2003). My own research in the main supports this. Many of the photographs around which our conversations focused illustrated happy family occasions such as weddings, christenings and birthdays. Although these occasions are generally talked about as happy however, the relationships portrayed within them are not always discussed in the same terms. For example, in Extract 3 Kate talks about a photograph of Rebecca’s father-in-law:
Extract 3: Kate, Rebecca and Jane

1. Kate and that's Justine
2. Jane oh right
3. Kate happy birthd- it might've been gran's eightieth birthday I don't know(,) I think it's granny oh and she says that's granddad
4. Jane o::oh::h an awkward old thing oh and that's Rebecca
5. Kate and he's a hundred now is he
6. Jane yes he is he's horrible to Rebecca oh
7. Kate (laugh) cantankerous (laugh)
8. Jane yeah very

Musello (1979) observes that one of the most important documentary purposes of the family photograph collection is to aid the retention of memories. Photographs can generate recall of specific information or they can become a prompt for reflecting on or sentimentalising the past. Therefore they tend to be used as ‘keys’ to memory rather than for their specific content. They are, however, only imbued with this type of ‘evidentiary’ value for those with direct personal knowledge of the people and events they portray. This inside information means that they may evoke memories of things that have nothing to do with the picture itself but require ‘filling-in’ information – they are dependent on the interpretations of those people familiar with them. Thus talk becomes indexical to the presentation of the photographs (Garfinkel, 1967). In listening to a conversation relating to a photograph, knowledge of its presence is often necessary in order to make sense of why a particular sequence of talk occurs at a particular time. The sequence of talk may only occur because it is located in the context of the photograph being presented. In addition the memories evoked by photographs do not just come from the images themselves but are generated within the conversational context in which they are being discussed. This might be talk about the past or the present or it might be about the photographic image itself or something that it reminds the speaker of when viewing it. The image therefore functions as a clue or a reminder of something. The accounts of events or people portrayed will differ between people and also between occasions of telling: “Family photographs may
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affect to show us our past, but what we do with them...is really about today, not yesterday (Kuhn, 1996:475).

The points highlighted in this discussion were useful in designing the second stage of my research. The critiques offered by visual researchers of the 1970s and 1980s that focused on the limited range of social science investigation using photographs, alongside some of the more novel approaches adopted in contemporary social science, prompted me to create a setting where photographs could usefully become the focus of conversation. The development of photo elicitation was particularly helpful in indicating how this method can be used – either by getting people to take photographs around a particular topic or by giving people photographs and asking them questions about them. However, these methods were reminiscent of the question schedule I was implementing in the first stage – the conversation that ensued would still have a focus determined by me. The discussion of the ‘home mode’ and the interesting work around family photograph collections added a new element to my thinking. Using the participants’ own photographs reduced the extent to which I was directing the interaction. So, in the spirit of conducting an ethnomethodological study where my own contribution was less researcher-focused and more participatory, I developed a method that combined the use of the ‘home mode’ with photo elicitation. By choosing their own photographs, the women were given the opportunity to decide what they would talk about. As with Hester and Francis’ discussion of case materials (1994), I hoped that the selection and ordering of photographs would provide a suitable focus for the conversation accompanying them.

This gave a different focus to my research than had generally been the case with other social scientific work that made use of visual media. Rather than concentrating on the photographs themselves, I instead intended to focus my analysis on the talk that accompanied them. My interest was not in the photographs as visual snapshots of the history of relationships or of social features of relationships, both of which could have
been possible routes to take in the analysis. Instead, I chose to concentrate on the wealth of linguistic information that their presentation prompted – to look at how the photographs, and the relationships the women were reminded of in viewing them, were constructed through the talk. This resulted in a very different thesis than if the photographs themselves had been the focus of interest. The concentration on the talk in my analysis means that to some extent the photographs themselves have been neglected. So, for example, the thesis does not reflect the sheer number of photographs we looked at. Considering that the majority of the women who took part brought albums full of photographs to talk about and introduced many of these photographs individually, throughout the empirical chapters I discuss very few of these (nine altogether). For the purposes of my thesis this demonstrates the success of both data generation methods – each resulted in a wealth of material suitable for an ethnomethodological analysis. However, for the reader interested in knowing more about the women’s lives as represented through these photographs, the thesis will be less informative.

4.4 Transcription as theory
I have already introduced some short extracts from my data so I will now turn to the transcription methods that I have found useful in my analysis for the thesis. The transcription conventions I use are based on Jefferson (1984b), and included in Appendix C. However, in addition to these conventions illustrating the actual structure of the extracts it is also important to consider the ways that transcription was used as a tool during my analysis that helped determine the best way to present the extracts. Following much of the work presented in CA and other discursive approaches (such as is seen in examples from other researchers that I include in previous chapters) I present my extracts in a standardised format. Sequential line numbering appears on the left followed by some sort of identifier of the speaker – I have used pseudonyms for my participants but various
identifiers such as initials, names or occupations can be used. On the right of the transcription comes the actual utterance, which can appear in various levels of detail depending upon the aims of the analysis.

**Box 2**

1. Jane  I might (. ) I might be roping you in to do something else you never know=
2. Helen =oh well we're always here aren't we Marie
3. Jane ready to be [roped
4. Helen [yes::s yes if if if ] if [it's anything like] if it's anything=
5. Marie [ready to be roped] [all in line girls]
6. Helen =like going to a hotel for the weekend we=
7. Marie =oh well course if they want
8. Helen to [stretch a point
9. Jane [(laugh) yeah [( . ) I don't I don't know if the Open University=
10. Helen [I know would you want would you like our=
11. Jane = would ] fund that really=
12. Helen =vie::ews] =would you like our vie::ews and us
13. Helen to do some photography in Scotland or something like that
14. Jane (laugh)

Though many researchers have used this layout recent ethnomethodological interest in the use of categorisation and in the presentation of data more generally have begun to problematise it.

Reading transcripts from left to right (as is generally the case) has been criticised as influencing the reader's interpretation of the interaction. For example, where the identifiers indicate the interaction is between a doctor and a patient, the transcription will be read differently than one where the identifiers indicate that the interaction is between friends. Watson (1997: 50-51) suggests that even if the identifiers are not treated as objects of explication "they still operate 'behind the scenes'. In other words, aspects of many sequential analyses in conversation analysis rely unrelievedly upon membership categorizations as a resource." Edwards (1998: 21-22) shows how categorising research participants in a particular way performs certain functions even before the talk is examined. In his example from couples counselling data the counsellor is categorised by
role whereas the couple are referred to by forenames throughout. Edwards argues that even this seemingly insignificant difference in categorisation carries with it much important information that in turn affects our understanding of the exchange and means it is read in a particular way.

Another likely influence of transcription on analysis is discussed in depth by Ochs (1979). Focusing on interactions between adults and children, she examines the problem of power differentials that may arise in these interactions and consequently in the transcription methods popularly used in discursive investigations. This echoes the discussion from feminist researchers (e.g. Wilkinson, 1997; Wilkinson, 1999), of the issue of power imbalances coupled with a concern to promote a balanced view of research participants. In Ochs’ example she argues that in general the contribution from the adult would be presented, followed by that from the child. She highlights this as problematic because it privileges the position of the researcher. To overcome the problem Ochs considers different methods of laying out transcriptions; for example dividing the data into columns so that the utterances of each participant are featured separately. In this way, she argues, the resulting power differentials can be re-balanced. For example, the utterances of the interviewee (in this case a child) can be given precedence over those of the interviewer by placing them in the left-hand column so they are read first. Ochs also argues that methodologically this layout performs very useful functions. Patterns both within and across the utterances can be tracked more easily by placing them in this way. In particular, Ochs suggests, it is an effective layout for examining conversations where three or more people are involved. It becomes much easier to identify what people are saying and the part they are playing in a conversation if their utterances are presented in separate columns as Ochs suggests.

Following feminist principles, where researchers are encouraged to represent the contributions of their participants fully and accurately, this type of layout expands the
possibilities for this. In my own study, laying out the transcripts in this way focused my attention more clearly on some of the issues that I had been introduced to in my reading of the literature around research roles introduced in Chapter 2: particularly those that questioned the power that the researcher holds in the research interaction. It also forwarded my aim to carry out a balanced analysis in the ethnomethodological tradition, where I could give equal attention to all of the utterances in the recorded conversations, particularly where three co-conversationalists were taking part. In my analysis of each of the extracts in which three speakers were involved I placed them in columns in order of speaking. I used the transitions marked either by topic change or by presentation of a new photograph as an indicator of the first utterance to be placed in the left-hand column. This gave me a specific marker that was present and could be identified throughout all the conversations. By pinpointing conversational change in relation to these transition points the 'power sharing' dimension that was evident in the conversations could be seen more clearly. Rather than placing Jane, as the researcher, in primary position every time, the first speaker in each chosen extract was instead whoever initiated the topic. This was less evident in the two party conversations, which generally relied on an interview format with questions and answers, but one place where the strategy did prove useful was in the identification of story sequences in the conversations (discussed in depth in Chapter 8). I found that not only did it show more clearly where one story ended and the next started, but it also enabled me to identify who actually introduced the sequence.

As an illustration of the difference this approach can make, in Box 3 I present the same short extract as appeared in Box 2. Here however, each woman’s utterances are placed in a separate column. Box 2 displays the complex conversational moves made between the three speakers such as the overlaps in Lines 4,5 and 6 and latching e.g. in Lines 2-3 and Lines 10-13. In contrast, in Box 3 the columns separate each person’s
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utterances and it becomes easier to identify who has command of the conversation at any particular time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3</th>
<th>Jane (1st speaker)</th>
<th>Helen (2nd speaker)</th>
<th>Marie (3rd speaker)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I might (.) I might be roping you in to do something else you never know= ready to be [roped] [laugh] yeah [(). I don't I don't know if the Open University would] fund that really=</td>
<td>=oh well we’re always here aren’t we Marie [ready to be roped] [all in line girls ] =oh well course if they want to [stretch a point [I know would you want would you like our vie::ews] =would you like our veeeeews and us to do some photography in Scotland or something like that</td>
<td>[yessss yes if if if ] if [it’s anything like] if it's anything like going to a hotel for the weekend we=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though I found this way of laying out the transcripts particularly useful in carrying out my analysis, for reasons of clarity I decided against including them in the empirical chapters themselves. I do include them for reference however, in Appendix F.

4.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have presented some of the research and background debates that informed my decisions regarding methodology. Discussions of what might be the ‘best’ method of generating suitable data for an ethnomethodological analysis resulted in my decision to use
two different methods of generating occasioned talk. In the first stage I met with each of
the eight participants individually and the conversations focused on a loosely structured
(and even more loosely implemented) series of questions and prompts on the topic of
relationships. My aim was to guide the conversation if it drifted from the topic of
relationships, or if it began to falter at any point. Whether or not particular questions were
asked was unimportant to the research itself, as was the specific ordering of the questions.
My aim was to generate a conversation around relationships, rather than to undertake a
simple question and answer session with each of my participants. This brief set of
questions enabled me to achieve exactly that. The conversations ranged in length from 44
minutes to 104 minutes, generating 12 hours and 23 minutes of talk in total. They covered
both general relationship matters and more personal anecdotes, and were all very different
from one another, resulting in a proliferation of data.

In the second stage I made use of the wealth of visual material that made up the
personal photograph collections of the participating women. Rose (2003:7) has remarked
that in her study “people not places dominated our conversations about their photographs”,
an observation that fits well with my aim to encourage people to talk about their
relationships. In my analysis I select a range of the stories and accounts prompted by the
photographs. These may be related to a specific photograph or may be something the
participant is reminded of through looking at a particular photograph (Kuhn, 1996).

Finally in this chapter I briefly discussed the ways in which transcription might
influence the reading of conversational data and the ensuing analysis. I found that though
the standard layout was detailed enough for the two person conversations those involving
three speakers were more complicated. Separating the utterances into columns helped
clarify some of the analytic issues that I encountered and produced a fuller understanding
of what was happening in the conversations.
Chapter 5 Using photographs as a topic of conversation

5.1 Introduction

Using personal photograph collections as tools for research has become increasingly popular in social science (Munro & Madigan, 1999; Rose, 2003). Their use as a topic of conversation, however, is less well-researched, though there is a small amount of work in this area such as that by Edwards and Middleton (1988) and by Spence and Holland (1991). In this first empirical chapter of the thesis my main focus is on how photographs can be used as a specific tool in order to facilitate talk about relationships. This focus on talk, rather than on the photographs themselves, means that even though a diverse selection of photographs is presented during the conversations, only a limited number appear in relation to the sections of talk chosen for discussion. Taking three sets of extracts I explore the participants’ co-construction of relationships prompted by viewing some of their photographs.

As a conversation unfolds none of the co-conversationalists is able to predict exactly what the next utterance will be – each conversation is unique. With this in mind, in
my empirical chapters I take the data section by section, presenting and analysing utterances in the order in which they appeared in the conversations. As a supplement to this I also present (in Appendix F) each of the sets of extracts that appear in Chapters 5, 7 and 8 in their local conversational context. The line numbers I use in the extracts here correspond to the line numbers that appear in Appendix F.

I outline several analytic features relating to the use of photographs as a topic for conversation. First I analyse how the co-conversationalists relate to the photographs themselves. Many parts of the conversations are indexical (Garfinkel, 1967) to the presentation of the photographs so it is only when the hearer knows the conversational context (i.e. that this is a conversation linked to the presentation of a set of photographs) that the relevance of the talk becomes clear. A second analytic feature is the ways that relationship talk is facilitated. The relationships between the women talking and the people in the photograph are explicitly attended to, with those in the photograph located in the current configuration in some way. The final feature is the construction of the relationships between the co-conversationalists themselves. The features of personal relationship oriented to in the conversations are indexed to the viewing of the photographs.

5.2 Indexicality, categorising relationships and managing disagreement in talk about a photograph

My first set of extracts is taken from the conversation between Helen, Marie and Jane and focus on a photograph of Marie’s grandma.
Chapter 5: Using Photographs as a Topic of Conversation

Photograph 1 (belonging to Marie)
The photograph is black and white. It shows a formally posed woman sitting alone and looking towards the camera. Some information about the woman, including her age, is written on the back of the photograph.

5.2.1 Indexicality in talk

The talk relating to the photograph begins with a reference to the image itself indicated by the indexical terms used.

Extract 1

1. Helen who’s this then (.) mum
2. Marie no that’s my grandma when she was forty

Lines 1-2 include the different indexical expressions ‘this’ and ‘that’s’. Here they link to ‘who’ and so hearably refer to a specific person – they index the ‘presence’ of Marie’s grandma. The question and answer sequence produced here could possibly refer to the arrival of Marie’s grandma in the room where the conversation is taking place – the abbreviations ‘who’s’ and ‘that’s’ often indicate the present tense. However, two features of the exchange indicate that her entry into the room in person is unlikely. The first is that the woman being referred to is not directly addressed – Helen’s question and Marie’s reply would probably be considered impolite if someone had actually walked into the room. The second is Marie’s addition of the information that her grandma ‘was forty’. Coupled with the indexical temporal marker ‘when’ she locates her ‘grandma’ in the past rather than in the present. Knowledge of the conversational context – talk about photographs – can be drawn upon to inform the hearer that the women are referring to a photograph rather than to an actual person. It therefore becomes clear right from the start of this set of extracts
that knowledge of the whole conversational context is necessary to fully understand that this is a discussion of a photograph rather than of woman who is present in the room.

**Extract 2**

3. Helen isn't she pretty (.) get down ( )
4. Marie mm (.) she was forty (1) but doesn't she look o::old (.)
5. d'y'think [they d-
6. Helen [no I don't (.) think particularly there she does
7. Marie

Helen’s reference to Marie’s grandma’s appearance by means of the assessment ‘pretty’, along with Marie’s use of the word ‘look’, indexes the ‘image’ of the person being discussed. The present tenses ‘isn’t’ and ‘doesn’t’ indicate a person who is accessible to them for discussion at this moment in time. In her next utterance Helen makes a direct reference to the photograph itself (Line 6). By using the indexical locator ‘there’ Helen hearably refers to a particular place – in this instance the photograph of Marie’s grandma. This is the first reference locating the image explicitly. The use of indexical term ‘there’ locates Marie’s grandma as ‘there’ in the photograph rather than ‘here’ in the room.

‘There’ may also imply the availability of other possible images in which she may look ‘old’ but that this is not the case in the one being discussed.

In the utterances that follow a suitable comparison is found for assessing how old ‘grandma’ looks.

**Extract 3**

8. Marie yes but Jane’s [forty four
9. Helen [oh she does a bit y- oh yeah I suppose you
10. put it like that [times have changed
11. Jane [compare her to me (huh)

Marie and Helen construct a comparison between the image of Marie’s grandma in the photograph and Jane who is present in the room. With the ‘yes but’ beginning at Line 8 Marie’s utterance is hearable as an instruction to Helen to compare the photograph and Jane – a comparison that illustrates how different they look even though of a similar age.
Marie indexes Jane’s presence and age to do this. Although Jane is introduced in the third person in contrast to the image of ‘grandma’ Jane’s actual presence in the room is oriented to – the talk about her is always located in the present whereas that orienting to ‘grandma’ takes on contrasting tenses (e.g. Lines 2, 3 and 6).

In further references to the image the age of ‘grandma’ is pinpointed more accurately.

Extract 4

12. Helen yeah she does actually compared to (.) a forty
13. four year old today=
14. Marie =I’m not sure maybe she was forty
15. [four
16. Jane [now you’re giving my age away ([laugh)
17. Marie [oh she was forty four
18. [ she was Jane’s age ]
19. Helen [what’s this on the back] (.) she’s jay- well there
20. you are (.) yes:::s [there’s a huge difference

Marie draws attention to the fact that perhaps her assessment of her grandma’s age as forty may not be accurate (Lines 14-15) but then confirms it at Line 17. This utterance, beginning with the change of state token ‘oh’ (Heritage, 1984a), moves from being ‘not sure’ (Line 14) to being certain ‘she was’ (Line 17). From the common sense assumptions and shared cultural knowledge that we have about photographs we can speculate that there may be some accompanying information that informs Marie of her grandma’s age. Helen confirms this speculation at Line 24. Her indexical locator ‘this on the back’, coupled with Marie’s exclamation ‘oh’ hearably indicates that ‘this’ on the back of the photograph is the age of Marie’s ‘grandma’.

5.2.2 Categorising relationships

My discussion of indexicality shows how the photograph as a topic of conversation is made relevant through the talk. The relationships between the various people who feature in the conversation are also categorised. The first two categorisations both hearably orient
to the woman in the photograph in terms of her particular familial role and make relevant a generational categorisation.

Extract 5

1. Helen who's this then (. ) mum
2. Marie no that's my grandma when she was forty

Helen locates the woman in the photograph in a different generation from Marie using the maternal category ‘mum’ (Line 1). The evaluation points in the right generational direction, indicated by Marie’s clarification at Line 2. In his discussion of membership categorisation Sacks highlights the consistency rule (Sacks, 1992a, 1992b). This rule says that if one person from a membership categorisation device (MCD) is introduced in a particular way then another will be introduced similarly. Here, even though both Helen and Marie are referring to the same woman, rather than to the different people Sacks indicated, they nevertheless maintain his consistency rule. In speaking about the woman in the photograph they both use informal, affectionate terms that signify a specific relationship – mum/daughter or grandma/granddaughter (Sacks, 1992a). The implicit categorisations that are invoked by those stated explicitly are, in turn, ‘daughter’ and ‘granddaughter’ – both roles that Marie could have fulfilled in relation to the woman portrayed in the photograph.

A second relationship categorisation here is the comparison between ‘grandma’ and ‘Jane’, orienting to their chronological age.

Extract 6

2. Marie no that's my grandma when she was forty

4. Marie mm (. ) she was forty (1) but doesn’t she look o::old (. )

8. Marie yes but Jane's [forty four

12. Helen yeah she does actually compared to (. ) a forty
In attempting to locate the age of Marie’s grandma a suitable comparison for whether or not she looks old is found in Jane – a person present who is roughly the same age as that of ‘grandma’ in the photograph. At Line 2 Marie cites her chronological age: ‘forty’.

Although not related to the question Helen asked, this is hearably relevant to Marie’s next utterance (Line 4). Any one of a number of category choices could have been made. Marie orients specifically to how one should look at a particular age. However, she links the two halves of this utterance with the disclaimer ‘but’ (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975) indicating a disjunction between them – someone who is forty should not look old.

When Helen contradicts this Marie counters with a comparison: at Line 8 she directs Helen’s attention toward the other person present and away from a sole assessment of the photograph. Marie acknowledges that Helen may have a point. However, she then adds the concrete example of Jane’s age to support her claim. Jane is there – a forty four year old available for direct comparison with the photograph. After Helen agrees with her assessment Marie signals her indecision about her grandma’s actual age (Lines 12-15). This hesitancy is countered at Line 17 where she discovers that her grandma was indeed the same age as Jane, a discovery that constructs a relationship between ‘grandma’ and ‘Jane’ through age and appearance.

5.2.3 Managing disagreement

One of the ways the women co-construct their relationships with one another, made hearable at various points throughout the conversational data, is to support one another in their talk.
### Chapter 5: Using Photographs as a Topic of Conversation

**Extract 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Helen</th>
<th>Marie</th>
<th>Helen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>no I don't (.) think particularly there she does</td>
<td>yes but Jane's [forty four</td>
<td>yeah she does actually compared to (.) a forty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>[oh she does a bit y- oh yeah I suppose you</td>
<td>four year old today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>put it like that [times have changed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>oy she was forty four</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>[she was Jane's age]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>[what's this on the back] (.) she's jay- well there</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>you are (.) yes::s [there's a huge difference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>I (.) think she looks old (1) [older</td>
<td>then though Marie didn't they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>[they did</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract 7 illustrates this conversational support by showing how Helen moves from disagreement with Marie to agreement that grandma looks old. At Lines 6-7 rather than directly contradicting what Marie has said Helen mitigates what she is saying by including several qualifiers: she hesitantly states her opinion and indexes it to this particular photograph.

She then responds to Marie's utterance at Line 8 by marking the change with 'oh', (Heritage, 1984a). She continues with a weak agreement but then repairs to a more positive one with 'oh yeah' at Line 9 (Schegloff et al., 1977). Though contradicting what she has said in her prior utterance she qualifies it with an explanation (Line 10).

Helen continues with a much more positive utterance 'yeah she does actually' (Line 12) that adds to her certainty. Again she gives a temporal reason for this apparently contradictory utterance marked by 'today' (Line 13). Marie introduces a personal link between the photo of her grandma and Jane – the forty four year old present in the room.
(Line 8), which Helen adjusts to a less personal form by comparing Marie’s grandma to a group that Jane belongs to instead of to Jane herself (Lines 12-13).

At Line 17 Marie makes an exclamation that, followed by Helen’s question at Line 19, is hearable as an orientation to the back of the photograph where her grandma’s age is written. Once forty-four is established as being her age Helen states her positive agreement (Lines 19-20). By prefacing her contradiction with ‘well’ she fits it to the new information gained from the back of the photograph (Schiffrin, 1987). Further support for this step is found at Line 20 with her addition of the extreme case formulation ‘a huge difference’ (Pomerantz, 1986).

Marie answers her own initial question here with her assessment (Line 21) and Helen sums up her transition from disagreement to agreement with a comment about a general group ‘they’ who are located in a time ‘then’ (Lines 22-23). Though generally not the case, Pomerantz (1984) proposes that sometimes a dispreferred response is more acceptable, particularly if an invitation has been made that is self-deprecatory. If Helen agrees with Marie’s assessment, she could be heard as insulting Marie’s grandma whereas if she disagrees she could be challenged as argumentative. She manages this possible dilemma by indexing a general group of people in a past time – the only reason Marie’s grandma can be assessed as looking old is because ‘they did then’ (Lines 22-23).

5.3 Conversational support and the co-construction of naivety

My second set of extracts is taken from the conversation between Audrey, Ellen and Jane. This part of their conversation orients to the circumstances surrounding people pictured in two of Ellen’s photographs.
Photographs 2 and 3 (belonging to Ellen)
The first photograph shows Ellen and a man getting into a car. Both are very well dressed and smiling. The second shows the same couple, wearing different clothes, posing for the photograph outside a hotel.

The talk centres on Ellen’s experience of going on honeymoon, an account that focuses particularly on her naivety at the time.

5.3.1 Conversational support
Ellen constructs herself as a naïve new bride, overwhelmed by the experience of being in London for the first time in her life. At Line 1 she accompanies the presentation of a new photograph, showing her and her new husband, with the marker ‘oh’, indicating a change of topic (Heritage, 1984a).

Extract 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ellen</th>
<th>oh that was us going on honeymoon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>where did you go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>went to London (1) I'd never been before in my life I wouldn't go on the escalator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>((laugh))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>((laugh))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>I stood at the top of the (...) is it the (...) b- biggest one (...) and I says (...) I'm definitely not going down that (...) and (laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Ben said 'well [what're you going to do'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>well you wouldn't've come across one in Grangetown would you [(laugh)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>((laugh))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>((laugh)) but i- i- he s- and I says</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The photograph is indexed at Line 1 by the word ‘that’ and shows ‘us going on honeymoon’. Jane enquires where they went with Ellen answering with their destination. This answer is sufficient in itself and is marked as such by the pause of one second at Line 3 (Sacks et al., 1978). Neither Audrey nor Jane takes up this opportunity to speak however
and Ellen carries on. Ellen orients to the remarkable nature of her trip, illustrating this by noting her aversion to escalators (Lines 3-4). This confession, linked to her never having visited London before, is hearable as a slightly naïve reaction to being in a very different context from usual. Both Audrey and Jane laugh (Lines 5-6) and Ellen orients to this laughter using the extreme case descriptor ‘biggest’ to explain why she would not go on the escalator. She defends against the implied criticism hearable in their laughter – it was not just any escalator but possibly the biggest in London (Line 7).

Jane overlaps the end of Ellen’s utterance at Line 10 by constructing a direct contrast – distinguished from the surrounding talk by the marker ‘well’ (Schiffrin, 1985) – through which she offers some understanding of Ellen’s reaction (Lines 10-11). In their discussion of preference Sacks and Schegloff (1979) outline the concept of ‘recipient design’ – conversational items are generally constructed so as to be recognisable to all conversationalists. Jane’s choice of ‘Grangetown’ – which passes without remark from anyone – suggests that this is a place of which all three women have some knowledge, and is thus oriented to as different from ‘London’. Citing ‘Grangetown’ the implication is that if it had had escalators to ‘come across’ then Ellen’s reaction would not have been so extreme. Grangetown then, is hearable as representing the familiar and recognisable and contrasts with London, which represents the unfamiliar and unrecognisable. Through this Jane orients to her relationship with Ellen in two ways: she constructs her familiarity with the places Ellen knows and supports Ellen’s naïve reaction to the escalator.

The contrast at Line 10 is complete as a statement but Jane supplements her construction with the tag question ‘would you’ (Coates, 1996). Positioned at the end of the utterance this makes a reply from one of the other co-conversationalists possible. However, rather than the agreement or disagreement called for, it is instead followed by overlapping laughter from all three, orienting to the suggestion as ridiculous and confirming the contrast between ‘Grangetown’ and ‘London’. This laughter also
authenticates the relationship between them all – they all understand the constructed contrast between the two places and, with their laughter, orient to it as being absurd.

Extract 9

13. Ellen ((laugh) but I- I- he s- and I says
14. Ellen 'I daren't' (.) he says 'well I'll stand in front of you' (1) I thought
15. Ellen oh::h my:::y Go:::od y'know I mean I'd never been to L:::ondon
16. Audrey in my li:::ife=
17. Audrey =I remember the first time I went on the tube
18. Audrey I put [my ticket in one end forgot to get it out the other end

Audrey demonstrates her recognition of the unfamiliarity of the London landscape and how to behave in it by mirroring Ellen’s account. She orients to what Ellen has said by connecting her own account in several ways. At the end of Ellen’s account, Audrey introduces her utterance as something that also happened in the past beginning with ‘I remember’ (Line 16). This draws attention to what is to follow and also links back to what has preceded it.

Audrey continues with an account of her first encounter with ‘the tube’ that, though not explicitly referring to London nevertheless indicates a connection between the accounts. Ellen draws attention to her first visit to London through telling of her reluctance to get on the escalator and Audrey connects to this detail with an account of her first encounter with ‘the tube’ – the colloquial term signifying the London underground train system, generally accessed by a descent on an escalator. She further orients to the connection between the unfamiliarity of their experiences by describing her confusion with the ticketing system – she draws attention to the difference between life in London and lives that are lived elsewhere. Audrey’s utterance thus orients to their current relationship – she offers support by reinforcing Ellen’s description of her experience. Everyday life in London, unfamiliar to both of them, provides common ground between them in the past and also in the present.
Extract 10

17. Audrey = I remember the first time I went on the tube
18. Ellen I put [my ticket in one end and forgot to get it out the other end
19. Ellen [and that was when they were (.) we w- we went l-
20. Jane did you (laugh)
21. Ellen we went from Little Markle on the train of course (.) and of=
22. Jane [mm
23. Ellen = of course con::nfetti=
24. Audrey =mm
25. Ellen and of course they’d stuffed my suitcas::se full (.) of s- of confetti
26. Jane and every time I opened anything it was awful
27. Jane oh::h ((laugh)
28. Audrey ((laugh) they tied kippers on our exhaust pipe=

The relational connections between them that are facilitated by the mirroring in the talk can be heard throughout this part of the conversation. Ellen’s reference at Line 21 to ‘the train’ orients to Audrey’s reference to ‘the tube’ at Line 17. Further, Ellen and Audrey co-construct connections between their honeymoon experiences. Ellen introduces an item – confetti – that is commonly linked with getting married. However, orienting to it with ‘of course’ at Lines 21-23 she marks what she is going to say about it as different in some way. She lengthens the word itself at Line 23, adding further emphasis to her upcoming information that her suitcase was ‘stuffed’ full of it, so that every time she ‘opened anything it was awful’ (Line 26). Audrey once again offers her own remembered experience that mirrors this account of post-wedding frivolities. At Line 28, joining Jane in laughter about Ellen’s predicament, Audrey continues with an account of kippers tied onto their exhaust pipe. Audrey’s reference to this light-hearted incident at her wedding mirrors Ellen’s account of the ‘confetti’ stuffed in her suitcase.

Ellen’s and Audrey’s matching accounts of their wedding experiences are not accompanied by any questioning of the details given. They construct a shared knowledge of the occurrence of incidents of this type at a wedding. Ellen’s use of ‘of course’ at Line 21 orients to the idea that the suitcase full of confetti was something to be expected at a wedding. None of them question (or add any qualification to) the existence of a mysterious group – ‘they’ – who seem determined to contribute to the wedding by doing
things that are, in some way, mischievous and cause some trouble. For example, ‘they’ had put confetti in Ellen’s suitcase and ‘they’ had tied kippers onto Audrey’s exhaust pipe. These are not everyday occurrences but examples of a (possibly wider) range of instances that, through these accounts, become linked specifically to weddings and/or honeymoons. The shared knowledge of the commonality of these occurrences is heard in Ellen’s next comment (Extract 11, Line 31). Rather than drawing attention to the strangeness of having kippers tied to the exhaust pipe she instead makes relevant owning the car.

5.3.2 The co-construction of naivety

Extract 11

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>course we hadn’t got a car then but (. ) that (. ) that (. ) that was on honeymoon (. ) we stayed out (. ) at this beautiful place (2) and I can always remember (. ) people saying (. ) cos we went down to breakfast the next morning and of course you know my hair was really (. ) auburn [red and it was [1(1) and (. ) everybody kept= [mm [mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>=saying (. ) ‘look at that beautiful hair’ and I felt so embarrassed and I says ‘I I I’m g- (. ) I (. ) can I (. ) can I (. ) go back upstairs please [(.) I mean (. ) well I mean !=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ellen’s account of being in London in Extracts 8 and 9 is of a naïve young bride who has never been there before and is overwhelmed by the experience. She continues her account along the same lines with her introduction of her next photograph. Its presentation is marked at Line 31 by her repetition of the indexical term ‘that’ and Ellen links it to an experience that happened at the ‘beautiful place’ where they stayed for their honeymoon. After a pause of two seconds she continues her account by introducing a further significant aspect of the honeymoon (Lines 32-38).

In contrast to the light-heartedness and laughter that accompanied the accounts of confetti and kippers at their weddings at Lines 21-28, here Ellen’s account orients to the embarrassment she felt on this occasion (Line 38). In the utterance she uses a variety of discursive devices to state her case. She constructs her account using several extreme case
formulations: they stayed at a ‘beautiful place’ (Line 32); she can ‘always remember’ (Line 33); her hair was ‘really (. ) auburn red’ (Line 35); ‘everybody’ (Line 35) commented on her ‘beautiful hair’ (Line 38); she ‘felt so embarrassed’ (Line 38), all of which orient to her discomfort at the time. Again she constructs herself as a naïve and unworldly – this time the recipient of the attention of an unspecified group of others: ‘people’ at Line 33 and ‘everybody’ at Line 35. This unwanted attention – focused on her ‘auburn red’ hair – resulted in her feeling ‘so embarrassed’ and wanting to ‘go back upstairs’. Her naïvety is also made hearable through her location of this unusual amount of attention in the context of an ordinary, everyday activity (Sacks, 1984b). She is going ‘down to breakfast’ (Lines 33-34) – an occasion that does not warrant this amount of attention.

Extract 12

40. Ellen please [(.) I mean (.) well I mean I was (1) young and stupid =
41. Jane [oh (laugh)
42. Ellen =wasn’t I
43. Audrey young and naïve [not stupid
44. Ellen [yeah young and naïve

Her naïvety is made explicit in the final utterances of the extract. At lines 40-44 Ellen and Audrey explicitly co-construct being ‘young and naïve’, a feature that has been implicit throughout. At Line 40 Ellen marks the transition from her account of the honeymoon occasion to a new conversational topic with ‘well’ (Schiffrin, 1985, 1987). This new topic is her negative assessment of herself as a young bride. The tag question at the end of this utterance ‘wasn’t I’ is directed at the co-conversationalists and asks for their agreement with her assessment (Coates, 1996). Audrey answers her question but only offers partial agreement – she echoes Ellen’s word ‘young’ but repairs ‘stupid’ to ‘naïve’. This gives a more positive view of the younger Ellen, a contrast that Audrey further explicates with the addition ‘not stupid’ (Line 43). Ellen agrees with this re-categorisation by overlapping her ‘yeah’ with Audrey’s ending and repeating Audrey’s words ‘young and naïve’ (Line 44).
Audrey’s repair to the more positive ‘naïve’ is the final, and most explicit, utterance of conversational support included in this extract, one that is accepted by Ellen.

5.4 Introducing ‘others’ into the conversation and categorising characters in an account

My third set of extracts focuses on two analytic features in my analysis: the introduction into the conversation of people neither present in the current interaction nor pictured in any of the photographs being viewed and the function of the specific membership categorisations used in the account – how they serve to present a particular picture of the people being discussed.

Photograph 4 (belonging to Rebecca) and Photograph 5 (belonging to Kate)

Rebecca’s photograph features a group of her ex-work-colleagues smiling at the camera at an office party. The second belongs to Kate and is of a family wedding. It portrays two people walking towards the camera smiling.

5.4.1 Introducing ‘others’ neither present in the interaction nor the photographs

Throughout the conversations relating to the photographs the talk moves in many directions. As I have shown in the two previous sets of extracts speakers might talk about the people or situations portrayed in the photographs or they may introduce people or situations they are reminded of in looking at them. Topics or people introduced into the conversations are almost always linked to some feature of a photograph that has been (or is intended to be) presented. Immediately prior to Extract 13 Rebecca has presented a
photograph of some of her ex-work colleagues. She specifically names one woman and on
recognising the name Kate asks to see the photograph.

Extract 13

1. Kate oh that’s her oh yes
2. Jane so you’ve got people in common that that you know from=
3. Kate =well no th- this lady lives at South Lineham and and my
4. husband’s brother the one’s that used to live in Spain well
5. he actually died in June he got cancer and this Hilda
6. person=
7. Jane =mmmm=
8. Kate =l-lives near him [doesn't she= oh right
9. Jane [mm
10. Rebecca =yes
11. Kate th-that's all an-and er th-they (.) I I don't know how we
12. found out but we did
13. Jane mm it is funny how everybody knows [somebody that
14. Kate [yes
15. Jane =[somebody else knows [(laugh)
16. Rebecca [yes

Kate marks her recognition of the woman at Line 1 and Jane comments on her recognition
by observing that Kate and Rebecca know some of the same people (Line 2). However,
Kate contradicts this and follows with an explanation for her disagreement: Hilda is
someone who lives near her ‘husband’s brother’ (Lines 3-8) ‘that’s all’ (Line 11). Though
there is an indirect relational connection this is not someone she knows personally.

Jane then changes her focus from a personal comment about the people Kate and
Rebecca have in common to a more general suggestion marked by ‘everybody’ and
‘somebody’ (Line 13). With this shift from the specific relationships and connections of
Kate and Rebecca to those that are more general, as well as eliciting Rebecca’s agreement
(Line 15), Kate also aligns herself with Jane. She moves conversationally from
disagreement (Line 3) to agreement (Line 14). So though Kate and Rebecca do not
actually have Hilda Thompson in common it is conceivable that they do have mutual
knowledge of other people. A similar pattern is found here to the Helen/Marie alignment
that I discussed in my analysis of Extract 7 in this chapter, with the move linked to it in
two ways. First the move is in the same direction: that is from disagreement to agreement.
Second the change can be linked to a move from a personal link to a more general one: Helen frames her agreement in terms of ‘they’ (Extract 7, Line 22) whereas here Kate agrees with Jane who says ‘everybody knows somebody’ (Line 13).

One of these possible connections between people is the focus of the next part of the conversation, hearable in Kate’s introduction of ‘Bill Brown’ in Line 17.

Extract 14

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>[Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>=man and you will not remember this but years ago (. )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The usual pattern seen in this conversational corpus is that a familiar person is introduced into the conversation using the economy rule (e.g. Sacks, 1992a; Sacks et al., 1978) and that their introduction is ‘recipient designed’ (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979). In general a new person is presented with only as much information as is necessary in order for the co-conversationalists to easily recognise the person being talked about. This familiarity is hearable in Kate’s introduction of Bill Brown merely by name (Line 17). The lack of questions of clarification from either Rebecca or Jane – orients to him as a person familiar to them all. Her introduction of Bill Brown at this point enables Kate to recount a conversation she had with him ‘the other day’ (Lines 17-18). Though the relevance of this particular conversation with Bill Brown is not immediately obvious she introduces someone they talked about: ‘Tom’ or ‘Ted’ (Line 21).

5.4.2 Categorising characters in an account
Initially there is some discrepancy over Tom/Ted’s name but this is resolved at Line 42 where Kate signals her recognition of him with the lengthened ‘oh::h’.
Extract 15

17. Kate [Bill Brown was at our house the
18. other day [and he was talking about when he was a young=
19. Jane [yeah
20. Kate man and you will not remember this but years ago (. )
21. erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted

39. Kate and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h
40. they called him Ted Campbell'=
41. Jane =yeah=
42. Kate =er and I said 'oh:::h' I said
43. 'he married Auntie Win' (. ) now the [(.) the man that I showed= ((laugh))
44. Rebecca ((laugh)
45. Kate =you there that came to live next door to me when I was four (. )
46. well Auntie Win (. ) was his sister

When I began analysing this extract the relevance of Kate and Bill’s conversation to the present conversational context seemed tenuous. However, a detailed exploration showed that Kate’s account is relevant to the current conversational task of talk about relationships on several levels. It is an account of a particular relationship – that of Tom/Ted Campbell (Lines 21 and 40) and Auntie Win (Line 43) – and as such links their introduction into the conversation closely to the overall topic of the research. As each of the participants is aware, the occasion of the current conversation is to discuss any and all relationships they may choose, in relation to the photographs they present. Kate indexes her account back to Jane’s comment at Lines 13-16. In this case both Kate and Bill know this man – Tom/Ted Campbell – therefore her introduction of him into the conversation demonstrates Kate’s understanding of, and agreement with, what Jane has said. Kate also indexes the account of ‘Auntie Win’ to a previously viewed photograph of a man who lived next door – she was his sister (Lines 43-46). Therefore, not only is she relating this account to the topic of conversation but she is also linking it back to Jane’s initial requirement for them to talk about their photographs. Her implicit orientation to the task, alongside her explicit introduction of different characters into the conversation, clearly demonstrates the complex nature of even a brief instance of talk.
Chapter 5: Using Photographs as a Topic of Conversation

Extract 16

42. Kate and I said 'oh::: h' I said
43. 'he married Auntie Win' (. ) now the ([.) the man that I showed=
44. [laugh]
45. Rebecca =you there that came to live next door to me when I was four (. )
46. well Auntie Win (%) was his sister [and when she was very young= [oh
47. Jane [ah::: h
48. Rebecca
49. Kate =she had a boy with Tom

56. Kate [and then w-when Auntie Win's husband died she bought a
cottage in Medomsley and that's when I I only called her Auntie
Win cos they did

Auntie Win is connected both to this man and to Kate herself by the relationships Kate
explicates in Lines 43-46 – she was the sister of the man who lived next door to Kate when
she was a child. Two features of Kate’s introduction of ‘Auntie Win’ demonstrate the
authority with which she is able to speak about her, both of which orient to the MCD
‘family’. On each use of Win’s name she attaches the family relational term ‘Auntie’ to it,
though as she says in Lines 57-58 she only called her Auntie because other (unspecified)
people did. The use of the familial categorisation here orients to the relationship between
them, which is close enough to use familial terms even though they are not actually blood
relations. A further connection between them is the longstanding, personal link between
herself and ‘the man’ in the photograph who was Auntie Win’s brother. She explicitly
orients to the length of time that she had known him – since she ‘was four’ (Line 45) and
by implication orients to the length of time that she had known Auntie Win.

Kate’s introduction of these characters is made relevant to the conversation as her
account unfolds. The conversational task is to talk about relationships and in her account
Kate orients to a specific relationship between them.

Extract 17

42. Kate =er and I said 'oh::: h' I said
43. 'he married Auntie Win' (. ) now the ([.) the man that I showed=
44. [laugh]
45. Rebecca =you there that came to live next door to me when I was four (. )
The second orientation to 'Auntie Win' is in relation to Tom. Kate gives a contrasting account of them where Tom is categorised as a 'ladies man' at Line 49 and Auntie Win is categorised as his 'sweetheart' at Lines 66-68. The categorisation of Tom as a 'ladies man' is inserted into an utterance where Kate says that Auntie Win had a child with him and 'he didn't marry' her (Lines 49-50). The responsibility for getting or not getting married is clearly placed with Tom here – he is the active participant in the account who 'didn't marry Auntie Win' (Line 50). On the other hand, Auntie Win's naïvety is emphasised and she is given a passive role in the account (Lines 46-49). These contrasting categorisations construct a relationship in which Tom is someone who is knowledgeable about the world, particularly when it comes to romance, whereas Auntie Win is naïve and unworldly.

In addition to the active and passive roles assigned to the characters, Kate also positions Auntie Win as blameless in the situation. She orients to Auntie Win's age at Line 46 and to Tom as being the one who made the decision not to marry (Line 50). In addition the category of 'ladies man' implies that perhaps Tom was not particularly reliable. The contrast between the two categories means that Auntie Win, more personally connected to Kate, is not held accountable for events that followed. This non-accountability is confirmed when Kate adds that she 'married a farmer near Sileby' (Line
Both of Kate’s categorisations – ‘ladies man’ and ‘sweetheart’ – could ostensibly be heard as moral judgements of the characters of Auntie Win and Tom and may then in turn be criticised by the other interactants. Kate’s management of her account defends against this potential criticism by using the voice of Bill to state both of these categories (Lines 49 and 66). Her use of constructed dialogue here (Tannen, 1989) creates a distance between herself and the categories so that if either Rebecca or Jane were to raise objections about them the responsibility for the categorisations is not hers – she is merely recounting what Bill said to her. However, the simultaneous utterances of Rebecca and Kate at the end of the account ‘was his sweetheart’ (Lines 67-68), confirm the success of the construction that Kate has built throughout the account.

5.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have introduced some of the ways in which viewing the photographs prompted talk about relationships. In their accounts the participants construct a range of relational features that connect them to the people portrayed in the photographs. These constructions may focus on themselves or each other, on others portrayed in the photographs or on people who are neither present in the interaction nor who appear in the photographs.

My first example featured Helen, Marie and Jane talking about a photograph of Marie’s grandma. I showed how, through their viewing of the photograph and their comparison of the woman who was pictured with Jane who was present, they construct an account of her age and appearance. The extract features many examples of indexicality, relating both to the photograph and to the surrounding context. The women categorise relationships through talk about the photograph and construct a specific relationship between Jane and ‘grandma’ pictured. Finally I explored how disagreement may be managed in talk and how conversational devices are used to move from disagreement to
agreement. In the second extract taken from the conversation between Audrey, Ellen and Jane that focuses on two photographs, Ellen gives an account of experiences on her honeymoon. She constructs an account of herself as young and naïve that is both implicitly and explicitly supported by the other conversationalists. Conversational devices such as laughter and recounting similar experiences as well as the unusual nature of her remembered situation are used to categorise themselves in particular ways. Finally I presented an extract where Kate constructs an account of two people she knew, neither of whom are pictured in any of the photographs presented. However, the account is linked to the conversational task in subtle ways so that the people being talked about are linked back to other photographs even though they do not appear themselves. Again the construction of naivety is achieved through the ways that different categories are explicated in the talk.

These accounts then focus on both people and events or experiences, all of which are related back to the photographs in some way. The use of personal photographs as a topic of talk about relationships proved a successful tool for my research. In the next chapter I build on features introduced in this one to explore some of the ways in which the relationships between the co-conversationalists are constructed.
Chapter 6 Constructing identity: Researcher, participant or friend?

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline some of the ways in which relationship identities are constructed in the data corpus. Since the research participants were a group of women who were already familiar with each other they were able to draw on a range of relational features in their talk, such as shared cultural understandings and familiarity with one another, not available in another setting. Their relationships are explicitly oriented to during the conversations as well as being implicated in the ways they talk, and form reference points for the progression of the talk. The women interact at times as 'researcher and participants' and at others as 'close friends'. They move between these two identity positions with ease from the beginning. For example, a cursory examination of the first parts of the transcriptions shows how they all follow a similar pattern. Each begins with the participants (including Jane) invoking their familiar personal identities with a short 'chat' or period of small talk (J. Coupland, 2000) about general issues. Then they turn to the task. Varying amounts of the earliest parts of the interactions are captured in the recordings. While transcribing the
data I recognised the value of the transition points from small talk to task talk — they clearly illustrated the women’s moves between familiarity and the research relationships that were novel to my research. Taking a range of extracts I look at how identity is drawn on during the conversations and is hearable as a flexible and fluid phenomenon from the beginning of each of them. I also explore how familiar and research identities are invoked.

6.2 Identity and small talk

Personal identity research — generally the domain of social psychology — tends to formulate identity as a feature that becomes fixed in early adulthood (Erikson, 1968; Freud, 1927). Recent investigation has expanded on this view, demonstrating the fluidity and flexibility of identity. Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) present a range of work illustrating how identity is made relevant within interactions. They summarise how a person’s identity can be seen as “his or her display of, or ascription to, membership of some feature-rich category” (1998: 2), arguing that successful analysis rests on the understanding that any individual can be described under a multitude of categories. In ethnomethodological investigations the analyst identifies the identity category being displayed and its accompanying characteristics through participants’ own orientations. Antaki and Widdicombe highlight five general principles “central to an ethnomethodological, and more specifically a conversation analytic, attitude to analysing identity” (1998: 3): people are cast into particular roles with other characteristics and features linked to them. This casting is indexical to and occasioned by the context in which it appears. The identity on display is made relevant to the interactional business of the moment. It is also consequential on the interaction — the identities oriented to will have some effect on the interaction. Finally all of this is visible in the interaction itself — people use the rules of conversation in such a way as to explicate their shifting identities.
This final point has been examined closely in studies of various aspects of talk (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Edwards, 1998; Greatbatch & Dingwall, 1998). One area that has become a growing focus of recent interest concerns the functions of 'small talk' in different types of interaction (J. Coupland, 2000). Many contemporary ideas about small talk are informed by early investigations into phatic communion. First defined by Malinowski as a style of talk that establishes "bonds of personal union between people brought together by the mere need of companionship" it has no "purpose of communicating ideas" (1922: 318). Laver (1975), expands this definition saying that phatic communion helps to establish social relationships while also providing transitionary points from where more topic-focused talk can begin. He further conceptualises it as an indexical means of communicating identities and ideas – it forms the basis of the following conversation. Despite arguments to the contrary where small talk has alternatively been conceptualised as unimportant, unfocused and so on (J. Coupland, 2000) recent investigation has confirmed Laver’s emphasis on the importance of this type of talk for the progression of conversations. Janet Holmes (2003) illustrates the importance of the ability to ‘do’ small talk in a work environment, highlighting problems that may arise if this is restricted in some way. Karen Tracy and Julie Naughton (2000) review media representations of small talk, concluding that it helps accomplish a range of social goals such as putting people at ease and managing others impressions of us. As Coupland points out, previous explorations fail to account for “the subtleties of discursive renegotiation – where with a given speech event, speakers’ orientations, framings and footings shift, reflecting their changing local priorities as talk proceeds.” (2000: 13). Through the identity shifts that take place in the conversations I focus on some of these changing ‘local priorities’.
6.2.1 From small talk to task talk

My recording of each of the research conversations began as soon as possible after I entered the house and in each of them a similar conversational pattern is heard. The earliest part of each conversation revolves around informal topics of talk such as Jane forgetting to bring Stella’s address and Ellen talking about one of her most recent birthday presents. These topics all oriented to the familiar and personal relationships between the women. So in Jane’s conversation with Stella she says:

Extract 1

1. Jane yeah so I had to call in at mum's on the way here cos (laugh)
2. once again I forgot err:: r (1) to bring your re- address with me

Jane implicitly orients to the familiar relationships between the three people named here – their connection is shown through her being able to obtain Stella’s address from her own mother who lives somewhere on the route to Stella’s (Line 1). As would be expected in a research project each recording showed that the transition from small talk to task talk was first oriented to by Jane, in her role as researcher. She marked these transitions in specific ways with ‘so’ being one frequent marker that appeared. Deborah Schiffrin (1987: 217-225) discusses several uses of ‘so’ in conversation one of which is as a turn-transition device that “marks a speaker’s readiness to relinquish a turn” (1987: 218). Jane’s use of ‘so’ at these points marks the transition from the introductory ‘chat’ to the specific task of the conversation by assigning conversational responsibility to the other woman or women present. Jane also generally makes an explicit reference to her ‘first question’ at this point in the interaction giving a further clue to the change of conversational orientation – it hearably distinguishes what is to follow from the preceding talk.
6.2.2 Shared understandings of the research process

In the majority of the conversations Jane’s invitation to talk is offered as discussed above.

An exception to this is her conversation with Millicent – as well as deviating from the
regular pattern this conversation provides the only instance where a participant asks to see
the question schedule.

Extract 2

1. Millicent so is there a questionnaire thing there
2. Jane I have to I have some questions but I didn’t really ask I don’t
3. really ask many of them
4. Millicent let’s have a look can I have a look
5. Jane you can look at them if you want yeah it’s easier if I ask you
6. them though
7. Millicent is it why shan’t I understand them
8. Jane well yeah y’ll understand them but I don’t always ask them
9. in that order and I don’t
10. Millicent oh right

52. Millicent how would you define a relationship well (. ) half the words
53. here I don’t understand I’m a bit thick [(laugh
54. Jane [you’re not [thick
55. Millicent [define a
56. relation[ship
57. Jane [that’s why it’s easier if I ask you them missus
58. awkward (laugh) oh right so who has (. ) who’s been
59. important in your life then

In this exchange Millicent and Jane’s orientation to both their personal connection and to
the research relationship is closely intertwined and their relational familiarity is both
implicated and explicitly invoked. At Lines 1-10 Millicent asks if Jane has questions that
she can look at. Jane says she can look but that it will be easier if she is asked them.

Millicent orients to this as a criticism of her ability to understand them, which Jane denies.

Their personal relationship is implicated in Millicent’s request to see the questions.

Typically in research the researcher is a figure with some status: she is in the powerful
position of being in charge of the research and she also has inside knowledge of what is
supposed to happen. To some extent the unevenness of the relationship distances the
researcher from the participant. Here however, Millicent orients to this imbalance in the
relationship and asks to see the questions. Her request makes relevant her personal
relationship with Jane and she moves away from the role of participant to one of familiarity.

In the second part of the extract (Lines 52-58) Millicent further orients to the unfamiliar discrepancy in their roles by saying that she doesn’t understand ‘half the words’ (Line 52). She orients here to Jane’s role as ‘knowing researcher’ and her own as ‘unknowing participant’. Given the close personal relationship between Jane and each of the participants it can be reasonably assumed that conversations between them would usually take place with each of them on a similar footing – as friends or family members, for example. However, Millicent’s comments highlight a perceived difference between Jane and herself with herself not understanding and being ‘a bit thick’ (Line 53) while Jane – the researcher – is (by implication) categorised as being more intelligent. Jane disagrees with Millicent’s self-assessment (Line 54). Instead she orients to the difficulty her questions may present unless they are being asked and explicitly confirms their familiar relationship by calling Millicent ‘missus awkward (Line 57).

The list of questions that Millicent is given to read has been written by Jane so, by asking to see the questions and then commenting negatively about them, attention is hearably drawn to the occasion of this conversation as being somewhat unusual. This conversational move may also perhaps excuse any faux pas that Millicent may make in her subsequent conversation. A further element to Millicent’s comment is that being ‘a bit thick’ is not a desirable characteristic of a good participant. In describing herself in this way Millicent constructs a category for herself of someone who is perhaps not qualified to take part in the research because not understanding the questions will hinder the successful progression of the interaction. Millicent’s prior knowledge of the questions through having read them means that Jane can issue her invitation to speak differently from other occasions. With no necessity to explain that there is a series of questions to be asked, because Millicent has already seen how many and what type of question they are, Jane can
immediately begin asking them. In other words the task-focused part of the interaction
begins with Millicent’s request to see the list of questions rather than Jane’s introduction of
the first question.

A further example where a deviation from the general pattern of initiating task talk
appears is the conversation with Audrey. In contrast to Millicent’s request to see the
question schedule the difference in Audrey’s conversational introduction links back to the
early stages of setting up the research. Each of the women was sent a letter outlining the
two stages of the research followed shortly afterwards by a telephone call to clarify any
points she may want to raise and to set a date for the initial meeting (see Appendix C).
Audrey misunderstood these instructions and arrived at the first meeting with some
photographs that she began by presenting.

Extract 3

1. Audrey  erm (.) well it’s going to be quite simple really I think I thought
2. Jane  of doing all sorts of things (.) and (.) I was gonna go=
3. Jane  =well (.) th-
4. Audrey  the photograph bit actually is the next bit (.) [so today it’s just=
5. Jane  [oh right (.) so you=
6. Audrey  =for me to ask you some] no no not necess- well (.) I mean=
7. Jane  =don’t need photographs]
8. Audrey  =you can show me them cos they look quite interesting [(laugh)

Audrey orients to the task in hand by opening in a very similar way to Jane’s own openings
discussed above. Where Jane used the marker ‘so’ to signal the change of topic continuing
with various introductions of her questions, Audrey introduces her plans with the marker
‘well’ (Line 1). Generally research follows a specific pattern – the researcher recruits
participants who follow instructions set by him/her to produce a particular research project.
Here this pattern is deviated from. Attempting to take charge of what is to follow, Audrey
orients to the consideration she has given the research prior to the meeting, particularly
how it should proceed and how she can best fulfil her obligations as a good participant.
Jane interrupts with 'well' and orienting to her role as researcher follows with an explanation that hearably informs Audrey of her misunderstanding (Lines 3-4). Jane’s addition marked with ‘so’ (Lines 4-6) performs two tasks: it continues to make clear that Jane is the researcher and it informs Audrey that it is only this part of the research that she has misunderstood. Indexing the temporal marker ‘today’ Jane orients to this misunderstanding as being temporary – Audrey’s overall comprehension is not at fault and photographs are to be included at a later stage. Audrey’s reaction is followed by a hedged and hesitating response from Jane that displays some trouble (Line 6). Jane’s hedging counters the possibility of further trouble in the conversation by allowing for some flexibility in the research. She tells Audrey that she can show her the photographs and ends with a laugh that also orients to this troublesome beginning (Jefferson, 1984a). Though the next part of the research has been designated ‘the photograph bit’ there is still some space here for viewing photographs.

These examples taken from the earliest recorded parts of the corpus illustrate the complex nature of the relationships constructed between the women. The transition from the period of ‘small talk’ to talk focused more closely to the research task is generally managed unproblematically so that even on those occasions where the talk departs from the usual transitional pattern the move is nevertheless achieved smoothly in the end as seen in Extracts 2 and 3.

6.3 Invoking research identities in orientations to the research task
Throughout the data generated in both stages of fieldwork – the one-to-one conversations prompted by the question schedule and the joint conversations focusing on the photographs – these shifts between research and familiar identities continue.
6.3.1 **Invoking researcher identity**

In the conversational data generated by the question schedule the introduction of questions performs explicit functions on different occasions and explicitly invokes the identities of researcher and/or participant. For example, in Extract 4 Jane orients to the research task with her question at Lines 1-2.

**Extract 4**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>so what else do I need to ask you or how've how've your relationships changed over time then</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>with who</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>people (,) whoever</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>well I don't know you get wiser when you get older</td>
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As culturally competent members people can identify relevant identities by indexing them to particular conversational actions. Examining the detail of a question can reveal a questioner’s identity. In the extract above Jane’s marker ‘so’ (Line 1) orients to a transitional return from the prior topic of talk – in this case the answer to the previous question – back to the question schedule with which she is guiding the conversation (Schiffrin, 1987: 217-225). In an interview situation this is a conversational move more likely to be made by the interviewer than by the interviewee. Indeed, if this is not the case it is hearable as interactional trouble since it implies that the researcher has lost control (Suchman & Jordan, 1990). The interviewer determines the progression of an interview by making decisions about when a question has been adequately answered and the next can be introduced.

Jane’s use of the word ‘need’ at Line 1 orients to a pre-planned agenda requiring her to ask particular questions – she doesn’t just want to ask things but needs to ask them for the research objectives to be fulfilled. The use of the personal pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’ also index the research relationship. Rather than talking inclusively such as might be indicated by ‘what else do we need to talk about’ Jane instead categorises them separately: ‘what else do I need to ask you’. In this case ‘I’ refers to Jane’s identity as the researcher –
it is she who 'needs' to ask the question therefore it is she who is directing the interaction.

Jane categorises herself similarly in Extract 5 where she again orients to her research identity.

Extract 5

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>(laugh) well I don't think I've got anything else to (.) that I wanted to ask you (.) erm (.) have I asked you what makes some relationships last and others not (.) no I haven't have I no I don't know really about that one (.) I suppose it depends how you get treated (laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Millicent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At Line 1 Jane begins with 'well' marking the shift from the previous topic and hearably indexing her identity as the researcher who is in charge of the situation. The short pause and self-repair here can be heard to indicate some trouble with the initial framing of the question. She stops at 'to' and after a short pause changes her tense – 'that I wanted to ask you'. Both parts of the utterance index the question schedule and Jane orients explicitly to the questions on the piece of paper that she has brought with her (Line 1). From this explicit reference to the question paper she then indexes her own personal interest in the questions – there are certain ones that she particularly wants to include (Line 2). Research roles are also made relevant in the next extract.

Extract 6

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>I suppose it's just normal (laugh) [normal [behaviour (laugh) [well I suppose it is really (.) y'know but::ter::r that quite nicely leads me into another question that I wanted to ask you was (.) why do you think some relationships last and some don't (.) [do you think [er::rm h::::h ah well now that's (3) well I mean you've got to have s::s- something in common haven't you (.) you you've both want got to want (.) the same sort of things (.) haven't you (.) er::rm phht (1) y'know</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Stella</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The question schedule, again the focus of attention, is introduced differently here.

Following on from a hesitating utterance from Stella, Jane cues another question. In this instance it is the conversation itself that serves as a prompt rather than the question...
schedule and leads her ‘quite nicely’ into her next question (Line 1). The past tense
‘wanted’ (also seen in the previous extract) indexes the pre-planned nature of the
interaction.

These three brief examples demonstrate the varied ways in which the occasioning
of the conversation as part of a research project is made relevant in the talk. In each,
Jane’s utterances orient to the question schedule in some way. They index her identity as
the researcher, separating her at times from the other conversationalists; they orient to the
presence of a material list of questions to which refers she at times during the conversation;
and they index the identity of each other conversationalist as part of a research project.
Each of the participants confirms this identity in that none of them objects to answering her
questions.

6.3.2 Orienting to participant identities
As well as orienting to her own identity as researcher Jane also invokes the research
identities of her participants (Extract 7-9).

Extract 7

1. Stella oh [dear (laugh)]
2. Jane [oh (2) so let me have a look at me questions .]
3. erm (1) d’ythink (1)one of the other things that I’ve asked
4. people is do you think that your relationships have changed
5. over (1) the years
6. Stella er::rm=
7. Jane =at all=
8. Stella =relationships with (. ) er::r yeah (. ) well of course

Extract 7, taken from the same conversation as Extract 6, shows Jane’s orientation to
Stella’s identity as research participant. She hesitantly draws attention to her question
schedule to see what she still has to ask (Lines 2-4). This invokes both identities of
researcher and participant – Jane is asking Stella a question. She goes further than this
however by locating Stella in a group of similar ‘people’ (Line 3). Orienting to the
questions she has asked her other participants she hearably locates this particular
conversation as one of a series of similar ones. This orientation to a *series of research encounters* is invoked in the following two extracts.

**Extract 8**

1. Jane so erm (. ) tt let me see what (1) first of all then I mean (. )
2. anything that y'you want to talk about really but (1) th'he
3. one of the first questions that I asked Kate when I [spoke=
4. Rebecca =to her was (. ) who were the most influential people do
5. Jane you feel i' the that you've (1) had relation[ships with during=
6. Rebecca [ships with
7. Jane =your life=
8. Rebecca =oh (. ) oh my goodness

**Extract 9**

1. Jane erm (1) right then well the first question that I started off with
2. the others with was (. ) who're the people who've been most
3. important to you or had the most influence on you in your life (. )
4. Marie has what changed
5. Jane the (. ) people have the people changed that've been influential (. )
6. Marie or
7. Marie no only died

Here Jane outlines some of what she has talked about with other participants. She reports a question she has asked previously and on each occasion the current respondent orients to her reference as if it is a direct question. In the conversation with Rebecca, Jane orients to Kate – the only other woman that she has spoken to at this point (Extract 8, Line 2). In that with Marie she makes relevant ‘the others’ – an unnamed group who are also part of the research (Extract 9, Line 2). Rebecca and Marie hearably understand these statements, demonstrated in their similar responses to Jane (Extract 8, Lines 4-9; Extract 9, Lines 5-8). They both orient to the task in hand without explicit instruction.

Orientations to the research task occur regularly in the conversational interviews and tend to be initiated by Jane either in reference to her questions or, on the odd occasion, to the recording equipment. In contrast, in the conversations focusing on the photographs the references to the research task are largely limited to the very beginning of the recordings as in Extracts 10-12.
6.3.3 Introducing a topic for talk

These introductions follow a similar format to the conversational interviews in that there is an initial period of small talk followed by a turn to the task. In these conversations the transition point is marked by a brief description of looking for the photographs before beginning to look at them.

Extract 10

1. Kate (oh yes I've just been sorting through a drawer of old photographs (. ) I've throw (. ) put some out to throw away (. ) I ought to've brought the lot=

Extract 11

1. Marie ok now what's look out look at you and look at me I've brought all this lot=
2. Helen =well I've brought I've got me album here an album here as well I've (. ) I've tried to find faces to fit the (. ) what Jane and I talked about

Extract 12

1. Audrey well I think the ones I've brought I've just sort of dug out I went (. ) went through last night quickly
2. Jane did you yes:::
3. Audrey been such a [well it is such a hectic week you see]
4. Ellen [yes well I had a (. ) I had a look on] (. ) [S::Sunday
5. Audrey but er (. ) a just things that (1) special moments or (. ) some things to=

The three extracts give varying accounts of how the photographs were selected. Both Kate’s and Audrey’s accounts give the impression of speakers who have brought a selection of photographs that have not been viewed for some time nor have they been chosen purposely for this occasion. They were instead picked out by chance (Extract 10, Lines 1-2) or in a hurry (Extract 12, Lines 1-2). In contrast Ellen’s were decided upon previously (Extract 12, Line 5) and Helen and Marie brought albums (Extract 11, Lines 2-3).

Accounts about these varying ways of deciding which photographs to bring – even if only at the last minute – suggest that some thought has been given to the research
beforehand. All of the collections fulfil my criteria of bringing personal photographs. None indicated a problem with my request and, since each woman brought a selection of photographs with her, everyone understood it as relevant. Each explanation about how the photographs were selected implicitly invokes the research relationship by orienting in some way to an attempt to help Jane in her research. The women all went to some trouble to fulfil their part of the research obligation – i.e. to be a ‘good’ participant. Helen for example refers back to the earlier stage of fieldwork (Extract 11, Lines 4-5) and has tried to find photographs of people she previously mentioned. Audrey mentions what a hectic week she has had in apology for just digging hers out quickly though she has tried to find ‘special moments’ (Extract 12, Line 6).

Like the transitions in the conversational interviews these initial descriptions of selecting photographs – periods of small talk – precede the transition to the task itself. Each conversation proceeds from this point in a similar manner – one of the women begins talking about her photographs followed later by the other. This interactional order is not explicated in the conversation, nor by my instructions, but rather seems to follow the pattern of turn taking reminiscent of ordinary conversation (Sacks et al., 1978) and negotiated together implicitly. The instructions (if any) were to present and discuss the photographs in any way they chose (see Extracts 13-15).

Extract 13

1. Jane
2. errm (.) just to say I mean this is the first one of these that
3. I've ever done so I don't know how it's going to turn out (laugh)
4. I did I did do a practice run with two friends [with my sister and=
5. yes
6. one of my friends and (.) we had quite a laugh cos Cassie had
7. just got a big box of photos and she was just pulling [photos out=
8. yeah (laugh
9. =and saying o::oh::h no I'm not talking about that one and putting
10. it back'n [I didn't quite know wha
11. Kate [oh yes I've just been sorting through a drawer of old
12. photographs I've threw put some out to throw away I ought
13. to've brought the lot=
14. =that's what you were just saying [isn't it=
15. [yes
16. [yes
17. Jane
18. Kate
19. Jane
20. Kate

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Here Jane again gives no explicit instructions of how to proceed. Instead, by talking of one possible way the task can be achieved by telling them about a ‘practice run’ that she did, she offers instructions to Kate and Rebecca on a way of proceeding (Lines 1-8). Explaining that this is the ‘first’ of these planned conversations she adds that its outcome is unpredictable. She counters any possible criticism of the research by offering this as a possible apology for anything that might happen. The research event itself is one in which there is some lack of control and though, in general, there is an expectation or understanding of how things should ‘turn out’ in research this is not the case here. Further, even though a ‘practice run’ has been undertaken this is no indication that there is a right or a wrong way for the interaction to continue. It was done in the relative ‘safety’ of being a practice so there is no guarantee of what might happen in the ‘real’ research environment.

Some idea of what might be appropriate in this research conversation though, is given in Jane’s outline of her ‘practice run’. It was conducted with people she was close to, so she aligns Kate and Rebecca with them (Lines 3-5). She also introduces the interaction as being fun so informing Kate and Rebecca that they may enjoy themselves (Line 5). Jane also orients to the possibility that Kate and Rebecca might want to ignore some photographs and that it is acceptable to do this (Lines 5-9). Implicitly then, Jane gives some clear indications of what might be expected to happen in the interaction.

Rebecca orients to these guidelines by indexing the beginning of the task with a temporal marker ‘now’ (Line 20). She displays understanding that Jane’s description of a
former interaction is the opening for this present one. The marker ‘now’ indicates the change of topic and she explicitly orients to the task by starting with ‘this one’ (Line 21).

In contrast to the last example, in the next two extracts Jane does explicate procedural instructions. However, in both instances some trouble with the instructions is made relevant.

Extract 14

1. Jane I just want you to (. ) talk about your photos
2. Helen oka::ay
3. Jane (laugh) you can you can look at them however you want to say
4. whatever you want look at just
5. Helen okay are (. ) are we to talk about these people who had an
6. influence on us or
7. Jane if you like Helen if you think that’s y- y’know
8. Helen well d- I mean what do you want from us
9. Jane I’d just like you to talk (. ) I’d just like you to talk about e- everything
10. and anything
11. Helen okay
12. Marie look at this (. ) look at this
13. Helen who’s that Victorian Reflections that’s a nice album m- Marie
14. you’ve never brought me that one before

Helen’s trouble with Jane’s instructions is marked by her responses to Jane (Lines 2, 5-6 and 8). Contrasting with Extract 13, Jane here gives a direct instruction (Line 1). Helen replies ‘oka::ay’ where the lengthening of the word is hearable as a potential trouble indicator, further confirmed with the short laugh (Jefferson, 1984a) with which Jane precedes her next instruction (Lines 3-4).

Helen’s question of clarification continues the tone of uncertainty (Lines 5-6). She uses the pronoun ‘we’ in her question to Jane, thus separating herself and Marie from Jane in the interaction. Helen speaks for both of them to clarify their position as research participants. Jane confirms that Helen is on the right track but the instruction is still not sufficiently explicit for Helen who adds a further question (Lines 6-7).

This question demonstrates that for Helen the task she is being asked to carry out has not yet been explicated. Whereas in the conversation with Kate and Rebecca, Jane’s presentation of the exemplar of her ‘practice run’ (Extract 13, Line 3) provided adequate
description of what the task required and therefore enabled them to address the task
unproblematically, the instructions here do not give such a clear illustration of how to
proceed. The shared understanding of what is required of them that an example enables,
even though not containing specific instructions, is hearably clearer for them than when
Jane merely attempts to tell them what to do.

Jane makes another attempt to formulate the research requirements in her next
request (Lines 8-9). Her final description again presents vague and generalised terms such
as ‘everything and anything’ and is quickly accepted by Helen with another, more positive,
‘okay’ (Line 10). Marie then follows asking them to look at something – namely her new
photograph album (Line 11). Indexed by ‘this’, Marie moves attention away from
clarification questions to admiration of the album, a change of attention that marks the
beginning of the task of looking at photographs. This also orients to the problem Helen
has with Jane’s instructions of what to do and the commonplace understandings of
research. Talking about their photographs is something they do in their everyday lives
(Line 12-13) but Helen’s questions indicate that she expects something more demanding
from a research situation.

Extract 15 follows a similar pattern to that of the previous extract with Jane again
giving explicit instructions.

Extract 15

1. Jane erm (. ) just basically look at (. ) look at your photos together
2. and talk about them and if (. ) if you I mean there might be
3. people in them that you both know (. ) so if you talk about the
4. people (. ) or there might be people that you don't (. )you=
5. mm hm
6. Audrey =don't [know (. ) any photographs that you think might be=
7. you see
8. =interesting=
9. mm
10. Jane well you see Jane you'll have got a lot (. ) of m- me (1) from m-
11. from your mother [(.] y’know a lot of like mother and (1) granddad
12. yeah
13. Ellen [and the wedding photographs and things
14. yeah I have of you but she she didn’t bring she brought more=
15. mm
16. recent ones as well [so ye::es
Mindful of previous problems with the instructions, Jane here adds some clarifications (Lines 2-8). She orients to her role as a competent researcher by addressing problematic features that have been raised in previous interactions. Ellen also orients to their research relationship by drawing attention to the further potential problem that she may not bring anything new to the interaction because her photographs are very similar to Marie’s. Again this highlights shared cultural ideas held about research such as that it should be novel rather than repetitious and that participants should be in a position to contribute something worthwhile. Jane’s and Ellen’s personal relationship is also hearable here: Ellen has knowledge of the research timetable oriented to by her reference to Jane’s ‘mother’, who she knows has already presented her photographs (Lines 10-13).

Both Extracts 14 and 15 illustrate hearably familiar relationship links between the participants – links that appear both implicitly and explicitly throughout the conversations. For instance, in Extract 14 Helen’s concluding comment of the extract relates to one of Marie’s albums. It shows that viewing Marie’s photographs is a commonplace activity for her. Her statement implies an intimate knowledge of Marie’s photograph albums and by association a close link with her family (Line 14). Similarly Ellen’s comment in Extract 15 that Jane will have ‘got a lot’ of Ellen from her ‘mother’ (Lines 10-11) demonstrates the close relational links between them all. Jane’s mother has similar family photographs to Ellen that feature people such as ‘mother’ and ‘granddad’ and events such as weddings.

These orientations to the task of talking about the photographs demonstrate a shared understanding around what a personal photograph collection comprises as well as an eagerness to fulfil Jane’s research request. This is accomplished in a relatively unproblematic manner throughout. In one case however, some discomfort with the research task is significant in the talk.
### 6.3.4 Kate's orientation to the research task

Except for the orientations made at the beginning of each interaction in which photographs were presented, there is only one other explicit reference to the research task in the remainder of the talk. Extract 16 consists of a series of excerpts from the transcript in which Kate expresses her concerns about the task. To illustrate the places that these references appear in the whole conversation they remain as numbered in my original transcript.

**Extract 16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rebecca</th>
<th>Kate</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Kate</th>
<th>Kate</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Rebecca</th>
<th>Kate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>165.</td>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>“now what else what have we got I’ll go right back to my childhood now=”</td>
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<tr>
<td>166.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>“=oo::hh God [oo::hh [oh my God] fathers”</td>
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<tr>
<td>167.</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I nearly brought all these I daren’t=”</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>261.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>“I mean I’ve got dozens of since we’ve been the last twenty years but I thought you were more interested in old ones=”</td>
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<tr>
<td>262.</td>
<td>=mm whatever</td>
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<tr>
<td>263.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>“I don’t mind I’m interested in all of it (laugh)”</td>
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<td>264.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>358.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>“I didn’t really oh I wish I’d brought more now but I didn’t look y’see so many of my photographs we’ve taken on holiday and they’re not of people they’re of=”</td>
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<tr>
<td>359.</td>
<td>=no::o=</td>
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<td>360.</td>
<td>=things ’n ’n places=</td>
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<tr>
<td>361.</td>
<td>Rebecca</td>
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<td>362.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>548.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>“those are all yours=”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>549.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>“=yeah”</td>
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<tr>
<td>550.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>“I could’ve brought but I thought y- I thought you wanted something more detailed lets have a look at that cos I oftens hear about these two oh yes=”</td>
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<th>Kate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1115.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>“I didn’t think you wanted (.) photographs like that er actually”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1116.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>“I found one of me and some people at work (.) [and I thought]”</td>
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<td>1117.</td>
<td>[ did you ]</td>
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<td>1118.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>“I thought we] shouldn’t want to see them”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1119.</td>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>“[oh::hh (laugh)”</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1375.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>“=now we’ve been sat talking I ought to’ve brought we used to go and stay on a farm in France (.) I suppose I should’ve brought that (.)”</td>
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<td>1376.</td>
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<td>1377.</td>
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At several points in the conversation Kate refers to the photographs she left behind that she should have brought with her. Her awareness throughout is that this is a task-oriented, occasioned interaction rather than just an everyday conversation with friends. Her first orientation to her photographs is at Line 169 where, commenting on some of the old ones that Rebecca produces, she says she ‘daren’t’ have brought the same range. She follows with six further explicit references to the task oriented nature of the conversation. Her references to her photographs at Lines 169, 255, 262 and 358 are indexed by the number she should have brought. She also makes relevant the type of photographs she had brought (Lines 262-263, 359-362, 550-551 and 1115). All her utterances orient to her concern about being a ‘good’ participant for the research.

At some points in the conversation her concerns are explicated in relation to not knowing what Jane wants from them (e.g. Lines 262, Lines 550-551 and Line 1115). Kate allocates the blame to Jane for perhaps having brought unsuitable photographs. As the researcher one of Jane’s obligations is to give clear instructions to her participants and if the photographs are not suitable then the fault lies with Jane for not doing this. At other points Kate cites her own lack of understanding as being problematic: she perhaps has not fulfilled her role as a good participant because she may have chosen the wrong photographs out of the ‘dozens’ she had (Line 261). She explicitly orientates to her growing realisation of her possible failure as a participant (Line 1375) – the research requirements have become clearer as the conversation has progressed.

At other points Kate orients to her understanding of the research requirements. At Lines 359-362 for example, she acknowledges that many of the photographs she has are of places rather than people. With this implicit reference to Jane’s research instructions she orients to some of the choices that she made regarding her photographs. Those showing ‘things ‘n ‘n places’ (Line 362) for example, are not as appropriate to a study of relationships as photographs of ‘people’. Here she makes relevant her attempt to fulfil her
research obligations as a good participant by taking into consideration what Jane is trying to achieve with the research.

Throughout most of Kate’s task references she explicitly orients to the research relationship separating herself from Jane by using ‘I’ and ‘you’ (e.g. at Lines 262 and Lines 550-551). At Line 1118 she introduces the pronoun ‘we’ that hearably includes all of the three women present – Kate, Rebecca and Jane – as the group looking at the photographs. She moves from an orientation to the research relationship to invoke the personal relationship of the three of them.

I should note that the material presence of the question schedule occasions conversation in much the same way as the participants’ photographs do, and through both methods Jane focuses attention towards the research task at certain times. Kate’s orientation to the research task stood out during analysis as the only occasion – apart from at the beginning – that a participant oriented to the research task. The contrast with the other conversations was all the more noticeable because of Kate’s continuing reference to it in more than half of the conversation: the completed transcript covers 2246 lines and Kate’s last explicit orientation to the research is at Lines 1374-1375.

In my discussion of some of the extracts the women’s personal relationships have also been intertwined with their orientations to the research relationship (e.g. Extract 2). In the next section I examine more closely some of these other identities, particularly those that link to the personal relationships between the women (Antaki, Condor, & Levine, 1996; Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995).

6.4 Managing familiarity

In addition to the orientations to research identities in the talk there are many instances where personal connections between the women are drawn upon. In the following extracts
Chapter 6: Constructing Identity: Researcher, Participant or Friend?

I look at how degrees of familiarity are constructed in the first few exchanges of a conversation.

### 6.4.1 Explicit constructions of familiarity

Obvious displays of familiarity in the corpus appear in the form of nicknames, terms of endearment and teasing. For instance, Ellen often uses the terms ‘darling’ or ‘love’ to address either Jane or Audrey in her conversations and Helen uses idioms such as ‘duck’ and ‘duke’. An example in which a nickname is teasingly used is presented in Extract 17.

**Extract 17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Millicent</th>
<th>how would you define a relationship well (. ) half the words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>here I don't understand I'm a bit thick [(laugh)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>[you're not [thick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Millicent</td>
<td>[define a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td>relation[ship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>[that's why it's easier if I ask you them missus awkward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td>(laugh) oh right so who has (. ) who's been important in your life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td>then</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jane and her participants are members of a local social network. This complex network is invoked at various times in the data and the short exchange presented here confirms the familiarity of the usual relationship between Millicent and Jane. Jane uses a nickname to tease Millicent about her insistence on reading the questions (Line 6), one of which she reads aloud (Lines 1-2).

The categorisation of Millicent as ‘missus awkward’ might generally be considered an inappropriate way of addressing a research participant. In the research context a researcher has an ethical obligation to demonstrate respect to her research participants. If instead the exchange is examined in the contrasting context of Millicent and Jane’s parallel ‘familiar’ identities of aunt and niece this can be heard as a (possibly) usual pattern of talk for them – relationships, for example, may be a commonplace topic of talk. The usual framing of their conversations however, would almost certainly be very different. In her
role as niece Jane would not be expected to visit her aunt armed with a list of questions and a tape recorder.

Clues in the talk itself guide its understanding: Millicent’s choice of words: ‘a bit thick’ (Line 2), hearably orients to the ‘unfamiliar’ positions invoked by the research context. Jane further invokes this fracture in their normally assumed identities with her teasing categorisation. The teasing nature of the nickname is confirmed with Jane’s laugh that orients Millicent to the light-heartedness of the name and immediately precedes her turn to the task ‘right so’ (Line 6).

Another instance of teasing that appears in the first few turns recorded in the interaction can be seen in Extract 18.

Extract 18

1. Helen well I've brought I've got me album here an album here as well
2. Helen I've I've tried to find faces to fit the what Jane and I talked about (. )what have you brought missus (. ) good lord have you brought overnight clothes an'all [(laugh)]
3. Marie [( ) shall I come for me holidays=
4. Helen =come for your holidays ducky come and stop with me (laugh) Billy all right
5. Marie yeah he's fine=
6. Helen =and the rest of the family
7. Marie
8. Helen right Jaynose what can we do for you duck
9. Jane I just want you to talk about your photos

Helen attends to the current conversational task by presenting her album and making relevant what she and Jane had previously talked about (Lines 1-2). The tone changes with surprised exclamation from Helen (Lines 3-4). Her remark ‘good lord’ marks the beginning of an insertion sequence not directly related to the matter in hand which continues until Line 11 when Helen, marking the topic shift with ‘right’, turns back to Jane and asks what she wants them to do.

The ironic ‘have you brought overnight clothes’ (Lines 3-4) links back to a previous statement from Marie about the number of photographs she has brought. Helen’s
sarcasm hearably teases Marie and along with the nickname ‘missus’ (Line 4) represents the closeness of their relationship. It is unlikely that someone less well known would have been met with a similar greeting about what they had brought. Their closeness is further demonstrated by the jokey question and answer (Lines 5-7).

Their joking and light-hearted exchange is punctuated with laughter and terms of teasing and endearment such as ‘missus’ and ‘ducky’ indicating an intimacy between the two women right from the start of the recording. This closeness continues with Helen’s query about Billy (Line 7). The use of his forename with no further identifying features orients to Helen’s shared knowledge of Marie’s personal life. ‘Billy’ is made relevant as a significant person in relation to Marie and is linked to her family though separated from the rest (Line 9). Combining these conversational clues with shared cultural knowledge of how relationships ‘work’ an informed guess can be made that ‘Billy’ is probably Marie’s partner.

Helen’s affectionate and informal manner continues at Line 11 when she turns attention to Jane and the research task. As with her teasing of Marie, the nickname ‘Jaynose’ accompanied by ‘duck’ hearably invokes her familiarity with Jane. However, even within this informal, familiar phrase their current research relationship is also invoked. Helen separates Jane from herself and Marie in two ways with her question (Line 11). She uses the pronoun ‘we’ to include herself and Marie but to exclude ‘Jaynose’ and her question specifically orients to the two of them doing something for Jane. By asking what they can do she displays her awareness that they are all there for a reason – though the talk to this point has been chatty and informal, teasing and affectionate, here Helen turns to the task in hand.

The two short exchanges in Extracts 17 and 18 demonstrate explicit orientations to the women’s familiar, personal relationships through conversational constructions such as teasing and nicknames. These features of teasing are taken from the earliest parts of the
recordings, as the task is about to start. In other conversations the constructions of
familiarity are not oriented to so explicitly.

6.4.2 Implicit constructions of familiarity

Here I present an exchange taken from the early part of Jane’s conversation with Rebecca
in which the categorisations used are heard as signifying a less familiar relationship.

Extract 19

1. Jane one of the first questions that I asked Kate when I [spoke=
2. Rebecca [yeah
3. Jane =to her was (.) who were the most influential people do you
4. feel i’th’that you’ve (1) had relation[ships with during your life=
5. Rebecca [ships with =oh
6. oh my goodness what a question [ (.) erm when] my husband=
7. Jane [it’s quite wide]
8. Rebecca =was alive obviously it was him

Two features of Extract 19 are notable: the categorisations used displaying familiarity and
unfamiliarity and Rebecca’s orientation to being a ‘good’ research participant. In the first
categorisation Jane introduces a connection between Rebecca and herself with her
reference to ‘Kate’, another participant (Line 1). As with previous examples the absence
of any further information about ‘Kate’ – other than as another participant – either
volunteered by Jane or asked for by Rebecca indicates that she is familiar to them both.
Similarly Jane’s minimal introduction of ‘Kate’ suggests her own awareness of a
connection between them. As Sacks’ discussion of the economy rule suggests (e.g. Sacks
et al., 1978; Silverman, 1998) only enough (and no more) information needs to be given in
order for a person to be recognised.

This given name being enough to introduce a familiar person can be contrasted
with Rebecca’s non-naming of ‘my husband’ (Line 6). This relational categorisation
orients to the possibility that Jane may not recognise Rebecca’s husband merely from his
name. In the context of a possibly unfamiliar relationship the sole use of a man’s name
here may have been ambiguous – a brother or a father for example may also be influential.
Rebecca’s use of the relational term ‘my husband’ invokes a specific person and a particular type of relationship that she orients to as familiar and easily understood – a husband is ‘obviously’ (Line 8) influential.

Rebecca’s response to Jane marks her knowledge and understanding of the research process and what she is supposed to do as a good research participant. Though Rebecca’s exclamation ‘oh my goodness’ suggests she has some difficulty with Jane’s question – nevertheless after a short pause and filler she answers (Lines 6-8). Despite these difficulties her willingness to attempt an answer to Jane’s questions orients to her understanding of what is expected of her as a research participant.

6.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have focused on some of the explicit and implicit constructions of identity that appear in the conversations. I have illustrated two means by which identity is hearable as a flexible and fluid phenomenon: the women’s orientation to their research identities and their orientation to more personal and familiar identities. This range of identities is indicated through features of familiarity, such as nicknames and teasing, as well as through constructions of less familiar relationships. It is heard in exchanges not only between the participants and myself but also between the women themselves.

I have focused on these identity orientations at the beginning of each of the research conversations, specifically in the transition from a period of informal, small talk to talk focused on the research task. These transition points illustrate the ease with which identity changes are managed in the conversations. The conversation between Millicent and Jane demonstrates complex intertwining of research and personal identities and how these affect analytic understandings of the talk. The identity changes at these transition points also illustrate the shared understandings of the research process itself. I have drawn attention to a range of means of orienting to research relationships. These include
references to both researcher and participant identities as well as introducing talk around the conversational topic itself. So for example, Jane invokes both her own identity as researcher and the identities of the participants at different points in the talk. These references are both implicated through, and explicitly included in, the talk.

Overall, a largely unproblematic understanding of the research requirements is demonstrated by all of the women and I have discussed the generally smooth running nature of each of them. However, I have also drawn attention to some exceptions to this, which created a level of ‘trouble’ in the conversational progression. The first two occur in the one-to-one conversations generated by the semi-structured question schedule. In the conversation between Millicent and Jane (Extract 2) Millicent asked to see the questions and voiced her reservations about them. The second (Extract 3) drew attention to a misunderstanding of the instructions by Audrey, which meant that she arrived at the first meeting (i.e. the arranged semi-structured interview) with some photographs to talk about.

The next issues that arose were related. Each of them illustrated a problem with the instructions given during the introduction to two of the three conversations focusing on photographs (Extracts 14 and 15). The non-problematic beginning involved Jane illustrating what she wanted the women to do by describing a similar conversation she had recently had with a friend and her sister – this illustration gave sufficient information for Kate and Rebecca to know how to proceed. However, at the beginning of the conversations with Helen and Marie, and Kate and Rebecca, Jane merely asked them to talk about their photographs with no further instructions.

The decision to give as little instruction as possible at the beginning was made in relation to the discussion I highlight in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.1) around generating ‘naturally occurring data’. To escape the level of direction that accompanied the semi-structured technique used in the first stage of data generation, I decided to give only minimal guidance. I reasoned that this would then enable the women to approach the
presentation and discussion of photographs however they wanted. Though this approach resulted in some trouble at the beginning of the interactions once these initial stumbling blocks were overcome the conversational progress was largely successful. However, it is necessary to draw attention to one final issue that was highlighted in the conversation between Kate, Rebecca and Jane (Extract 16). This was Kate’s concern about doing her best in the research process by being a good participant and was reflected in her regular references to the research task through much of her talk.

Following on from these discussions of ‘trouble’ in the conversations, in the final part of this chapter I have focused on the explicit and implicated constructions of familiarity constructed in the conversations. These constructions demonstrate the ongoing orientation to personal connections as well as research relationships in the talk between the women. These complex relationships and their influence on the talk is further explored in my next chapter where I concentrate on one specific aspect – the ways through which relationships are remembered in the talk.
Chapter 7 Constructing relationships through remembering

7.1 Introduction
In this chapter I explore the act of remembering different people, situations and events. As noted in Chapter 3, research has shown that remembering is a familiar discursive practice that plays an active part in the construction of accounts so that specific remembered features are drawn on in particular ways to inform the current topic of conversation (Boden & Bielby, 1983; Middleton & Edwards, 1990b). Boden and Bielby (1983) show that to inform their accounts older conversationalists orient to a wide range of features such as autobiography, geographical origins and so on. Middleton and Edwards (1990b) discuss the importance of both cultural and socio-historical context as well as the local conversational context in the construction of remembered accounts. Though a conversation might not necessarily be focused specifically on past events these may be made relevant to the topic currently being discussed.

Middleton and Edwards (1990b) argue that conversational remembering is an open-ended social activity, constantly being revised and reconstructed during talk. Remembering particular occasions or people is important in constructing shared
Chapter 7: Constructing Relationships through Remembering

experiences. Moreover, remembered incidents in conversation are tailored for a specific context and will not be recounted in the same way on other occasions. The experiences recounted – and the ways they are told – are dependent on both the reasons for the conversation and the people taking part in it. Radley (1990) explores how artefacts may be involved in remembered accounts – remembering is not just about words but is located within a world of things. Though the incidents remembered are often constructed through words, the objects involved give the speakers a sense of their past – they understand it in a particular way. Discussions such as these have informed my analysis in this chapter. The talk about relationships generated for this research was partially occasioned by looking at a particular type of artefact – the family photograph. Through these, and my questions, not only did the conversation focus on current relationships but often also oriented to remembered features of past relationships. Examples of both of these are included in the following analysis.

The extracts I explore all have features in common whether the women are recounting something based in fact or are focusing on something imagined. Each remembered occasion is oriented to features of their relationships either implicated or explicitly oriented to in the conversations and each one performs an activity in the conversation. I concentrate on the management of the conversational shifts that take place in the context of remembering particular events and people.

7.2 Orienting to current and remembered relationships

My first set of extracts is taken from one of the individual conversations and illustrates the potential complexity involved in constructing relationships in talk. Remembered relationships in the data corpus were often recounted in connection with current ones. Extract 1 begins with an addition to one of the scheduled questions (Chapter 4, Box 1) that refers to changing relationships over time.
In Extract 1 Jane and Stella both explicitly invoke specific relationships: Jane the category ‘grandchildren’ (Line 1) and Stella her grandson ‘Ben’ (Line 3). They both also make relevant their current research relationship: when Jane asks her question (Lines 1-2) and when Stella begins to construct her answer (Lines 3-5). Jane’s question indexes talk that precedes this extract – she does not explicate to what she is referring when she asks about Stella’s grandchildren (Line 1). Stella’s understanding of what is being indexed however, is hearable at Line 3 when she begins her reply. The pattern of talk here is typical of a semi-structured or open-ended interview situation (Hester & Francis, 1994): a question is asked or a prompt provided that allows a relatively lengthy answer. Though a yes or no answer would have been sufficient to answer Jane’s question, after a brief hesitation Stella demonstrates her understanding of what is required in this type of conversation by saying ‘yes’ (Line 3) and following with a specific example as illustration – what Sacks (1992a; 1992b) refers to as the project of the question.

As well as the research relationship the current personal relationship between Stella and Jane is hearable in this brief exchange. Stella orients to Jane’s category ‘grandchildren’ with the introduction of ‘Ben’ whose name and implied age group are the only features she
makes relevant. Sacks (1974b) argues that people will be introduced as economically as possible and if one category is enough to identify them then no other information need be provided. Stella's use of Ben's forename here orients to him as someone Jane will recognise from this minimal information. This recognition is demonstrated through the joint construction of Ben's approximate age. Though there is no explicit orientation to his actual age there are clues from both speakers suggesting which age group he may be part of. Jane makes relevant the age of Stella's grandchildren (Line 2) and by saying that he visits less often Stella implies some level of agency in Ben's life (Lines 7-8). A common sense assumption is that he is old enough at this point to visit her on his own and can choose whether to visit her or not. Coupled with what is hearable (even though cut off) as 'his awkward stage' (Line 3) this constructs Ben as almost certainly at least a teenager.

Extract 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>=but I'm conscious of the fact that (. ) he doesn't bother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>coming round as much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>er::rm (laugh) well he hardly comes round at all [(laugh) if it=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>[(laugh) yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>=comes to that (1) er::rm (. ) y'know they sort of drop you don't</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>yeah=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stella's orientation to Ben and his current behaviour in answer to Jane's question provides an occasion for her to remember how she herself acted with her grandparents. She makes two conversational moves to achieve this. By replacing the personal pronouns 'I' and 'he' (Lines 7 and 10) that she has used to this point, with the more general 'they' and 'you' (Line 12), Stella moves from a personal account of her own relationship with her grandson to a more impersonal account of grandchildren and grandparents in general. With this change in categorisation she hearably locates Ben in a category of young people who 'sort of drop you' and herself in a category of grandparents who are dropped. As at Lines 3-5, Stella once again orients to the implied criticism in her construction. By moving from the
personal to the general the criticism is not directed at Ben himself but includes all
grandchildren of a similar age. Similarly, with the insertion of the minimiser ‘sort of’,
which downgrades the impact of ‘drop you’ and the tag question ‘don’t they’ that invites
Jane to agree with her, Stella counters any possible resulting disagreement (Lines 12-13).

Extract 4

15. Stella =but you I mean I can remember doing the same myself
to me- (. ) to my grand[parents
16. Jane [ye::ah [yeah
17. Stella [but not meaning anything by it I still
18. loved them (. ) but I didn’t go (. ) y’know (. ) and if I went (. ) I’m bored
19. stiff in (. ) twenty minutes and and wanted to leave y’know
20. Stella’s move from the personal to the general next presents an opening for her to
remember how she herself behaved at a similar age. She supports her comments about
Ben’s behaviour with an example she remembers from her own younger life (Lines 15-20).

Though beginning at Line 15 using the same generalised pronoun ‘but you’ Stella then
repairs to the personal ‘I’ to recount an example of her own. In this way she not only
categorises Ben as part of a group who ‘drop’ their grandparents but also categorises
herself as having once belonged to the same group (Line 15). By citing a remembered
example of her own behaviour she identifies and explains Ben’s behaviour towards her –
she didn’t mean anything by her behaviour (Line 18) so by implication Ben doesn’t mean
anything by his. Remembering how she felt towards her grandparents (Lines 18-19)
implies that she realises that Ben’s lack of visits to herself does not mean that his feelings
for her have diminished. He is merely following the pattern of behaviour that all young
people follow, including Stella herself with her own grandparents. In her final utterance
Stella again links Ben’s possible feelings about the visits he makes, to herself by
remembering her own extreme boredom (Lines 19-20). This assessment of grandparents to
whom visits lead to feelings of being ‘bored stiff’, but who are nevertheless ‘loved’
constructs a complex structure of identity. Stella makes relevant the different identities
that accompany different age groups while also orienting to similarities in age identities across time.

Stella’s account of this remembered occasion clearly orients to the requirements of this set of research conversations – she orients to two stage-of-life identities (Silverman, 1998) – herself in the present as grandmother and herself in the past as granddaughter. She links an account of her grandson’s behaviour toward her in the present with an account of her own similar behaviour toward her own grandparents in the past. Her account hearably orients to talk about relationships through the categories of grandparents and grandchildren that are introduced by Jane in her question. She also orients to her implicit understanding of the research relationship by providing an explanatory answer to a question that did not explicitly initiate one. While Stella’s account is firmly based in the mundane reality of relationships between the generations, the next three extracts offer a less ‘everyday’ account.

7.3 Co-constructing authenticity in remembering
In Extracts 5-7 Audrey talks about a personal experience – an account to which Ellen contributes her own supporting comments. Prompted by her presentation of a photograph of some friends, one of whom – ‘Alma’ – has since died Audrey remembers an incident that happened at another funeral she attended.

Photograph 1 (belonging to Audrey)
Shows a group of five women, including Audrey herself. They are standing together outdoors and are all smiling towards the camera.
I focus on two specific orientations to relationships here. Audrey and Ellen construct their current relationship through their talk about how Betty is remembered, as well as constructing their longstanding familiarity with one another.

Extract 5

1. Audrey that's my most (1) I dunno frightening but amazing
2. (2) thing I've ever had (1) I went to Betty's funeral (1) last
3. year (1) o::oh dear=
4. Ellen =two years ago
5. Audrey [eighteen months ago [ (1) [it'll be
6. Ellen [yes at [least
7. Audrey two years this is John's [(1) second Christmas=
8. Ellen [yes =yes
9. Audrey and::der () the service was at the crematorium (1) and I went in

Audrey and Ellen's current relationship is oriented to through Ellen's support of Audrey's account. Ellen's knowledge of the people involved in the account is evident as Audrey and Ellen jointly establish when "Betty's funeral" took place. The approximate year of the funeral is established by calculating that this will be "John's (1) second Christmas" (Lines 7-9). John's identity is ambiguous, but 'second Christmas' and the construction of 'Betty's' funeral hearably connect them together – the implication is that this will be John's second Christmas without Betty. Sacks' consistency rule (1974b) suggests that, if one person is heard as belonging to a particular MCD then any person linked to them in the talk – as here with Betty and John – will be heard as belonging to the same MCD. So in this instance they may have been, for example, husband and wife or mother and son.

Extract 6

9. Audrey and::der () the service was at the crematorium (1) and I went in
10. and it was (.) all music (.) not hymns and things because she
11. was::ser [(.).she loved her music ] [I can't remember I've got=
12. [she loved all m- oh she] [(
13. Ellen =the] [(.) [funeral sheet at home somewhere]
14. Audrey = [ )] [Betty liked mu:] [ oh that's what I want yeah ]
15. Ellen [yes I] know I think you gave [me one
16. Audrey [ erm ] [I can't remember it was the Beach
17. Jane [ right
18. [Boys singing something it's [(.).while the coffin was going through
19. Audrey [==some think about the journey (.) coffin went through the curtains
20. came round (.) and I just glanced up (.) and she came floating out
21. of the top of it (2) the hair (.) grey immaculately [(.) done (.) all=
At times the account in Extracts 5-7 rests solely with Audrey as she talks about a very personal experience. Ellen and Jane mark her account with continuers such as ‘yes’ and ‘right’ (Lines 8 and 18). At other times Ellen supplements and echoes features that Audrey makes relevant about Betty as a person, demonstrating her knowledge of Betty and showing support for what Audrey is saying (Lines 12-14 and Lines 22-24). Ellen’s agreement both confirms Audrey’s identity as a competent speaker and helps authenticate her account. At Line 10 Audrey draws attention to one aspect of the funeral that she particularly remembers – it did not consist of ‘hymns and things’ but was ‘all music’. Ellen overlaps with an incomplete remark occurring at almost the same time as Audrey’s comment (Line 11). It is picked up and echoed almost exactly by Audrey who then continues – Ellen’s interruption does not hinder her account. A further instance where Ellen supports Audrey is hearable in her repetition of the descriptor ‘immaculate’ (Line 24). The term is introduced by Audrey to indicate how the apparition of Betty looked to her and is then taken up by Ellen whose use of the extreme case formulation ‘always’ indicates and upgrades her agreement with Audrey’s assessment.

Audrey’s account is of an experience at which neither Ellen nor Jane was present so neither can contradict her account by recounting their own experience of the same event. Audrey acknowledges this possible contradiction with her explication of the event as ‘amazing’. Ellen supports Audrey’s account by adding in comments of Betty in life that confirm Audrey’s description of her manifestation at the funeral. The opportunity to construct contradiction was provided by Audrey’s description of the incident as ‘amazing’ but rather than commenting on this feature Ellen orientes instead to Audrey’s description of the apparition of Betty. She makes relevant features that she remembers about Betty – her
love of music and her appearance – and mirrors Audrey’s construction of her account by picking out particular words. Echoing Audrey’s description of Betty orients to the relational closeness between Ellen and Audrey and provides support for an account that could possibly have been questioned for its ‘amazing’ quality.

Extract 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>(2) thing I've ever had (1) I went to Betty's funeral (1) last year (1) o::oh dear=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>=two years [ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>(eighteen months ago [ (1) it'll be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>(yes at [least</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>two years this is John's [(1) second Christmas=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>[she loved all m- oh she] [(</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>=the] [ (. ) ] [funeral sheet at home somewhere]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>= ) [Betty liked mu-] [ oh that's what I want yeah ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td></td>
<td>[yes I] know I think you gave [me one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>somethink about the journey (. ) coffin went through the curtains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>came round (. ) and I just glanced up (. ) and she came floating out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>of the top of it (2) the hair (. ) grey immaculately [(.) done (. ) all=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>[yeah mm she=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>=her makeup on (. ) and she was just going like that she was=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>=was always immaculate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The orientation to the visual aspects of Betty’s appearance rather than to the ‘amazing’ nature of the incident constructs a remembered familiarity between Audrey, Ellen and Betty. Their current and their past relationships are made relevant in the account. Their remembered relationship is evident at different points and oriented to in different ways in the conversation. The first instance comes at Lines 2-7 with Ellen’s correction of Audrey’s guess at how long ago the funeral took place. Finally settling on a time span the conversation then turns to the detail of the funeral – where it took place, what it was like and so on. This fine detail is important to the account that follows because, in establishing the minutiae of the funeral such as the date, the ‘amazing’ incident that follows is grounded in a more day-to-day reality that helps construct the account as authentic.
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Ellen’s next explicit orientation to the shared familiarity between the women is at Lines 12-15. Audrey moves on to describe the music, which both she and Ellen construct as something Betty ‘loved’. Here Audrey mentions that she has the funeral details somewhere and Ellen remembers that though she was not present at the funeral she knew Betty and wanted a copy which Audrey brought for her. Audrey’s account of Betty ‘floating’ out of the coffin again prompts a comment from Ellen that explicates her familiarity with Betty (Line 24). The extreme case formulation ‘always’ coupled with the knowledge that she ‘loved’ all music implies a certain amount of regularity in Ellen’s contact with Betty that would not necessarily be the case with someone who she was not so familiar with.

The closeness of Audrey and Ellen’s current relationship is constructed throughout the remembered account in Ellen’s support of Audrey. However, it is also oriented to as a relationship that has been close for some time evident in the familiarity constructed in the references to Betty. This orientation to long-term relationships between women in the network is continued in the next extract.

7.4 Remembering how things might have been

In Extracts 8-10 Helen and Marie jointly construct an account of a past occasion where they planned some work together. Prior to Extract 8 Jane has begun to draw the conversation to a close. Her attempt is followed by some joking between Helen and Marie about doing something more for her research and their suggestions become increasingly outrageous. The conversation changes pace with Marie’s utterance at Line 1.

Extract 8

1. Marie like Patrick once so- we were going to work in Seaholme  
2. weren’t we  
3. Helen h:::h do you remember that Marie didn’t we get excited oh  
4. he’d got all this work Jane (.) a::al:: this work the council’d got in  
5. Seaholme (.) Patrick said would we be prepared to do it well Marie  
6. and I we (.) we nearly got the hotel booked (laugh)
Marie’s use of the term ‘like’ marks a move from the jokingly outrageous comments preceding the extract, to a real-life instance that she has been reminded of (Line 1). ‘Like’ links to the previous talk and also indicates a topic change. The incident Marie orients to is remembered in terms of how she and Helen got carried away with their plans similarly once before. The incident is located in the past and is also oriented to as something that actually failed to happen – they ‘were going’ to do some work (Line 1) – a construction that implies that they didn’t. Marie marks the incident as a joint enterprise with her use of the inclusive pronoun ‘we’ and by inviting Helen to join in the account (Line 2). This makes hearable two features of their relationship: the long term relationship between them is invoked through Marie’s choice of topic (it is something they were both involved in) and the current relationship is hearable in Marie’s invitation for Helen to contribute.

Marie begins her account by introducing ‘Patrick’ (Line 1). Here she evidences Sacks’ economy rule (1974b) – apart from Patrick’s name she adds no further identification of who he might be. Helen however, does add information: she identifies him as someone for whom they both worked at some point in the past and further explicates his role as someone linked to ‘the council’ (Line 4). Although Marie introduces ‘Patrick’ and links him to some work that they were asked to do Helen then takes up the account (Line 3). This is slightly unusual in the data corpus – generally the person who introduces an account is the main raconteur of the situation. However, the example that Marie introduces is one in which both were involved so it is possible for either to give an informed account.

Extract 9

3. Helen: h:::h do you remember that Marie didn’t we get excited oh he’d got all this work Jane (. ) a::al::ll this work the council’d got in Seaholme (. ) Patrick said would we be prepared to do it well Marie and I we (. ) we nearly got the hotel booked (laugh) Jane really [(1) so what happened (1) as usual with Patrick’s [work it= Marie [well it was Helen [as usual] Jane =fell through

159
Marie ends her introduction of the account with the tag ‘weren’t we’ (Line 1). That ‘we’ refers to at least the two of them is confirmed when Helen singles out Marie at Line 3. Helen’s next comment is oriented to Jane and tells her that Patrick asked if ‘Marie and I’ would be prepared to do it (Lines 5-6). Jane’s exclusion is further made hearable by her own question at Line 7 where she cites her lack of knowledge of this account. Marie and Helen’s joint account continues with further references to ‘we’ and also introduces ‘they’ as an opposite category. However, in contrast to Extracts 1-4 in this chapter, where ‘they’ was used as an impersonal category orienting to grandparents in general, here ‘they’ is used to categorise a specific group – the council – of which Patrick is part (Line 11).

Though Jane is not part of the group oriented to in Marie and Helen’s use of ‘we’ she nevertheless makes relevant her familiarity with features of their situation by orienting to her knowledge of ‘Patrick’s work’ (Line 7). Though not a part of this particular account Jane has in depth knowledge of Marie and Helen’s work for Patrick and some of its problematic features. Jane’s ‘as usual’ (Line 7) implies that this is a regular occurrence with Patrick’s work – an implication that is confirmed by Helen’s repetition (Line 9). These brief utterances make the ongoing relationship between Helen, Marie and Jane relevant to the progression of the conversation. Their shared knowledge of these particular work circumstances and people is oriented to by their minimal references to features such as the council and the unreliability of the work.

At Line 3 Helen assesses her own and Marie’s reaction to the prospect of the work Patrick was offering in emotional terms (Edwards, 1997): ‘didn’t we get excited’. This excitement is further implicated in the rest of this utterance through Helen’s upgraded repetition at Line 4 and her comment that they had almost booked a hotel (Line 6). This is followed by a laugh that explicitly assesses their excited reaction as one that was troubled
in some way. Jefferson (1984a: 346) illustrates how in talk about trouble "the troubles-teller produces an utterance and then laughs, and the troubles-recipient does not laugh, but produces a recognizably serious response." She argues that one of the reasons for this may be that in recognisable troubles-talk the recipient is being asked to take the trouble seriously and to demonstrate "troubles-receptiveness" (1984a: 351). In this case Helen laughs but rather than laughing too Jane (the troubles-recipient) marks her troubles-receptiveness with 'really' followed by a one second pause. The pause marks a possible turn transition point where Helen is given the opportunity to continue her account. However, she fails to do this so instead Jane asks a question that explicitly requests Helen’s continuance (Line 7).

Extract 10

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>they’d got their did they did he say they’d got people locally</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>[yes::s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>(1) and crossed us off the list=</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>(=and crossed us off (.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>=and crossed us off (.) Marie</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>(laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>and I w- (.) we were there (.) we’d started=</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>(laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>=we were in a caravan</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>(laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>[weren’t we</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>(laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>[oh we were doing all sorts of things (wasn’t we</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>(laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>[(laugh)</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>(laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>w- we’d got ourselves sorted (.)</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>painting Seaholme red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>(laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>yes::s (1) and then he said er (.) sorry but er</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>(laugh)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jane’s request for further information prompts an account in which Helen and Marie orient to their close personal relationship. They continue by separating themselves from ‘they’ and ‘he’ (i.e. the council and Patrick) and jointly construct their account. Helen follows with two self-repairs: she asks Marie first whether it was the council and then whether it was Patrick who said that they were going to use local people. These repairs and the request for Marie to comment at this point are hearable as an aim to give as accurate an account as is possible. She does not rely on her own remembering of the sequence of events but seeks confirmation from Marie who was also present. This orientation to a joint
construction also manages any discrepancies that may arise. By explicitly inviting Marie’s contribution Helen avoids any possible disagreement with her account.

The understanding between the two women hearable through their joint collaboration orients to the close familiarity that they have with one another. It continues through the rest of the extract. After Helen’s question at Line 11 Marie confirms what she remembers and adds further information (Line 13). Latching her next comment to Marie’s ending Helen almost completely repeats what Marie has just said (Line 14). At this point their joint account moves from a straightforward account of what happened at the time to one in which the ‘nearly’ element indicated in Line 6 takes over. Helen and Marie both remember how they got carried away with their plans, constructing the utterances that follow in Lines 15-20 as if the events actually happened. So they say: ‘we were there (. ) we’d started’ (Line 15); ‘we were in a caravan’ (Line 16); ‘we were doing all sorts of things’ (Line 18); ‘we’d got ourselves sorted’ (Line 20).

Even though in reality the work had fallen through they construct it as an event that actually took place and it is only by contextualising these statements within the whole extract that they become hearable as plans they fantasised about at the time. The return to reality is marked in Helen’s final utterance – she pauses for a second and then returns to what Patrick said (Line 22). Rather than being an account of an actual remembered event, this is instead a jointly constructed account in which Helen and Marie remember how they got carried away with their plans and how, in the end, nothing came of it.

7.5 Remembering the past in the present

Extracts 11-13 focus on talk about a photograph taken at a local dance hall. Helen and Marie remember going there and talk about how they might possibly have been there at the same time.
Chapter 7: Constructing Relationships through Remembering

Photograph 2 (belonging to Helen)

Shows Helen and a group of male and female friends at the local dance hall. The men are dressed in suits and are standing behind the women sitting smiling in their dance dresses.

Extract 11

1. Marie y’see you’ve wrote Co-op dance hall nineteen sixty (. ) well I
2. Marie went there every Friday (. ) but don’t forget by nineteen sixty
3. Marie I was married [ and had a couple of children ]
4. Helen [you were married you see Marie] (. ) you were going
5. Helen in the earlier years [ wasn’t you to ] to Little Markle
6. Marie [yes the fifties yeah]
7. Helen yeah

Extract 11 begins with Marie referring to Helen’s photograph, indexed by a date written on the back (Line 1). Marie orients to this date drawing attention to the fact that although, coincidentally, she had been going to the same dance hall ‘every Friday’ (Line 2) by this time she had a family (Line 3). The unspoken implication in her orientation to being married is that by the time the photograph was taken she was no longer going there. This highlights a fundamental difference between being married and being single and at Line 4 Helen demonstrates her understanding and acceptance of these contrasting identities by echoing what Marie has said. They both orient to the differing rights and obligations (REF) linked to married women’s and single women’s identities, one of which is to not attend dance halls once you are married. As with previous examples, support is offered to one woman’s account by the other by echoing what has been said – either with direct repetition or by picking out specific words (such as at Line 3). Helen and Marie’s familiarity with one another is demonstrated through their remembered accounting of attending the same dance hall, albeit at different times, and their joint understanding that attendance would stop once they were married.
Chapter 7: Constructing Relationships through Remembering

Extract 12

4. Helen [you were married you see Marie] (. ) you were going
5. Marie in the earlier years [ wasn't you to ] to Little Markle
4. Helen [yes the fifties yeah]
6. Marie so we wouldn't've [seen
7. Helen [but (. ) we were often at the Co-op [dance hall
8. Marie [we went
9. Helen every Friday night without fail=
10. Marie =did you=
11. Helen =every Friday [night
12. Marie [I bet sometime we
13. Marie [crossed paths
14. Marie mm (. ) yeah
15. Jane probably you did

The similarity of their dance hall experience is constructed through Helen and Marie remembering the regular nature of their visits. The photograph that Helen has presented does not portray a one-off event but instead shows a familiar place that Helen and Marie both knew well and attended frequently with other people – Helen visited ‘often’ (Line 7) and Marie went ‘every Friday’ (Lines 2, 9 and 11). Though they have already acknowledged that it is unlikely that they were both there at the same time – Marie was going in earlier years than Helen – discovering that they both regularly attended the same dance hall forms a connection between them and leads Helen to suggest that there is a possibility that they might have ‘crossed paths’ at some time (Line 13).

Extract 13

12. Helen [I bet sometime we
13. Helen crossed paths
14. Marie mm (. ) yeah
15. Jane probably you did
16. Helen didn't you can't you remember when we touched dresses Marie
17. Jane and I said 'I'll see you on the ay seventeen
18. Jane [[laugh]
19. Helen [[laugh]
20. Marie [[laugh]

To emphasise this possibility she adds detail of a fantasy meeting that draws attention to two features – one located in the past and one in the present. The first is a reference to the photograph where the dresses that the women are pictured wearing have very full skirts
with lots of petticoats – in the confines of the dance hall it would be impossible not to have ‘touched dresses’ (Line 16). The second connects Helen and Marie’s past identities – as single women visiting the dance hall – to their present identities by orienting to their working relationship. Elsewhere in the conversation the women talk about their work doing traffic counts for the council (also made relevant in Extracts 8-10) and here this work is indexed by Helen’s reference to the ‘ay seventeen’ (Line 17).

Using constructed dialogue Helen links her own and Marie’s past lives – when they didn’t know each other but may have crossed paths – to their present lives in which they are good friends. Her question at Line 16 invites Marie to go along with the fantasy that their past and present lives may be much more closely linked than either of them realised. The laughter that follows from all three women orients to the humour of Helen’s construction of this link.

7.6 Chapter Summary
In this chapter I have explored some of the features of remembering that appear in the conversations, located in the context of work by both conversation analysts and discursive psychologists. There are several ways in which the women orient to relationships in the conversations. These include both explicit and implicit orientations that make relevant relationships both in the past and in the present.

One of the features shown in the extracts analysed here is the very personal nature of remembering. It may be of real-life situations. Stella’s construction of the similarities between her grandson’s relationship with her and her own with her grandparents when she was young, and Marie and Helen’s construction of their visits to the dance hall when they were young, are both instances of real-life remembered occurrences. Alternatively the occasions remembered may be of something fantastical. Audrey constructs an account of an ‘amazing’ experience that is grounded in reality both by her own account and through
Chapter 7: Constructing Relationships through Remembering

the supporting statements from Ellen. This reality is constructed through the remembered detail of the occasion such as how long ago the funeral took place, what the music was and even how the apparition that appeared connected to Betty’s real-life appearance. Similarly in the account co-constructed by Helen and Marie of a situation that ‘might have been’ their joint fantasy is also grounded in reality. So they refer to Patrick’s unreliability in telling of how they were carried away in the moment.

These brief extracts also show the varied nature of the remembered occasions that occurred in the talk and how they were constructed. The account constructed by Stella, taken from a one-to-one conversation, was solely her own. Audrey’s account of the incident in the church was one at which only she was present and therefore Ellen and Jane could not contribute to or contradict. However, here the relationship between Audrey and Ellen was made relevant through Ellen’s support of Audrey. Though she was not present she could add comments that confirmed Audrey’s account. The two extracts featuring Helen and Marie both oriented to different features of their relationship. In Extract 3 the account was jointly constructed between them with Marie’s collaboration explicitly sought by Helen. In Extract 4, though the experience remembered was similar for them both they had both encountered it at different times. Helen however, constructed a connection between their past lives by orienting them to their present relationship bringing their past experience into the present.

In this chapter, then, I have drawn attention to the varied ways in which past and present relational identities can be drawn upon and made relevant to the current topic of talk. Each of the extracts shows a slightly different feature of remembering in conversation and features ways in which past experiences can be drawn upon to inform current understanding of a situation. The next chapter focuses on one specific way in which these remembering appear in conversation.
Chapter 8 Conversational Stories

8.1 Introduction

Ethnomethodological researchers have focused on conversational stories for many years (M. H. Goodwin, 1990; Mandelbaum, 1987; Sacks, 1974b). The mechanics of a story in ethnomethodological terms is such that the story is proposed by the teller with the audience signalling – or not – their acceptance of it by their response. The story continues with active receipt from the audience using continuers such as ‘yes’, ‘mm’ and so on. Sacks first drew attention to the occurrence of second stories in talk (Sacks, 1974b; 1992b: 764-772). He suggested that first stories often ‘provoke’ stories from listeners and that these second stories resonate in some way with the first. They are generally told in order to perform a specific conversational action such as to do agreement or to do argumentation, for instance. A key feature of their construction is their connection to the preceding story by the selection of specific characters, actions and so on. This interest in second and subsequent stories has been extended from these initial observations to encompass a range of interests (Arminen, 2003; Ryave, 1978).
In this chapter I focus on how co-conversationalists tell stories. I concentrate on how these demonstrate an understanding of what has preceded them in the conversation. Schegloff (1997a) argues that in demonstrating our understanding of stories, we analyse what we’ve been told and then construct and tell of comparable experiences ourselves. The action that a second story performs depends on many features such as the speakers involved, the context in which it is being told and so on. The action is not hearable as being ‘searched for’ but is constructed in the conversational sequence as a natural progression of the talk.

In my data Jane’s contribution is generally as second-story teller rather than as initiator of the sequence. This is not unexpected when the conversational context is accounted for: as the researcher Jane’s aim is to elicit talk from her participants. One exception occurs in the data and I include this as a deviant case. The stories also cover a wide range of topics. In my previous empirical chapters I have presented the extracts so as to represent the conversational progression. In this chapter however, I present the two stories together as they unfold, rather than discussing the first and then the second. The line numbers in each extract correspond to the position of the utterances in the conversation.

8.2 Connecting second stories and categorising relationships
The talk in Extracts 1-7 is taken from the individual conversation between Helen and Jane in the first fieldwork stage. Immediately prior to this extract the conversation had centred on a Spanish holiday that Helen had recently had and she had pointed out a photograph of the holiday on top of her piano. Next to this was a photograph of Helen with her brother, someone who had not been evident in the conversation and at this point Jane changes the topic with a question about him.
Chapter 8: Conversational Stories

Photograph 1 (belonging to Helen)

Helen is pictured with another woman and a man standing looking at the camera. It is positioned among some others on the top of her piano.

Extract 1

1. Jane so do you keep in touch with your brother then Helen [does he]
2. Helen [oh yes]
3. Jane live {nearby }
4. Helen [he lives] at Burton-on-Witham (.) [and er Barry and I well ]
5. Jane [oh right that’s not too far]
6. Helen from here either
7. Helen Barry (.) erm (.) oh because I think you know the story [ that =

The new topic begins with Jane’s question at Line 1 and Helen’s reply at Lines 2. Helen continues with some details of where her brother ‘Barry’ lives and Jane comments that they are quite close geographically. This exchange forms the introduction to Helen’s story preface (Line 7) – the most routine method used to gain permission for a conversational turn that will take more than one utterance. In order to tell a story a participant needs to establish that they will legitimately take the conversational floor for some time. The preface can either be accepted or declined by the recipient and leads to the telling (or not) of the story (Sacks, 1992a: 222-228). Jane’s topic change at Line 1 provides the opportunity for Helen to recount further details of her own and her brother’s ‘story’ of which, she indicates, Jane may have some prior knowledge.

Extract 2

7. Helen Barry (.) erm (.) oh because I think you know the story [ that =
8. Jane [cos he’s =
9. Helen = Barry and I were ] adopted=

Extract 3

35. Jane it’s funny you know because Millicent (.) y’know Millicent dad’s sister=
36. Helen =yeah
Sacks (1992b: 19) says that when a second story appears it picks up points in the first.

Extracts 2 and 3 show two very similar story prefaces. In Extract 2 Helen marks the beginning of her account by instructing Jane to hear whatever comes after in a specific way – that is as a ‘story’ (Line 7). This is unusual in the data corpus where stories are not generally explicitly marked as such. Helen then follows with a gloss of her story (Line 9).

In Extract 3 Jane’s utterance at Line 35 does two things: it echoes Helen’s beginning by including the same discourse marker ‘because’ and also marks a change in the rhythm of the conversation. To this point Helen’s utterances have been interspersed with questions and continuers from Jane. Here she does neither but instead marks her understanding of Helen’s story by beginning one of her own. She continues with ‘Millicent...was adopted’ (Lines 35-38). Though additional clauses are added the general statement is the same as Helen’s at Line 9.

Sacks (1992a: 3-16) argues that second stories perform different actions in conversation – they might be constructed as agreement for example or as argument. Here, though Jane’s preface is oriented to Helen’s in its construction, it sets up a contrast (Line 35). Though there may be similarities in Jane’s story, there is also something notable – it is not just a repetition of the one told by Helen.

The two utterances at Lines 7-9 and Lines 35-38 are hearably similar in their hesitant nature, though the hesitation performs different functions in each one. As Schegloff (1997) highlights, each story is tailored to fit the emerging situation. Helen’s account of her personal experience of adoption is unfolded in the context of a research conversation about relationships – a context that will influence what she says in this telling. Jane however, relates something that happened to someone else and so she needs to locate her characters in a context recognisable to Helen. With the short pause after
'Millicent (.)' and the addition of 'y'know Millicent dad's sister' (Lines 35-36) Millicent is located in a context clearly recognisable for Helen, acknowledged by her 'yeah' (Line 37) immediately following 'sister'.

The categorisation 'dad's sister' performs other functions as well as locating Millicent in a recognised context. Jane gives herself authenticity claiming her right to tell her story by citing a personal link to Millicent – personal authenticity may stave off any challenge about being intrusive. As a close relative of Millicent, Jane’s use of the family link suggested by this categorisation may indicate that the story is one she knows well. The category locates Millicent, as another older woman, in the same generational context as Helen – Jane could have said 'my aunt' but categorising her as 'dad’s sister' links her more closely to Helen. Similarly, it hearably links both Millicent’s and Helen’s identities as part of a particular generation in their families. Finally, Jane’s inclusion of Millicent’s brother in her account echoes Helen’s telling of the story of herself and her brother.

A further link between the stories, illustrated by the next two extracts, involves the temporal location of discussions of the adoptions.

Extract 4

15. Helen =no (. ) I said to Barry one day (.) quite a while ago we were
16. having a drink together and I said (1) 'Barry (.) do you know who
17. we are' so he said (. ) 'no' (2) I said 'oh::h' I said (.) 'any desire to
18. know' he said (.) 'not really'=

Extract 5

49. Jane =but they also had
50. 51. a brother (.) and I was talking to Millicent a little while ago about it
52. (. ) cos her mum died giving child (.) err in childbirth [giving birth=
53. 54. Helen = to ] their brother (.) or just afterwards=
55. 56. Jane =really] =oh [dear
57. Helen =errrm (.) and he
58. 59. Jane was adopted and (.) neither of them have any idea who he (.) who
60. or where he is

At Line 15 Helen recounts a conversation with Barry and at Line 50 Jane echoes this by orienting to a similar conversational occasion between herself and Millicent. Using 'quite
a while ago' and 'a little while ago' locates the conversations temporally and indicates that discussion around the topic of adoption is ongoing. Helen locates her discussion to a specific time - 'one day' - when she and her brother talked about 'who we are' and whether he had 'any desire' to know (Lines 15-18). Their conversation is further specified by recounting it using constructed dialogue (Tannen, 1989). In contrast Jane does not mention a particular conversation between her and Millicent but only says that they were talking 'about it'.

Throughout her story Jane uses specific devices which, though they work towards constructing contrast, also guard against her account being hearable as argumentative – the balance here between specificity and lack of detail is important in maintaining this defence. While Helen recounts a specific conversation, taking part on a particular day, even locating it to a distinct occasion (Lines 15-16) Jane avoids such details.

Extract 6

| Helen       | (. ) they didn't in those days Jane
| Jane        | no
| Helen       | I mean they come out with it now before y- they've stopped rocking you in the [cradle
| Jane        | [mm
| Helen       | it's different (. ) but then no you didn't know
| Jane        | it's funny you know because Millicent (. ) y'know Millicent dad's sister= =yeah
| Helen       | erm (. ) because she always knew she was adopted (. ) but sh- (. ) I think that was partly because they wanted to adopt her sister as well [and

Sacks (1992a: 764-772) argues that conversational markers are made that indicate the end of a story, such as repeating words or ideas from the beginning of the story or summarising what has been said. The concept of knowing – made relevant in this set of extracts as a significant element of both past and present relationships – is the element oriented to at the end of Helen’s story. She indicates her story’s ending by returning to her own lack of knowledge about her adoption (Line 34), having contrasted it with cases of those people


‘now’ who know about it from an early age (Lines 31-32). Jane also orients to this concept of knowing to introduce the contrast between the two stories. This contrast is encapsulated within the two phrases: ‘didn’t know’ (Line 34) and ‘always knew’ (Line 38).

Different pronoun use also contributes to the ongoing construction of contrast between the two stories. Even though her story is personal Helen’s talk is impersonal – she uses the pronoun ‘you’ to talk about a general category of people of which she was a member. The contrast occurs with Jane’s personal pronoun use – she constructs ‘Millicent’ as a contrast to Helen’s general group ‘you’, who didn’t know of their adoption. By introducing a specific instance she presents an exception to Helen’s general rule. Jane’s initial wording (Line 35) sets up this concept of an exception – of something strange or unusual, which she follows with her illustration.

A further contrast occurs here – this time in Helen’s own story. Again time is highlighted, not between the stories as with Extracts 4 and 5, but between a group of people who exist ‘now’ and know about their adoption and another group who existed ‘then’ didn’t know. Helen includes herself within this second, generalised group, thus constructing her experience as the norm for ‘those days’ (Line 29).

**8.2.2 Membership Categories**

A further site of connection between these two stories is through the membership categories used. Apart from the I’s, you’s, he’s and she’s used by Helen and Jane in relation to both the different characters and each other, the most usual terms of reference are forenames and kinship categorisations. Sacks (1992b: 291-331) introduces the idea of the ‘poetics’ of everyday talk – not only through the use of rhyming or semantically similar words but also by what he terms “produced similarities”. These include such things as the co-selection of words or phrases, which may be “history sensitive for a conversation”
In a similar way the characters in a sequence of stories will hearably connect the stories together.

**Extract 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>so do you keep in touch with your brother then Helen [does he]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>=mum and dad you know [that was (. ) the way it went and (. ) lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>it's funny you know because Millicent (. ) y'know Millicent dad's sister=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>think that was partly because they wanted to adopt her sister as well [and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>[oh right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>and (. ) the grandmother who was a bit of an old battleaxe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>apparently wouldn't let them (. ) wouldn't let grandma and granddad adopt Geraldine=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>a brother (. ) and I was talking to Millicent a little while ago about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>(. ) cos her mum died giving child (. ) err in childbirth [giving birth=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>[ did she =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>= to ] their brother (. ) or just afterwards=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract 7 demonstrates the number of categories included in these two stories that can be located within the MCD ‘family’. For example: ‘your brother’ (Line 1); ‘mum and dad’ (Line 24); ‘dad’s sister’ (Lines 35-36); ‘her sister’ (Line 39); ‘the grandmother’ (Line 42); ‘grandma and granddad’ (Lines 43-44); ‘a brother’ (Line 50); ‘her mum’ (Line 51); ‘their brother’ (Line 53). Sacks’ concept of poetics is relevant here as the categorisations in each of the stories can be matched. Jane’s initial question orients to the first of the ‘family’ categorisations and provides an occasion for Helen to tell her adoption story. After talking about herself and her brother Helen continues to orient to family categorisations by introducing the affectionate, informal terms ‘mum and dad’ (Line 24). Similarly, in Jane’s story she introduces these same categories of brother and sister (Lines 35-36), following with the inclusion of ‘grandma and granddad’ (Lines 43-44) – as Millicent’s adoptive parents they are the equivalent to Helen’s parents. So, not only are the familial categories
matched but Jane also echoes the generational connections. This similarity supports Sacks’ discussion of the ways in which characters in a second story tend to be chosen to reflect those who appear in a first – here Jane co-selects categories to mirror those used by Helen.

One character however, stands out in the two stories as different: with the exception of ‘the grandmother’ (Line 42) Jane echoes the informal terms adopted by Helen, all signifying affection. A relational contrast is hearable with this exception, constructed through the adoption of a less affectionate tone than is used for the other characters and through the link to Millicent with the objectifying term ‘the’ (Line 42). This further helps construct a distance not apparent in any of the other relationships talked about here. The impersonal tone is continued with the negative description using an aggressive, warlike metaphor. Metaphorical descriptions not only give literal information but also suggest something more (Potter, 1996b). By linking the suffix ‘battleaxe’ to the family categorisation ‘grandmother’ Jane instructs Helen to hear the category negatively rather than in the affectionate manner of the other characters.

Two features of second story telling have been the focus of my discussion of this extract – how a second story is constructed to present a ‘contrasting but connected’ case and how orientation to membership categories in particular contributes to its achievement. Both of these features orient to the construction of the relationship between the two women. Helen tells a personal story of her own adoption and Jane demonstrates her understanding of Helen’s account by closely orienting her own second story to particular features of the first. My next example of second story construction, though focusing on a very different set of circumstances, also displays this construction of a contrastive structure.
8.3 Constructing a contrastive structure

Extracts 8-13 are taken from a stretch of talk prompted by a photograph belonging to Rebecca. A discussion of holiday experiences followed and Kate, who had recently been to stay with her son, continues the conversation with an account of her visit to South America.

**Photograph 2 (belonging to Rebecca)**

Rebecca and a friend stand arm-in-arm outside a foreign hotel. They are wearing sundresses and sunhats and are smiling at the camera.

Presenting photographs often led to conversational topics not directly connected to the one being viewed but that were prompted either by something seen in the picture or by something said in connection to it. Kate’s experience in these extracts is one such occasion.

### 8.3.1 Constructing similarity and difference

In this account Rebecca does two things with her story: she aligns it to Kate’s by telling of a similar experience and she creates a contrastive structure by drawing attention to context and circumstances.

**Extract 8**

| 1. | Kate | the only thing we saw there was a night adder and if some man hadn't shouted at me h: :::::::::huh I was as near to that night adder as I am to [this (. ) and he= |
| 2. |      | [really oh no |
| 3. |      | =and he said mind that at night adders and Jack says you've got twenty minutes if it bites you |
| 4. | Jane | |
| 5. | Kate | |
| 6. |      | |

**Extract 9**

| 28. | Kate | the man says to me ‘where’s it gone to’ I said well it went in that grass there [‘oh well keep on going’ he says you’re [all right= |
| 29. |      | [mm |
| 30. | Rebecca | [laugh |
| 31. | Kate | =(laugh) |
| 32. | (2) | |
Chapter 8: Conversational Stories

33. Rebecca last time I saw a snake was in Fenwick
34. Kate was it
35. Jane (laugh)
36. Rebecca yes (laugh) I think it was probably a grass snake or [some= well it=
37. Kate or a or a (.) erm an adder type thing
38. Rebecca = thing I didn't or a (.) erm an adder type thing
39. Kate = wouldn't be a night adder]

Each of the story prefaces in Extracts 8 and 9 explicitly orients to the focal 'character' of the story – in Kate's 'a night adder' (Line 1) and in Rebecca's 'a snake' (Line 33). The hearer is oriented to the contrast between the stories at these earliest points in that Kate actually names the type of snake immediately but the one encountered by Rebecca at first goes unnamed. This naming and non-naming makes relevant the overall contrast of the stories – in Kate's the dangerous nature of the snake and in Rebecca's the unusual circumstances of her seeing one. When Rebecca does tentatively name the snake (Line 38) Kate overlaps saying it would not be the same as the one she saw (Lines 37-39). This again highlights the contrasting nature of their stories – a night adder might not be remarkable in Kate's account located in South America but would be extremely unlikely in 'Fenwick', England.

This early contrast is continued throughout the two stories for example in where and when the snakes were seen.

Extract 10

21. Kate oh I've seen several snakes I just stand there and I saw a (. ) erm
22. last time we were there I saw a night adder went across the road
23. in front of me at er (2) Cabot Cove or somewhere I can't
24. remember what it wa- I don't know what to do I just stand still and
25. say 'look at that' or [something like that
26. Jane [mm
27. Rebecca [laugh) help
28. Kate the man says to me 'where's it gone to' I said well it went in that
29. grass there ['oh well keep on going' he says you're [all right=

Extract 11

43. Rebecca well I was walking to the hospital to visit me mother so it must've
38. been last year (. ) and erm
39. Kate really
40. Rebecca coming up some steps and I thought a::ah::h (. ) a snake [(laugh)
41. Jane [(laugh)
Chapter 8: Conversational Stories

42.  Rebecca  [not what you] expect [to s- to see

Kate’s encounter with a snake was in the South American countryside when it crossed the road in front of her and into some nearby grass (Line 28). Given a cultural understanding of snakes as creatures that avoid human contact and live in the wild this context is not constructed as unusual. Kate orients to this ‘ordinary’ behaviour of snakes in her account of ‘the man’ (Line 28) who accepts her description of where the snake has gone with nothing more than telling her ‘you’re all right’ and to ‘keep on going’ – he treats it as an unremarkable event (Line 29).

Rebecca’s story of coming across a snake at ‘Fenwick’ is marked as being more unusual, both implicitly through emphasising what she thought and explicitly in mentioning its unexpectedness (Lines 46-48). In contrast to Kate’s encounter that took place in the countryside Rebecca’s story denotes a very mundane context – she was on her way to visit her mother in hospital and was walking ‘up some steps’ (Line 46). The similarity is recognisable in the understated reaction that both women have to seeing a snake. Kate ‘just’ stands still (Line 24) and Rebecca’s reaction was one of thought rather than action (Line 46). Both women implicitly explain this reaction – Kate has seen ‘several snakes’ (Line 21) and Rebecca marks it as something that has happened to her before (Line 33).

As with Helen and Jane’s stories, in these extracts Rebecca’s second story demonstrates a contrastive structure with the one from Kate. Kate’s story focuses on the detail of the snake with the physical setting of the story less defined. Rebecca’s however, orients in more detail to the setting with the snake itself less clearly described. This contrastive structure is continued in further details of the stories such as the orientation to other characters in the accounts.
A similarity is constructed through the introduction of other characters in the women’s stories.

**Extract 12**

5. Kate =and he said mind that at right adders and Jack says you’ve got twenty minutes if it bites you
6. Rebecca [oh dear (laugh)]

**Extract 13**

43. Rebecca well I was walking to the hospital to visit me mother so it must’ve been last year (.) and erm

Though it is not evident here it has been explained earlier in the conversation that ‘Jack’ who appears at Line 4 is Kate’s son who lives in South America. As with my discussion of Helen and Jane’s stories, a matching orientation is made between these to the MCD ‘family’ – Kate introduces her son ‘Jack’ (Line 5) and Rebecca introduces her ‘mother’ (Line 43). The close alignment of the first and second stories is also made relevant in the ways in which these family members are introduced. Jack is oriented to as the person who gives the information about what will happen if a snake bites you and Rebecca’s mother is being visited in hospital.

In these two sets of stories it is made evident that a wide variety of topics can occur in conversations whose main reason for taking place is to talk about relationships, and can then become the focus of a second story. These indicate resonances and connections between the women, so in a sense the relationship is talked up as a set of corresponding accounts. The types of detail picked out in the two sets of extracts above are explored further in the next section where three stories appear sequentially.

**8.4 Constructing a third story**

My next example is taken from a part of the conversation between Helen and Jane where the focus is talk about marriage and divorce. Prior to this Helen has talked about her
divorce from her husband ten years ago, moving then to talk about the naivety with which she approached her marriage – a naivety she links to youth where everything in life is expected to be positive.

8.4.1 Moving from the general to the specific in an account
In my data general examples are often drawn on in the conversations to authenticate more personal experiences. In the following this contrast between the general and the specific is again oriented to.

Extract 14

1. Helen right and i- that happens in a i- in a lot of aspects of life y’know
2. Helen you it’s like you know you it’s like when a man leaves leaves his wife
3. Jane mm

Extract 15

10. Jane no cos I yeah cos when me and Gary who I’m going out with on Sunday night for a meal (laugh)
11. Helen oh I’ve heard about this meal
12. Jane when we split up y’know it was like it wasn’t a shock because we just argued all the time
13. Jane

Extract 16

16. Jane but the couple who lived next door went out to work together in the morning hand in hand came home at at night y’know always went out together you never saw one without the other yet he’d been having an affair for two years
17. Jane
18. Jane
19. Jane

In these three stories an impersonal example is followed by personal illustrations. Helen’s indexical alignment to the previous topic ‘that’ coupled with her use of ‘right’ (Line 1) aligns her story preface in Extract 16 to what has preceded her utterance in the conversation. She says ‘it’s like’ to indicate that her example that follows represents ‘that’. Though Helen does not personalise this account – it could be any ‘man’ and any ‘wife’ – it hearably orients to a previous point in the conversation where she told Jane that her husband left her.
In Extract 17 Jane’s story preface closely orients to Helen’s categorisation by introducing a personal example (Lines 10-14). She introduces ‘Gary’ categorising him as an ex (Line 13) – Gary’ is the ‘man’ and Jane is ‘the wife’. In the story preface in Extract 18 Jane introduces another personal example of Helen’s general suggestion by talking about her neighbours. The relevance of this new example is marked by ‘but’ (Line 16) indicating a difference to come. A contrastive structure is constructed in the remainder of the utterance through the use of the concept of expectedness. Though Jane and Gary’s separation was unsurprising (Line 13), the couple next door did everything together so their parting was much more unexpected (Lines 16-19).

In her two story prefaces Jane hearably supports Helen’s general statement of men leaving their wives and introduces two very different examples confirming this general assumption. Moreover, even though Helen’s personal experience is only implicated here Jane explicitly orients to her own personal experience. In doing so she orients to her similarity to Helen as another woman who has been part of a broken relationship – she understands what Helen is talking about.

Extract 17

1. Helen right and i- that happens in a i- in a lot of aspects of life y'know
2. you it’s like you know you it's like when a man leaves leaves his wife
3. 4. Jane mm
5. 6. Helen and and you think ‘oh that would (%) they’d never part never’ and they do

Extract 18

13. Jane when we split up y’know it was like it wasn’t a shock because we
14. just argued all the time
15. Helen yeah

Extract 19

18. Helen out together you never saw one without the other yet he’d been
19. having an affair for two years
20. Jane exactly
21. Helen well when had he done it (laugh)
Using the extreme case Helen orients to people who would ‘never’ part in her first story (Line 5). Jane follows with two stories as illustration – one that contrasts with Helen’s and one confirming what she says. In the first Jane orients to the unsurprising nature of her own split and gives a reason for it, echoing Helen’s use of the extreme case in her description of constant arguing (Line 14). In her second story however, Jane makes relevant all of the things that her neighbours did together – reasons why they would ‘never’ be expected to part. She follows this detailed description with a revelation of the male partner’s affair, authenticating her information with a time frame and orienting to her own disbelief (Line 19 - 21). This second couple hearably fit Helen’s construction of what might happen (Line 4).

Specific details such as the characters, the action and the conclusion link the three stories together.

Extract 20

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>you it’s like you know you it’s like when a man leaves leaves his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>and and you think ‘oh that would (. ) they’d never part never’ and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td>they do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>no cos I yeah cos when me and Gary who I’m going out with on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sunday night for a meal (laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>oh I’ve heard about this meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>when we split up y’know it was like it wasn’t a shock because we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td></td>
<td>just argued all the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>but the couple who lived next door went out to work together in t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td></td>
<td>morning hand in hand came home at at night y’know always went</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td></td>
<td>out together you never saw one without the other yet he’d been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td></td>
<td>having an affair for two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>exactly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>well when had he done it (laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>was what you know I used to think well how has he and apparently</td>
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</tbody>
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In each of the categorisations in Extract 22, though the characters are matched they appear at different levels of generalisation and specificity. Helen begins with the categorisation
man and wife (Lines 2-3) that Jane personalises at Line 8 'me and Gary'. Jane’s categorisation of 'the couple' at Line 14 is the most general. A couple could denote any combination of people and even being told that they live next door gives the hearer no extra information about who they might be. It is only in the context of the preceding information that they are heard as a married couple – in the 'rules' of subsequent stories the characters should match those that have appeared in previous ones (Sacks, 1992b: 764-772). Further information follows in the conversation to confirm this supposition but at this point the categorisation is based on what is already known.

The action constructed in each story is also hearably similar – each features a version of separation in varying levels of detail. Helen begins with a general thought about couples that 'part' and then Jane introduces her personal experience of her 'split' with Gary followed by a more detailed account of her neighbours' experience.

Extract 21

8. Helen and 'n' y- you just grow up you just realise it's not a bowl of cherries like you
9.

13. Jane when we split up y'know it was like it wasn't a shock because we just argued all the time
14.

26. Jane mm (.) and he just one morning he'd just gone

In the final excerpt in the analysis of this story I explore the conclusions of each of the stories. Helen finishes her general example with a metaphor (Line 6) prefaced by the idea that this is not something you know but a realisation you reach through life experience (Lines 8-9). Jane orients to the meaning constructed through this metaphor in both conclusions to her stories. Her own personal experience was 'just' arguing all of the time and her summary of the couple next door was that he'd 'just' gone one morning.
Through Jane’s stories she demonstrates support for Helen. Taken in the context of the research this acts as reassurance that Helen is fulfilling the requirements of the research task. Taken in a more personal context Jane orients her own personal experience of divorce to Helen’s.

8.5 Researcher’s first story: a deviant case

The one deviant case in the conversations is my final example in this chapter. This is the only time in the data that Jane tells the first story and, unlike the previous examples, the second story does not immediately follow the first but is interrupted by a stretch of talk fifty-seven utterances long. I argue however, that the similarities between the two stories nevertheless make Stella’s the second that follows Jane’s first.

8.5.1 Constructing a deviant case

In this part of the conversation Stella has been talking about her grandson who is fifteen and who has been described as being at an awkward stage in his life. Jane begins at Line 1 with a popular construction of a teenager, referring to a TV character created by Harry Enfield: ‘Kevin the teenager’. He has become synonymous with adolescents who exhibit bad behaviour and are rebellious and the common understanding of him as such is oriented to by Stella who comments that his mother describes him in the same way.

Extract 22

5. Jane tell her I had one [(laugh)]
6. Stella [I said well [(laugh)]
7. Jane [Josh’s just developed into himself again (. ) from being Kevin for about four years=]

Extract 23

13. Stella but (. ) eventually you get back what you started [with
86. Stella have (. ) I mean (2) I’ve got our Jennifer (1) back (laugh) from teens (. ) a horror
Jane’s story preface is identifiable in her orientation to the preceding talk about Stella’s grandson (Line 5). She follows with her own gloss on teenager (‘Josh’) describing his change from being a rebellious teenager as his development ‘into himself’ (Line 7).

Stella’s story preface is hearable in her reference to Jane’s comment about the transformation from rebellious teenager (Line 13). Her possible story is however, interrupted by Jane who overlaps with an example about Josh. They spend some time speaking of other things and then Stella begins to complete what she had started (Lines 86-87). She orients her words closely to her preface referring directly to her own rebellious teenager ‘Jennifer’ (Line 86). Stella makes an explicit negative assessment of Jennifer in her teens: ‘a horror’ (Line 87), adding a more serious tone to what has generally been referred to in jokey terms to this point.

Stella’s alignment to getting someone ‘back’ echoes Jane’s description of Josh as developing into himself. Both categorisations invoke someone who started out as one person, changed, and then turned back into the original. This idea is continued in their categorisations of Josh and Jennifer.

Extract 24

14. Jane [I can remember
15. Lucy saying to me one day (1) she rang me up and she said (1)
16. ‘Josh spoke a whole sentence to me today’ [(laugh) and we just=
17. Stella [(laugh)
18. Jane =cracked up laughing because he just never spoke=

Extract 25

93. Stella [well I mean (. ) we’ve got this normal person back
94. Jane oh right
95. Stella yeah (laugh)=
96. Jane =(laugh) right she’s back to being Jennifer=

Jane gives a specific example of the severity of Josh’s change (Lines 14-18). Lucy rang her up to tell her that he had spoken ‘a whole sentence’ – something that was so remarkable that they ‘just cracked up’ (Line 16). Jane invokes Sacks’ stage-of-life
categories here to orient to the particular behaviours that are appropriate for a given age – in this case teens. To say that a teenager had spoken a whole sentence carries with it some humour – they ‘cracked up’. Stella also orients to this atypical behaviour using the term ‘normal’ in relation to Jennifer (Line 93). Now, echoing Stella’s words (Lines 13 and 86), Jane once again orients to the idea that teenagers become someone else (Line 96).

A temporal feature of this progression through the teenage years is oriented to in the two stories.

Extract 26

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| 7. | Jane | [Josh’s just developed into himself ]
| 8. |   | again (.) from being Kevin for about four years=
| 9. | Stella | =four years you had |
|  10. |   | of it oh:::h (.) I mean y- you just have to go through it and it’s a |
| 11. |   | nightmare though isn’t it |

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>‘Josh spoke a whole sentence to me today’ [(laugh) and we just=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td></td>
<td>[(laugh)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>=cracked up laughing because he just never spoke=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>=no=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td></td>
<td>=for about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>two years he just didn’t [speak at all (.) he just used to grunt like=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>[(laugh)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>=Kevin (laugh) so it was really</td>
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Extract 27

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86.</td>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>have (.) I mean (2) I’ve got our Jennifer (1) back (laugh) from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87.</td>
<td></td>
<td>teens (.) a horror</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>=(laugh) right she’s back to being Jennifer=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97.</td>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>=yes:s cos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I mean (.) sh:::h that took a long time didn’t it (.) y’know (.) what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99.</td>
<td></td>
<td>with (1) I mean we get on very well now (actually</td>
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Jane explicitly invokes a time-span in relation to Josh being ‘Kevin’ for ‘four years’ (Line 8), an orientation with which Stella sympathises (Lines 9-11). Jane then orients to a specific feature of Josh’s teenage ‘nightmare’ – his not talking. This lasted for approximately ‘two years’ so was not symptomatic of the whole time he was ‘Kevin’
(Lines 18-19). Jane gives these specific time periods of ‘four’ and ‘two’ years respectively but Stella is less specific in talking about Jennifer. She says that Jennifer getting back to ‘normal’ took ‘a long time’ adding that their relationship is now much improved (Lines 98-99). By implication during Jennifer’s teens they got on less well. The temporal aspect in both cases then is linked into one particular kind of teenage behaviour.

One key feature that Sacks (1992b: 3-16) highlights as being important to identifying a second story is the selection of characters. In these two stories the main characters are explicitly oriented to by name: ‘Josh’ (Lines 7 and 16) and ‘Jennifer’ (Lines 86 and 96). They both fit the category of ‘troubled teenager’ as evidenced in the descriptions given of them by Stella and Jane (Lines 7-8 and Lines 86-87). Sacks also claims that another key feature of a second story is that its teller takes on the same role as the teller of the first. In the case of these two stories Jane orients to her closeness to ‘Josh’ – she knows that he was ‘Kevin’ for ‘about four years’ and that for two of those his only communication was a ‘grunt’ (Line 21). Their actual relationship is not explicated but this is not important to Stella’s construction. In her story Stella orients to the implied relationship by constructing an account of ‘Jennifer’ who she has got back from being ‘a horror’ (Line 87). Again their relationship is not explicitly defined though their closeness is made relevant in Stella’s use of the personal pronouns ‘I’ and ‘we’ in her account.

These implicated relationships between Jane and Josh and Stella and Jennifer orient to the closeness between Jane and Stella themselves. Throughout the two stories they have no need to add anything other than the minimum information necessary for the characters to be identified (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979). If two unfamiliar women were talking the people discussed and their relationships with the speakers would need greater clarification. The lack of this type of explanatory detail demonstrates the familiarity that Jane and Stella have with one another and the other people in their respective lives.
8.6 Chapter Summary

In this final empirical chapter I have explored the ways in which second and subsequent stories are introduced and how they perform a variety of actions. Such stories orient to what precedes them in conversation and to particular membership categorisations (both in the categorisations of characters being talked about and also those of the tellers). They are constructed so that the intended actions such as ‘doing agreement’ or ‘doing contrast’ are achieved. They also demonstrate the ‘poetics’ of talk (Sacks, 1992b: 291-331) where words and phrases are taken up and repeated in following stories. I have shown this at different points of my analysis but poetics has a particularly significant role in second story construction.

The first set of stories show how a second story is constructed so that it ‘fits’ with the telling of the first. Explicitly marking her account as a ‘story’ Helen tells of her experience of being adopted and not knowing her real parents. This account is very personal but nevertheless Jane constructs an account of Millicent’s adoption that fits closely to Helen’s story. Orienting to similar membership categorisations and linking herself into the story enables Jane to construct a comparable experience. My second set of stories oriented to two very different encounters with snakes. The stories link into both Kate’s and Rebecca’s family relationships, some of which are made relevant in their telling. This particular set of stories demonstrates that all sorts of topics can provide the opportunity for a subsequent story to appear and so demonstrate understanding of what is being said.

The third story sequence I explored is of three stories – the second and third both told by Jane as real life examples of the generalised first. In this sequence giving these specific examples to support a more general first story is slightly unusual in the data set. In previous chapters I have demonstrated how often a specific account often becomes more generalised in order to claim authenticity. Here the sequence is reversed and I argue that
this supports the idea that telling a second story supports and shows understanding of the first. By giving these two illustrative examples Jane supports Helen’s more general account. My final extract was a deviant case in the data corpus for two reasons: Jane tells the first story and the second does not follow immediately after it. Jane’s role in the conversations, as a researcher, is to facilitate and encourage each of her participants to fulfil the research task as fully as possible. For much of the time in the one-to-one conversations she either asks questions or encourages longer answers from the participants. At this point however, Jane tells a story which is taken up by Stella who eventually follows with her own. This deviant case is included here to demonstrate that it is possible in this type of interaction for the researcher to adopt a different conversational role from usual.

I have concentrated in this chapter on one specific way in which relationships are constructed through the process of talk: telling second (and subsequent) stories. Looking at the range of stories constructed in the conversations illustrates the variety of topics that can be included in a conversational task focused on relationships. This wide range of topics can still be seen when the focus is narrowed to looking only at those stories followed by another in the conversation. So in the selected extracts here the topics have ranged from stories of very personal experiences to those focusing on more unusual incidents.
Chapter 9 Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

The principal aim of this thesis is to explore the construction of personal relationships in and through talk. To achieve this I use conversational interviews and personal photographs as resources to generate talk around the topic. The participants all belong to a relational network of which I am also a member. This membership facilitated discussion around mutual, shared relationships, allowing these relationships to be explored in a variety of original ways.

I address the topic of relationship construction through three questions (stated initially on p21). However, throughout the process of the research these questions have changed and developed. They are restated in their finalised form below and before moving to address each in turn in my discussion it is important to discuss this evolving process. Conversation analysis is an iterative process – the research focus evolves as the research itself develops and knowledge is gained. Consequently, though general research aims are stated at the beginning of the research it is usual from this perspective for these to develop during the process. My first question addressed the indexical nature of talk prompted by viewing personal photographs. However, one of the features I had not initially considered,
and that became noticeable as the research progressed, was that the interview schedule was also used as an indexical marker in the conversations. Thus, it became necessary to incorporate this into the resulting question. Similarly, developments during the research fed into the final version of the second question. I originally set out to look at the participant orientations to my contrasting identities as researcher and network member. Again, other foci became incorporated here and I ended up looking not only at my own contrasting identities but also at those of my invited participants as members of both the research group and the relationship network. My final question remained very similar to the one I had begun with – my initial interest had been to explore participants' orientations to their relationships and this was something I remained interested in throughout the research process. The final versions of questions (stated below) are followed by a discussion of each of them in turn.

- How is talk indexical particularly when it is occasioned by an interview schedule or by personal photographs?
- How is identity oriented to in the talk, particularly in relation to the dual identities of being part of a research project and of being a network member?
- How are the women’s own relationships made relevant in their talk through the use of different conversational devices?

In this final chapter I discuss my analysis by focusing on these three research questions. I review the implications of my findings for personal relationships research exploring ways in which this research can be extended in the future, and I conclude with some general comments.

**9.2 Research summary**

In this thesis I explore relationships constructed in and through older women’s talk. My decision to focus on older women was influenced by my personal dissatisfaction with what I perceived to be a generally pathologised account of older people available through
both gerontological and psychological research. Personal experience informed me that
many older people did not fit this pathologised view and it struck me that offering an
enlightened view of a large number of older people in Western society left those older
people living independent lives relatively under-researched.

I was aware that one way that people’s ordinary, independent lives are managed is
through their day-to-day relationships. In order to focus on this I decided to concentrate on
members of an existing network as research participants and, to integrate myself more fully
into the research process, I chose a network of which I am a member. In Chapter 1, I
outlined this choice of network and discussed how, in writing this thesis, I have created a
distance between myself as researcher and as network member. I refer to myself as ‘I’
when writing as the researcher and ‘Jane’ when writing about my participanmt as a
network member.

Ethnomethodology has been used to great effect to look at the importance of
ordinary, mundane features of people’s lives and I found it could be readily used to
investigate older people’s everyday constructions of their relationships. In Chapters 2-4, I
explored the usefulness of both theoretical and methodological features of
ethnomethodology and the empirical chapters built on this literature to explore the
construction of relationships in the talk generated through the research. The analysis
focused on two overall features of these relationship constructions: general methodological
issues (Chapters 5 and 6) and specific conversational devices (Chapters 7 and 8). Though
there are connections between them (addressed in Section 9.3), each empirical chapter
focuses on a different feature of talk.

In Chapter 5, I addressed the first research question by focusing on how personal
photographs can be used as a resource for generating talk about personal relationships.
Previous research has explored the efficacy of using photographs to generate conversation,
focusing either on photographs that are taken as part of the research occasion or
alternatively on those supplied by the researcher. To my knowledge there is little research specifically taking people’s personal photographs as a stimulus for generating conversation about relationships and even less that employs an ethnomethodological analysis. Furthermore, there is no research on how relationships are maintained through talk about such photographs.

With regard to the photographs viewed for this research, the relationships discussed were organised in one of three different ways: they were linked to the people in the photographs themselves, to other people the women were reminded of, or to events or experiences that the women recalled. However, no matter who the talk focused on, nor how they were oriented to, all of the relationships discussed were indexed to the situational context in some way. Sometimes the link was to the research situation itself since the reason for the interaction was my request that they talk about relationships. Sometimes connections were made to specific photographs through remarks about words written on the back, or perhaps about how someone looked at a particular time. At other times the relationships that were talked about were indexed back to previous parts of the conversation, or even to prior conversations.

In Chapter 6, I focused on the second research question by exploring some of the identity issues made relevant in the talk. I discussed ways in which two types of identity were invoked: those linked to being part of the research project and those invoked by being a network member. The discussion also included a consideration of how these were oriented to by all of the women at various points in the conversational data. The familiarity between the women as network members was demonstrated in various ways throughout the conversations, for example through teasing and the use of nicknames.

This orientation to both the women’s familiar identities and to their research identities was particularly noticeable at the beginning of each recording. There, a conversational move took place from an introductory period of small talk to talk that was
more clearly oriented to the task, a move noted as necessary for the smooth progression of
the talk. A further point of interest is the orientation to the research task itself. The
interview questions in particular were made relevant at different points in the talk, usually
oriented to by Jane. She turned to them at some points to keep the conversation going and
at others as a check of what she intended to ask. It was unusual for the interviewees to
draw attention to the question schedule themselves. In the conversations about the
photographs, reference to the research task was less common. When this occurred it
tended to be at the beginning of each of the conversations with Jane’s introduction of the
form they should take. Analytically deviant cases were used to clarify some of the
findings.

Chapters 7 and 8 mark an overall change in the analysis from a focus on the
methods of research and their explication in the talk, to a closer scrutiny of some
conversational devices the women use in constructing their relationships. These two
chapters are linked most closely to the third research question and each addressed a
specific means by which relationships are made relevant in the talk. In Chapter 7, I
explored the ways in which people and events are remembered in the talk. In the data there
is a wealth of talk where family and friends are included as well as mention of work
colleagues and neighbours – indeed it appears that any relationship was considered suitable
for inclusion. It should also be noted that, though some remembered relationships are
explicitly oriented to, others are constructed by implication in the talk.

This variety of remembered relationships was occasioned both by the types of
questions asked and by the selection of photographs included. At some points in the
conversational interviews I specifically asked about relationships located in the past
referring to past events, or to whether they still kept in contact with people from their past.
At other times they themselves drew upon family occasions and other past events in
reference to something or someone located in the present, and connections were made
between past and present to show similarities or differences across time. Photographs also featured largely in these remembered accounts (three of the four extracts were occasioned by reference to photographs). Those the women selected represented their lives biographically and were usually presented in a chronological order. Consequently a proportion of all of their selections portrayed occasions such as schooldays and youthful social occasions, or long-dead family members and friends, providing many occasions for talk about the past.

In Chapter 8, I focused on a different conversational device that regularly occurs in the data - storytelling. Research from a spectrum of disciplines indicates that stories make up a large part of everyday conversations. Using interview schedules and photographs as prompts for the talk proved no obstacle to stories being told in this data corpus, and one feature in particular became noticeable during the analysis. Often when one story was told, another followed that was hearably constructed specifically to follow it. These second stories picked up points from the first, such as specific related chains of events or the teller assuming a similar character within her story. These links made them easily identified as logically following the first story.

Though each of these four analytic chapters can be read and understood separately there are important connections between them and their overlaps. I have separated out issues of identity, remembering and storytelling into separate chapters but each of them can be identified in extracts analysed in other chapters. In both their remembered experiences and the stories they tell the women orient to particular identities in order to illustrate the points they are making. Similarly, remembered instances are often told in the form of stories and stories may incorporate past features alongside more contemporary aspects. The examples chosen from the data are by no means the only ones available in the talk but represent a range of the things that were talked about. Photographs were a particularly
useful tool for occasioning identity talk, remembered experiences and stories and the indexing of photographs in the talk is incorporated into each of my empirical chapters.

9.3 Research contribution

The research contribution of this thesis can be split into two main areas. First, it supplements and extends knowledge about personal relationships and how they are constructed in the conversations of older women. Second, it develops a novel means of researching personal relationships.

As I have outlined in Chapter 2, research into personal relationships has been a focus of social psychology for many years. Although largely underpinned by a realist epistemology, this body of research has also recently been influenced by insights from a discursive, social constructionist perspective. Discursive psychologists have drawn from a range of research, most notably ethnomethodology, which emphasises the importance of the everyday detail of ordinary lives. It is within this body of work that my research fits most closely.

Research to date has given many useful insights into the organisation of relationships with a focus on their specific, individual aspects. Features such as getting to know someone and how people become attracted to each other as well as how people have dealt with conflict in their relationships have been given much attention. In contrast, my own interest is in the maintenance of long-term relationships that are not generally problematic, an area that I consider has been under-researched in psychology. Consequently I explore some of the long-term relationships that the majority of us are part of at one time or another in our lives.

Much psychological research takes language as a transparent resource through which to investigate particular phenomena. For example, relationships have been researched by asking people for their opinions and views about their own relationship
experiences. In contrast, ethnomethodology focuses on talk as a topic for investigation. Taking this focus, I began my research with the intention of generating a body of data in which the participants' personal relationships would be constructed in and through the things they said. It soon became apparent however, that as well as those talked about, the relationships between the participants were also hearable in the ways they spoke. Their long-term familiarity with each other facilitated a conversation in which they did not have to attend to the 'getting to know you' phase that often begins the interactions instigated by researchers and so they discussed shared events and experiences without the preamble that often occurs in conversation between co-conversationalists who do not know each other. This discovery, made early in my research, informed the development of my final research questions set out in Chapter 1.

This thesis, then, adds to existing research examining how personal relationships are constructed through conversation in a number of ways. It proposes that 'doing' relationships in the research conversations is accomplished by drawing on different identities. The complexities of the identity constructions are oriented to in an occasioned context with familiar people. Drawing on contextual cues, such as interview questions, the women's research identities are often made relevant to the progression of the conversation. More familiar identities were also oriented to at the beginnings of the interactions, where talk moves from an informal, introductory period to talk that is more task-focused. Participants teased each other, used nicknames and assumed shared knowledge about different identities. Identity construction in everyday conversations remains a relatively under-researched area of interest. This analysis of how older women explicitly refer to identity, and those implicated in their conversational moves, adds to the body of knowledge about identity.

A second way that the research contributes to knowledge about personal relationships is its focus on remembering and the past. Occasioning of talk about
relationships influenced the course that the conversations took and the research methods made relevant things that were located in the women’s pasts. The interview schedule (Chapter 4, Box 1) included a range of questions about relationships using words such as ‘people you have known’, ‘changed over time’ and what ‘makes some relationships last’. The temporal element introduced into these questions invokes relationships in the past as well as those in the present and both were included in the accounts given in conversation. Also, the women brought a range of photographs that were taken some time ago, in some instances in their childhood. This produced conversation of past relationships and their continuing significance.

Thirdly, the analysis contributes to the study of storytelling in conversation. There is a large body of social scientific work that examines the occurrence of stories in talk, and a growing number of researchers are adopting an ethnomethodological perspective. However, research exploring the occurrence of stories in occasioned talk such as that generated for my research is less evident. As noted in Chapter 4, the interview techniques traditionally used in personal relationships research preclude the narrative turns in which stories would be likely to occur. Taking account of the recent discursive turn and its emphasis on language as a topic, in this corpus of data participants give extended accounts of their relationships. By generating data that includes long narrative turns this research extends knowledge of how stories are constructed in talk, where they are likely to occur and how they contribute to the maintenance of relationships.

This thesis contributes to research into personal relationships by implementing new ways of generating data. This is novel in two ways: researching a network of older women familiar to the researcher, and using personal photographs to generate talk. My aim in planning my fieldwork was to set up and record conversations in which I could explore long-term relationships within an existing network, look at any aspects of these relationships that cropped up and analyse the ways that they are constructed in and through
Chapter 9: Conclusions

the talk. These aims suggested that recruiting as research participants a network of women familiar to one another as well as to the researcher could be a successful strategy: it seemed appropriate to research long-term relationships within a network of people who were already involved in long-term relationships with one another. The strategy proved successful and generated a rich body of conversational data. Not only did the participants talk about relationships as a topic of conversation, their talk could be heard as constructing or sustaining the relationships between them. Consequently, this method adds a new dimension to existing relationship research by enabling the analyst to identify those relationships talked about as well as those constructed between the co-conversationalists within their talk.

An unexpected dimension was added to the research in that my own role within it was shown to be much more complex than I had originally anticipated. Some of this complexity is discussed in Chapter 6 where I explore the changing identities of the participants (including myself/Jane) within the interactions. However, other issues that I encountered were on a personal level rather than solely an academic or research level. For example, I went into the research thinking that this would be a relatively ‘easy’ group to research. The recruitment process confirmed this initial thought in that I had relatively little problem recruiting participants to the study — they expressed an enthusiasm to ‘help’ me that I had hoped for but not expected. What the recruitment process did not highlight, however, was that it would also be my relationships being explored in my analysis and some of the difficulties that accompanied that aspect. The relationships were all well established before I began the research and have all continued since. However, there is now a new layer to them in that all of the women involved are interested in, and have an involvement in, an aspect of my life that had previously been at a distance from them. For psychological research particularly, and social scientific work more generally, the inclusion of the researcher as a familiar person is relatively unusual unless the purpose is to
give an ethnographic insight into a topic area. My research thus extends the existing body of ethnomethodological work looking at relationships by bringing a further dimension to the complexity of analysis.

As outlined in Chapters 4 and 5, social scientists have long recognised the value of visual tools, with researchers sometimes commissioning photographs or video diaries as part of their projects, or presenting photographs to prompt discussion. Photographs are commonly used as a topic for talk in day-to-day life and over the last century people living in Britain have commonly accumulated personal photograph collections. The conversations I recorded that centred upon photographs from such collections progressed with ease, and this confirmed their effectiveness as a tool through which to prompt talk. Using photographs to occasion talk is a useful strategy.

Other forms of stimulus that are frequently commented on in ordinary life may also serve the same purpose. For example, newspaper cuttings, letters and so on are all commonly discussed in everyday life. It is possible too that artefacts which participants view as collections could be used to generate conversation in the same way as photographs. One of the aims of this research was to encourage the participants to ‘contribute’ to the process by selecting their own photographs. Similarly they could also have been asked to talk about any of their household objects that may have some significance for them.

9.4 Future research suggestions

There are several directions that future research based on this study could take. Both methods of occasioning talk have proved successful for generating data suitable for an ethnomethodological analysis. Personal photograph collections form an accessible resource that could be used in a variety of ways, both to further explore personal relationships and also to look at other topics for which a personal approach may be beneficial. This thesis focused on long-term relationships among older women but the
approach could be adapted to research other kinds of personal relationships, and other contexts such as intergenerational family relationships, workforces or offices, school reunions and celebratory events such as graduations, religious festivals or birthdays. By giving a common focus for talk between grandparents and grandchildren for example, photographs might occasion talk about family histories that date back to the beginnings of photography in the nineteenth century.

In the thesis the discussion of identity issues was concentrated in specific ways: on the contrasts between identities, specifically those invoked by the conversational context of researcher and participant, and the familiar identities that the women brought to their interactions such as mother, daughter and friend. However, these are only some of the identities available for analysis and this research could be extended to explore others made relevant in the conversations. These include the remembered identities that were oriented to for example, or the speaker identities that were invoked through telling stories and second stories. Extending this even further the women’s work-related identities or those linked to their geographical location could be explored, all of which were oriented to at different points in this corpus.

The thesis focuses on the everyday talk of a network of older women. They were identified as a group in which little research has been conducted but one from which insights into a variety of features of older age can be accessed. The focus in this research has been on the maintenance of personal relationships, but this group has a wealth of experience that could be of value to relationship research. Considering the amount of experience that older people have to draw upon, the area of remembering could be extended to great advantage in future research. The analysis concentrated only on constructions of what was remembered in the conversation, but one way this could be extended is to look at how people deal with the issue of forgetting in conversation and how those items finally come to be remembered in the talk. In addition to shedding light on
ordinary, everyday talk this exploration could in turn have far reaching implications for those older people who exhibit both memory and language problems.

9.5 Conclusion

Personal relationships are constructed in talk, and taking a group of women who are familiar with one another as well as with the researcher facilitates the study of relationship talk. Having undertaken this research my conclusion is that there is still much work to be done in the area of personal relationships.

This research also contributes to the body of work that highlights the positive features of later life. The corpus of data covers a wealth of topics and demonstrates the conversational adeptness of older women. Giving them the opportunity to talk about the everyday features of their lives is something they themselves commented on as unusual. Focusing on their strengths, experiences and resources empowers them in unaccustomed ways. The research highlights the importance of personal relationships in everyday life and this is apparent both in the topics discussed and in the ways they are talked about. Conversation is both a vehicle for talking about relationships and is a context through which relationships are constituted. My participation in this project provided data and analysis on both these fronts. I both talked about relationships and conducted them through the talk. This complex interactional situation, albeit in a fairly mundane setting, provided the opportunity to collect rich data and to develop a dual analysis where I moved between description of, and the acting out of, relationships among a group of older women.
Appendix A: Biographical information

The final number of women recruited to take part in the research was eight (nine including myself). A selection of their biographical details is included in the following table where I provide a gloss for the reader of the women who made up the final research group. The differences in the biographical details for each occurs because the information included was taken from the transcribed conversational data. I did not set out to collect any biographical details but inevitably in the conversations about their relationships certain facts were highlighted. The order of presentation of the women in the table follows the order in which I first interviewed them and I include myself in the table as a full conversational participant. The pairings in the joint conversations were Kate and Rebecca, Helen and Marie, and Audrey and Ellen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Children/Grandchildren</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate (74)</td>
<td>married to Bert (82)</td>
<td>1 son who has lived in South Africa since 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>widowed 14 years ago (husband: Mike)</td>
<td>son with 3 children under 5 and a daughter with 2 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>divorced ten years ago from Peter</td>
<td>3 married sons and 3 grandchildren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millicent</td>
<td>married to Pat</td>
<td>2 sons, 1 daughter and 6 grandchildren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>married to Bill</td>
<td>3 daughters, 2 sons and 7 grandchildren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>married to Don</td>
<td>1 son who died in 1989, 1 daughter and 2 grandchildren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>divorced from Ben in 1978</td>
<td>1 son in England, 1 daughter in U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>married to Roy</td>
<td>2 sons, both living abroad, and 2 grandsons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane (44)</td>
<td>split up from Gary</td>
<td>2 daughters (1 pregnant) and 1 son</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Interview contexts and times

Each of the conversations took place in one or other of the women’s own homes and I conducted each of the individual interviews when it was convenient for me to visit them. Inevitably this resulted in some delays and cancellations, especially in the joint meetings. However, eventually they all went ahead and I met with Kate and Rebecca in Rebecca’s home, Helen and Marie in Helen’s home, and Audrey and Ellen in Ellen’s home. In each of these as well as in the individual meetings the conversations took place in a relatively relaxed manner, usually accompanied by a drink and some biscuits. On one occasion I was offered a meal and on another a cake had been baked specially for the meeting. All of these welcoming details contributed to making the encounters both productive and enjoyable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Length of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>44 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>53 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>69 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millicent</td>
<td>59 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>48 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>74 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>63 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>55 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate and Rebecca</td>
<td>83 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen and Marie</td>
<td>104 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audrey and Ellen</td>
<td>91 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total time</strong></td>
<td><strong>743 minutes (12 hrs 23 minutes)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Transcription Conventions

The transcription conventions I use throughout the extracts included in the thesis are a simplified version of those developed by Gail Jefferson (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984) as follows:

- A full stop in brackets denotes a pause less than one second
- A number in brackets denotes a pause timed to the nearest second
- A space in brackets denotes an indistinct stretch of talk
- A word containing a series of colons denotes a lengthened sound
- Square brackets at the beginning of two stretches of talk denotes overlapping speech (also marked at the end if one speaker continues to speak after the other has stopped)
- A hyphen immediately following a letter denotes a sound that is cut off
- An equals sign at the end of one utterance and the beginning of the next denotes no discernible gap between speech
- A word in brackets denotes a non-speech sound
- Speech marks around a stretch of talk denote constructed dialogue

For a full sense of the conversation a much more in-depth transcription would be necessary. In most cases however, the conversation can be followed relatively easily and the sense of what was said (and how) can be discerned.

During my writing some instances were pointed out where difficulties may arise in interpreting the talk and I highlight some of these briefly here to illustrate issues that may be problematic. One feature that was brought to my attention was the mispronunciation of some words. So in Chapter 6, Extract 18 Helen mispronounces ‘album’ twice in quick
succession, though in other parts of the conversation it is pronounced correctly. Similarly in some places in the conversations the regional accents are heard: in Chapter 6, Extracts 7 and 11, for example, both Jane and Helen pronounce ‘my’ as ‘me’. I decided to leave these mispronunciations in because they are faithful to the actual conversation I recorded and were particularly noticeable.

Another issue, highlighted with regard to the first utterance in Chapter 5, Extract 1, was that the questioning tone of Line 1 is not conveyed through my transcription. I decided against including a question mark at the end of the utterance because of its association with punctuation in writing and also decided against any other notation – Jefferson uses arrows to denote upward and downward intonations in speech but by including these I found that my extracts became very cluttered. I chose instead to try to retain as much of the clarity of the actual utterances as possible, perhaps at the cost of detail.
Appendix D: Recruitment letters

Each of the women I recruited was sent a letter introducing the research followed by a telephone call a few days later to set up a date for our first meeting.

42, Clarina Street,
Monks Road,
Lincoln.
LN2 5LZ

.../.../

Tel: Mobile:..........; Work:............
E-mail: .............or ............

Dear

Further to our telephone conversation on 10/3/02 I enclose details of the work that I’m undertaking for my PhD at the Open University. My research focuses on an examination of the personal relationships of older women. I’m interested in your own views of your relationships (rather than discussing them from my point of view) and to help me represent these views as accurately as possible I’d like you to take part in two separate activities.

First I’ll come and talk to you briefly about my research and ask you some questions about personal relationships that have played a significant part in your life. This won’t take too long and I’d like to audio tape the conversation for transcription purposes. At this first meeting I’ll explain the second part of the research process and answer any questions that you may want to ask about the research.

The second part will be carried out in a slightly different manner from this first interview. I’d like to invite you, along with one of the other people taking part, to come to a meeting with me. As you are already aware, my interest is in the personal relationships you have been involved in throughout your life, with both family and friends. So I’d like you to bring along to that meeting some photographs that portray people who are, or have
been, significant in your life. Bring as many photographs as you like and present them in whatever manner you prefer (some people have their photographs arranged in albums whereas others may keep them loose in boxes). Then I'd like you to talk together about both sets of photographs.

As you'll know each other, people in the photographs may be known to both of you. Equally, other people may be known to only one or other of you. This is not important, as my interest is in your discussion of your relationships with the people in the photographs. With this in mind, if you don't feel comfortable talking about any of the photographs, or there are some you don't feel are significant, then it is quite all right for you to skip over to ones you feel are more interesting or relevant.

Again, for analytic purposes, I'll be audio taping the conversation that you have together. The taped recordings of both conversations will be completely confidential. Any references within the discussions to either people or places will be changed when I am writing up my research in order to maintain that confidentiality. However, there may be instances where the edited, recorded conversation will be cited within different publications or at conferences. I may even write a book! Therefore, the transcriptions of the conversations, with names changed, may be made available in various forms to different people.

I'll see you on the 28th of March for the first interview.

Yours Sincerely,

Jane Montague
Appendix E: Consent and copyright form

Research examining the personal relationships of older women

Permission to quote form

Some of the things you say in the conversations I record may be used in what I write (such as my thesis or in articles) or in talks I give.

Anything you say will be anonymous. Your real name, or anything else that might identify you (the places you mention or the names of the people you are talking about), will not be used.

You can withdraw from the research at any stage if you wish.

The audio and video recordings will be kept in a locked cupboard for which I have the key. No one else will have access to the tape recordings unless I have a secretary to help me transcribe the tapes. The secretary would not know who you are.

As I'm interested in the fine detail of how people talk, for instance the silences that occur or when people overlap in a conversation, the final transcript I'll work from will be very comprehensive. I don't think you'll be interested in this level of detail so I can send you either a simplified copy of the transcript of our conversations or a copy of the tape. This is so you can clarify or make corrections to what you have said. If there is something that you don't want to be included, please give me a ring and we can discuss whether details can be changed or whether it needs to be left out altogether.

So that I can use your comments without having to consult you every time I want to do so please sign below to say that you give me the copyright of your comments:

I hereby assign the copyright in my contribution to Jane M. Montague for use in research, publication, education, lectures and broadcasting.

Name: __________________________________________

Address: ________________________________________

________________________________________________

Signed: ______________________ Date: ______________
Appendix F: Transcribed full extracts

The selections of data included in the excerpts below locate the brief extracts discussed in each of the empirical chapters in their wider conversational context. I also include the transcripts separated into columns for those extracts where I used this method to aid my analysis.

**Chapter 5**

All of the extracts in Chapter 5 are taken from the second stage of fieldwork in which the talk focused on the photographs that the women presented.

In Extracts 1-7 Helen, Marie and Jane talk about a photograph of Marie’s grandma. The conversation revolves around determining her age and draw on the age of Jane who is present in the room as a comparison. (Helen’s comment following the short pause in Line 3 is directed at her dog.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Helen</th>
<th>Marie</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>who's this then (.) mum</td>
<td>no that's my grandma when she was forty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>isn't she pretty (.) get down ( )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>mm (.) she was forty (1) but doesn't she look o::old (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>d'y'think [they d-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>no I don't (.) think particularly there she does</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>[they did</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>yes but Jane's [forty four</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>[oh she does a bit y- oh yeah I suppose you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>put it like that [times have changed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>[compare her to me (huh)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>yeah she does actually compared to (.) a forty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>four year old today=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>[four</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>=I'm not sure maybe she was forty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>[now you're giving my age away [laugh)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>[oh she was forty four</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>[ she was Jane's age ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>[what's this on the back] (.) she's jay- well there</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>you are (.) yes::s [there's a huge difference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>[I (.) I think she looks old (1) [older</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>[they did</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>then though Marie didn't they</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Extracts 8-12 of Chapter 5 focus on two of Ellen’s photographs. The topic of conversation between Audrey, Ellen and Jane is some of the experiences that accompanied their honeymoons. Ellen describes her naïvety and Audrey supports her account with her comments.

1. Ellen oh that was us going on honeymoon
2. Jane where did you go
3. Ellen went to London (1) I'd never been before in my life I wouldn't
4. go on the escalator
5. Jane (laugh)
6. Audrey (laugh)
7. Ellen I stood at the top of the ( ) is it the ( ) b- biggest one ( ) and
8. I says ( ) I'm definitely not going down that ( ) and (laugh)
9. Ben said 'well [what're you going to do'
10. Jane [well you wouldn't've come across one in
11. Grangetown would you [(laugh)
12. Audrey [(laugh)
13. Ellen [(laugh) but i- i- he s- and I says
14. 'I daren't' ( ) he says 'well I'll stand in front of you' (1) I thought
15. oh: h my:: y Go::: od y'know I mean I'd never been to L::ndon
16. in my li::ife=
17. Audrey =I remember the first time I went on the tube
18. Ellen I put [my ticket in one end forgot to get it out the other end
19. [and that was when they were ( ) we w- we went I-
20. Jane did you (laugh)
21. Ellen we went from Little Markle on the train of course (:) and of
22. Jane [mm
23. Ellen course con:: nfetti=
24. Audrey [mm
25. Ellen and of course they'd stuffed my suitcas:::se full ( ) of s- of confetti
26. and every time I opened anything it was awful
27. Jane oh: h [(laugh)
28. Audrey [(laugh) they tied kippers on our exhaust pipe=
29. Jane [oh God
30. Ellen [oh no well of
31. course we hadn't got a car then but ( ) that ( ) that was on
32. honeymoon ( ) we stayed out ( ) at this beautiful place (2) and I
33. can always remember ( ) people saying ( ) cos we went down
34. to breakfast the next morning and of course you know my hair
35. was really ( ) auburn [red and it was [(1) and ( ) everybody kept=
36. [mm
37. Audrey [mm
38. Ellen saying ( ) 'look at that beautiful hair' and I felt so embarrassed
39. and I says 'I I'm g- ( ) I ( ) can I ( ) can I ( ) go back upstairs
40. please ( ) I mean ( ) well I mean I was (1) young and stupid=
41. [oh (laugh)
42. Jane [mm
43. Ellen wasn't I
44. Audrey young and naïve [not stupid
45. Ellen [yeah young and naïve
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ellen</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Audrey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>oh that was us going on honeymoon</td>
<td>where did you go</td>
<td>((laugh))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>went to London (1) I'd never been before in my life I wouldn't go on the escalator</td>
<td></td>
<td>((laugh))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stood at the top of the (.) is it the (.) b-biggest one (.) and I says (.) I'm definitely not going down that (.) and (laugh) Ben said 'well [what're you going to do'</td>
<td>[well you wouldn't've come across one in Grangetown would you</td>
<td>((laugh))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((laugh) but i- i- he s-and I says 'I daren't' (.) he says 'well I'll stand in front of you' (1) I thought oh::h my:::y Go::::od y'know I mean I'd never been to L:::london in my li::ife=</td>
<td>did you (laugh)</td>
<td>((laugh))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[and that was when they were (.) we w- we went l-</td>
<td></td>
<td>=I remember the first time I went on the tube I put [my ticket in one end forgot to get it out the other end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we went from Little Markle on the train of course [(.) and of course con::nfetti= and of course they'd stuffed my suitcases::se full (.) of s- of confetti and every time I opened anything it was awful</td>
<td>[mm</td>
<td>=mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[=oh no well of course we hadn't got a car then but (.) that (.) that (. that was on honeymoon (. we stayed out (. at this</td>
<td>oh::h</td>
<td>((laugh))they tied kippers on our exhaust pipe=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References

beautiful place (2) and I can always remember (. ) people saying (. ) cos we went down to breakfast the next morning and of course you know my hair was really (. ) auburn [red and it was [(1) and (. ) everybody kept saying (. ) 'look at that beautiful hair' and I felt so embarrassed and I says 'I I I'm g- (. ) I (. ) can I (. ) can I (. ) go back upstairs please [(.) I mean (. ) well I mean I was (1) young and stupid wasn't I [yeah young and naïve

Extracts 13-17 are taken from two stretches of talk that are part of the conversation between Kate, Rebecca and Jane. Their conversation focuses on a man that Kate introduces into the present conversation as a main character of her account and the extracts focus on Lines 1-21 and Lines 39-69 below. This set of extracts demonstrates how the introduction of a person external to the current interaction is managed and how an account that is not specifically related to the presentation of a photograph can nevertheless be introduced as a relevant part of the current conversational context.

1. Kate oh that's her oh yes
2. Jane so you've got people in common that that you know from=
3. Kate well no th- this lady lives at South Lineham and and my husband's brother the one's that used to live in Spain well he actually died in June he got cancer and this Hilda
4. Jane mmmm=
5. Kate lives near him [doesn't she=
6. Jane [oh right
7. Rebecca =yes yes
8. Kate tha-that's all an-and er th-they (. ) I I don't know how we found out but we did
9. Jane mm it is funny how everybody knows [somebody that=
10. Rebecca [yes
11. Kate [=somebody else knows [laugh]

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16. Rebecca [yes
17. Kate [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.)
18. Jane [yeah
19. Kate [I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted

39. Kate and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
40. Jane =yeah=
41. Kate =er and I said 'oh:::h' I said 'he married Auntie Win' (.) now the (.) the man that I showed=
42. Rebecca [(laugh)
43. Kate =you there that came to live next door to me when I was four (.) well Auntie Win (.) was his sister [and when she was very young=
44. Jane [oh
45. Rebecca [ah:::h
46. Kate =she had a boy with Tom and Bill said he was a ladies man [(.) called Lewis [w-well she d- he didn't marry Auntie Win but
47. Rebecca [(laugh) [yeah
48. Jane [goodness
49. Kate [and then w-when Auntie Win's husband died she bought a cottage in Medomsley and that's when I I only called her Auntie
50. Jane yeah
51. Kate and Auntie Win (.) erm (.) and Tom got married I can [remember=
52. Rebecca [oh oh:::h
53. Jane =Harry and Mrs Hill going to Guildhall registry office=
54. Kate [yeah
55. Rebecca [laugh)
56. Kate 'an-and he had a boy called Lewis and a sweetheart' so
57. Kate Auntie Win [was his sweetheart (laugh)
58. Rebecca [was his sweetheart (laugh)
59. Jane oh:::h (laugh)

Kate

oh that's her oh yes

=well no th- this lady lives at South Lineham and and my husband's brother the one's that used to live in Spain well he actually died in June he got cancer and this Hilda person=

Jane

so you’ve got people in common that that you know from=

=mm=

Rebecca

[oh right

=yes yes
| tha-that's all an-and er th-they (.) I I don’t know how we found out but we did |
| mm it is funny how everybody knows [somebody that [somebody else knows [(laugh)] |
| [yes] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| [yes] |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
| [Bill Brown was at our house the other day [and he was talking about when he was a young man and you will not remember this but years ago (.) erm (1) I call him Tom but Bill calls him Ted |
| and I said 'what did you say they called him' so he said 'oh:::h they called him Ted Cambell'=
| =yeah=
| [(laugh)] |
called her Auntie Win cos they did and Auntie Win (.) erm (.) and Tom got married I can [remember Harry and Mrs Hill going to Guildhall registry office= oh:::h Bill says ‘yes’ he said ‘he had six children an-and he had a boy called Lewis and a sweetheart’ so Auntie Win [was his sweetheart (laugh) yeah [oh oh:::h =yeah (laugh) oh:::h (laugh) (laugh) was his sweetheart (laugh)]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Chapter 7 I explored some of the ways remembered accounts were constructed in the conversations. Extracts 1-4 are taken from the conversation between Stella and Jane. Stella talks about her relationship with her grandson and compares it to the one she had with her grandparents when she was young.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Jane what about with your grandchildren (.) d'y'think that's changed as they've got older 2. Stella er:: rm (.) well yes cos Ben's going through his (.) awkward st- I mean don't get me wrong (.) I mean I get on all right with him= 3. Jane =mm= 4. Stella =but I'm conscious of the fact that (.) he doesn't bother coming round as much 5. mm 6. Jane 7. Stella er:: rm (laugh) well he hardly comes round at all [(laugh) if it= [(laugh) yeah 8. Stella =comes to that (1) er:: rm (.) y'know they sort of drop you don't they 9. yes= 10. Jane =but you I mean I can remember doing the same my self 11. to me- (.) to my grand[parents 12. Jane [ye:: ah [yeah 13. Stella [but not meaning anything by it I still 14. loved them (.) but I didn't go (.) y'know (.) and if I went (.) I'm bored 15. stiff in (.) twenty minutes and and wanted to leave y'know 16. |

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References

Stella

er::rm (. ) well yes cos Lee’s going through his (. ) awkward st- I mean don’t get me wrong (. ) I mean I get on all right with him=
=but I’m conscious of the fact that (. ) he doesn’t bother coming round as much

er::rm (laugh) well he hardly comes round at all
[(laugh) if it comes to that (1) er::rm (. ) y’know they sort of drop you don’t they=
=but you I mean I can remember doing the same my self to me- (. ) to my grand [parents [but not meaning anything by it I still loved them (. ) but I didn’t go (. ) y’know (. ) and if I went (. ) I’m bored stiff in (. ) twenty minutes and and wanted to leave y’know

Jane

=mm=

mm

[(laugh) yeah

yeah=

[ye::ah

yeah

Extracts 5-7 in Chapter 7 are taken from an account Audrey gives of an incident she remembers from the funeral of one of her friends. Her account is authenticated through the some of Ellen’s comments. The column layout of the transcript shows much more clearly the lengthy account from Audrey and the short continuers from Ellen and Jane.

1. Audrey that’s my most (1) I dunno frightening but amazing
2. (2) thing I’ve ever had (1) I went to Betty’s funeral (1) last year (1) o:: oh dear=
3. Ellen =two years [ago
4. Audrey [eighteen months ago [ (1) [it’ll be yes at [least
5. Ellen [yes
6. Audrey two years this is John’s [(1) second Christmas=
7. Ellen [yes =yes
8. Audrey [she loved all m- oh she] [( [funeral sheet at home somewhere]
9. Ellen [Betty liked mu-] [ oh that’s what I want yeah ]
10. Audrey [erm ] [I can’t remember it was the Beach
11. Jane [right

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Audrey

that’s my most (1) I dunno frightening but amazing (2) thing I’ve ever had (1) I went to Betty’s funeral (1) last year (1) oh dear= [eighteen months ago [(1) [it’ll be two years this is John’s [(1) second Christmas

and::der (. ) the service was at the crematorium (1) and I went in and it was (. ) all music (. ) not hymns and things because she was::ser [(.: she loved her music ] [I can’t remember I’ve got the]  

Ellen

=two years [ago [yes at [least [yes [she loved all m- oh she] [(

Jane

}
I can’t remember it was the Beach Boys singing something it’s
(.) while the coffin was going through somethink about the journey (. ) coffin went through the curtains came round (. ) and I just glanced up (. ) and she came floating out of the top of it (2) the hair (. ) grey immaculately
( .) done (. ) all her makeup on (. ) and she was just going like that she was just (. ) conducting
( .) the music the Beach Boys (. ) and looking at me as if to say w- (1) don’t worry (. ) everything’s going to be all right I’m fine
( .) I mean she had emphysema (. ) y’know and she was on oxygen
[and that for a (. ) a long she was ever so poorly (. ) piled on weight because of
[the (. ) steroids and that (. ) but I just couldn’t believe it I’ve never (1) never seen anything
[like that at all before (. ) and I came out and Alma (1) here that was working (. ) with us as well (. ) she died (. ) about ten days after Betty
and I went to her service a week later (. ) and I was (. ) frightened

Going in
[and I just couldn’t (. ) y’know and I thought what on earth’s gonna happen=
and I felt so (. ) everything
In Extracts 8-10 Helen and Marie talk about an occasion when they were expecting to be working together, but the job fell through. In this part of the conversation they construct the fantasies that they had at the time about what they would have done if the job had gone ahead.

| 1. Marie | like Patrick once we were going to work in Seaholme weren't we |
| 2. Helen | do you remember that Marie didn't we get excited oh |
| 3. Helen | he'd got all this work Jane ( ) as:al: this work the council'd got in |
| 4. Marie | Seaholme ( ) Patrick said would we be prepared to do it well Marie |
| 5. Helen | and I we ( ) we nearly got the hotel booked (laugh) |
| 6. Jane | really ( ) so what happened ( ) as usual with Patrick's [work it= |
| 7. Marie | [well it was |
| 8. Helen | [as usual |
| 9. Jane | =fell through |
| 10. Helen | =and crossed us off ( ) Marie |
| 11. Marie | and I w- ( ) we were there ( ) we'd started= |
| 12. Marie | =we were in a caravan |
| 13. Helen | weren't we |
| 14. Helen | [oh we were doing all sorts of things [wasn't we |
| 15. Marie | [(laugh) |
| 16. Helen | w- we'd got ourselves sorted ( ) [ |
| 17. Jane | [painting Seaholme red |
| 18. Helen | (laugh) yes: :s ( ) and then he said er ( ) sorry but er |

<p>| Jane | no (laugh) right then ( ) is that it then |
| Helen | have you got what you want darling that's the main thing= |
| Marie | [oh right Jane you’ll like it |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I might (. ) I might be roping you in to do something else you never know=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ready to be [roped]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[(laugh) yeah [(. ) I don’t I don’t know if the Open University would] fund that really=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((laugh) yeah [(.) I don’t I don’t know if the Open University would] fund that really=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(laugh)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>really [(1) so what happened (1) as usual with Patrick’s [work it fell through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=oh well we’re always here aren’t we Marie [ready to be roped] [all in line girls ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=oh well course if they want to [stretch a point [I know would you want would you like our vie::ews]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=would you like our vie::ews and us to do some photography in Scotland or something like that art maybe (. ) the odd painting or thousands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h:::h do you remember that Marie didn’t we get excited oh he’d got all this work Jane (. ) a::al::l this work the council’d got in Seaholme (. ) Patrick said would we be prepared to do it well Marie and I we (. ) we nearly got the hotel booked (laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[as usual (. ) they’d got their did they did he say they’d got people locally [Marie =and crossed us off (. ) Marie and I w-. (. ) we were there (. ) we’d started= [oh we were doing all sorts of things [wasn’t we w- we’d got ourselves sorted (. ) [(</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[yes::s yes if if ] if [it’s anything like] if it’s anything like going to a hotel for the weekend we=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like Patrick once se- we were going to work in Seaholme weren’t we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[yes::s yes if if ] if [it’s anything like] if it’s anything like going to a hotel for the weekend we=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well it was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ye::s (1) and crossed us off the list=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=we were in a caravan [weren’t we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[(laugh)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The final set of extracts in the chapter (Extracts 11-13) focus on one of Helen’s photographs. Viewing this photograph leads Helen and Marie to remember the days that they spent at the local dance hall, discovering that they both attended the same one though at different times. This time the columns illustrate the relatively equal contribution that the two women make to their account.

| 1. Marie | y'see you've wrote Co-op dance hall nineteen sixty (.) well I went there every Friday (.) but don't forget by nineteen sixty I was married [ and had a couple of children ] [you were married you see Marie] (.) you were going in the earlier years [ wasn't you to ] to Little Markle [yes the fifties yeah] 
| 2. Marie | yeah 
| 3. Marie | so we wouldn't've [seen] but (.) we were often at the Co-op [dance hall we went] every Friday night without fail= did you= every Friday [night I bet sometime we crossed paths] 
| 4. Helen | 
| 5. Marie | mm (.) yeah probably you did 
| 6. Jane | didn't you can't you remember when we touched dresses Marie and I said 'I'll see you on the ay seventeen 
| 7. Helen | [(laugh)] 
| 8. Marie | [(laugh)] 
| 9. Helen | [(laugh)] 

Marie

y’see you’ve wrote Co-op dance hall nineteen sixty (. ) well I went there every Friday (. ) but don’t forget by nineteen sixty I was married [ and had a couple of children ]

Helen

[you were married you see Marie] (.) you were going in the earlier years [wasn’t you to]
References

[yes the fifties yeah] to Little Markle

so we wouldn’t’ve [seen
[we went every Friday night without fail=
=every Friday
[night

mm (. ) yeah

[but (. ) we were often at the
Co-op
[dance hall
=did

you=
[I bet sometime we crossed paths

(probably you did

didn’t you can’t you remember when we touched dresses Marie and I said ‘I’ll see you on the ay seventeen

[laugh)

Chapter 8

The first set of extracts (1-7 in this chapter is taken from the conversation between Helen and Jane where they discuss different experiences of adoption – Helen her own and Jane that of someone close to her. The two stories are seen very clearly when separated into two columns. Each of them is interspersed with continuers from the recipient that encourage the talk to proceed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Helen or Jane</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>so do you keep in touch with your brother then Helen [does he] [oh yes]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>live [nearby ] [he lives] at Burton-on-Witham () [and er Barry and I well ] [oh right that’s not too far]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>from here either</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Barry () erm () oh because I think you know the story [ that = [cos he’s =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>= Barry and I were ] adopted=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>=older than you isn’t he] =yes I remember yeah d- [did=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>=you ever=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>=no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>=no () I said to Barry one day () quite a while ago we were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>having a drink together and I said (1) ‘Barry () do you know who we are’ so he said () ‘no’ (2) I said ‘oh:h’ I said () ‘any desire to know’ he said () ‘not really’=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

223
want to know
part of me does but (1) a lot of me doesn’t [cos they (. ) that was= [mm
=mum and dad you know [that was (. ) the way it went and (. ) lee-
[mm
leave well alone y’know=
=and did they never tell you anything [then
[no
(. ) they didn’t in those days Jane
no
I mean they come out with it now before y- they’ve stopped
rocking you in the [cradle
[mm
it’s different (. ) but then no you didn’t know
it’s funny you know because Millicent (. ) y’know Millicent dad’s
sister=
yeah
err (. ) because she always knew she was adopted (. ) but sh- (. ) I
think that was partly because they wanted to adopt her sister as
well [and
[oh right
and (. ) the grandmother who was a bit of an old battleaxe
apparently wouldn’t let them (. ) wouldn’t let grandma and
granddad adopt Geraldine=
=right=
=but they always made
sure that Millicent stayed in touch with her=
yes=
=but they also had
a brother (. ) and I was talking to Millicent a little while ago about it
(. ) cos her mum died giving child (. ) err in childbirth [giving birth=
[did she =
[err::rm (. ) and he
was adopted and (. ) neither of them have any idea who he (. ) who
or where he is
no
yet they’ve always kept in in [contact
[in t- in touch [yeah
[yeah and they see

Helen
[oh yes]
[he lives] at Burton-on-Witham (. )
[and er Barry and I well]
Barry (. ) erm (. ) oh because I think you
know the story
[that Barry and I were]
adopted=
=no

Jane
so do you keep in touch with your brother
then Helen
[does he] live
[nearby]
[oh right that’s not too far]
from here either
[cos he’s older than you isn’t he]
=yes I remember yeah d- did you
ever=
I said to Barry one day quite a while ago we were having a drink together and I said (1) ‘Barry do you know who we are’ so he said ‘no’ (2) I said ‘oh::h’ I said ‘any desire to know’ he said ‘not really’=

part of me does but a lot of me doesn’t [cos they that was mum and dad you know [that was (. ) the way it went and (. ) lee-leave well alone y’know= [no they didn’t in those days Jane

I mean they come out with it now before y-they’ve stopped rocking you in the [cradle

it’s different (. ) but then no you didn’t know

=yeah

[oh right

=right=

=yes=

[did she really]

=oh

[dear

no

[in t- in touch

[yeah

no=

=mm (1) have you still (. ) do you still want to know

[mm

[mm

=and did they never tell you anything

[then

no

[mm

it’s funny you know because Millicent (. ) y’know Millicent dad’s sister= erm (. ) because she always knew she was adopted (. ) but sh- (. ) I think that was partly because they wanted to adopt her sister as well [and (. ) the grandmother who was a bit of an old battleaxe apparently wouldn’t let them (. ) wouldn’t let grandma and granddad adopt Geraldine= =but they always made sure that Millicent stayed in touch with her= =but they also had a brother (. ) and I was talking to Millicent a little while ago about it (. ) cos her mum died giving child (. ) err in childbirth [giving birth to] their brother (. ) or just afterwards= [er::rm (. ) and he was adopted and (. ) neither of them have any idea who he (. ) who or where he is

yet they’ve always kept in in [contact

[yeah and they see each other quite regularly
Extracts 8-12 consist of two different stories about encounters with snakes. Kate’s story is of a very poisonous snake in South America whereas Rebecca encounters hers on some hospital steps in England. Again the stories are seen very clearly in the columns.

30. **Kate**
   the only thing we saw there was a **night adder** and if some man hadn’t shouted at me [this () and he=
   as I am to [this () and he=
   [really oh no
   =and he said mind that at night adders and Jack says you’ve got
   twenty minutes if it bites you
31. **Kate**
   [oh dear (laugh)
32. **Jane**
   [yes:s (.) they’ve got a helicopter pad [there to get you out [yes (.)=
   [ah:::h
33. **Rebecca**
   =gangrene sets in after twenty [minutes
   [gosh oh my [word
   [that [quickly
   [yes and it was
34. **Jane**
   [mm
35. **Jane**
   only a little thing like that
36. **Rebecca**
   yeah (.) did you run
37. **Kate**
   (laugh)
38. **Kate**
   no (.) stand still I freeze I don’t know what to do it’s no good
39. **Jane**
   running I just stand there
40. **Jane**
   yeah
41. **Kate**
   oh I’ve seen several snakes I just stand there and I saw a (.) em
42. **Jane**
   last time we were there I saw a night adder went across the road
43. **Jane**
   in front of me at er (2) Cabot Cove or somewhere I can’t
44. **Kate**
   remember what it wa- I don’t know what to do I just stand still and
45. **Jane**
   say ‘look at that’ or [something like that
46. **Rebecca**
   [mm
47. **Rebecca**
   [laugh) help
48. **Kate**
   the man says to me ‘where’s it gone to’ I said well it went in that
49. **Jane**
   just there ‘oh well keep on going’ he says you’re [all right=
50. **Jane**
   [mm
51. **Kate**
   =(laugh)
52. **Rebecca**
   last time I saw a snake was in Fenwick
53. **Kate**
   was it
54. **Jane**
   (laugh)
55. **Rebecca**
   yes (laugh) I think it was probably a grass snake or [some=
56. **Kate**
   [well it=
57. **Kate**
   = thing I didn’t [ or a or a (.) em an adder type thing
58. **Jane**
   =wouldn’t be a night adder]
59. **Kate**
   mm
60. **Kate**
   I don’t go and look at snakes they’ve got lots of snake houses and
61. **Kate**
   and different I never go and look at snakes
62. **Kate**
   well I was walking to the hospital to visit me mother so it must’ve
63. **Kate**
   been last year (.) and em
64. **Jane**
   really
65. **Rebecca**
   coming up some steps and I thought a::ah::h (.) a snake [(laugh)
66. **Jane**
   [(laugh)
67. **Rebecca**
   [not what you) expect [to s- to see
68. **Jane**
   [how unusual] [no::o
69. **Rebecca**
   very near a motorway too
70. **Kate**
   we keep away from all snakes I do
71. **Rebecca**
   [mm
72. **Kate**
   [mm
73. **Jane**
   [mm
74. **Jane**
   [mm
75. **Jane**
   [mm
76. **Kate**
   [mm
77. **Kate**
   [not what you) expect [to s- to see
78. **Jane**
   [how unusual] [no::o
79. **Rebecca**
   very near a motorway too
80. **Kate**
   we keep away from all snakes I do
Kate
the only thing we saw there was a night adder and if some man hadn’t shouted at me huh I was as near to that night adder as I am to [this(.) and he and he said mind that at night adders and Jack says you’ve got twenty minutes if it bites you
yes::s(.) they’ve got a helicopter pad [there to get you out yes(.) gangrene sets in after twenty [minutes [yes and it was only a little thing like that
no(.) stand still I freeze I don’t know what to do it’s no good running I just stand there
oh I’ve seen several snakes I just stand there and I saw a(.) erm last time we were there I saw a night adder went across the road in front of me at er (2) Cabot Cove or somewhere I can’t remember what it wa- I don’t know what to do I just stand still and say ‘look at that’ or [something like that the man says to me ‘where’s it gone to’ I said well it went in that grass there [‘oh well keep on going’ he says ‘you’re [all right’ (laugh)

Jane
[really oh no
[really
[that
[yeah(.) did you run

Rebecca
[oh dear (laugh)
[ah:::h
[gosh oh my [word
(laugh)
Taking Extracts 14-21 as illustration I outline the occurrence of three consecutive stories in one of the conversations – Helen tells the first and the others follow from Jane. Jane’s two stories are illustrations of the general points made by Helen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Helen</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Helen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>right and i- that happens in a i- in a lot of aspects of life y’know you it’s like you know you it’s like when a man leaves leaves his wife</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>mm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>and and you think ‘oh that would (. ) they’d never part never’ and they do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>mm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>and ‘n’ y- you just grow up you just realise it’s not a bowl of cherries like you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>no cos I yeah cos when me and Gary who I’m going out with on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>7.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

References
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Sunday night for a meal (laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Helen oh I've heard about this meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Jane when we split up y'know it was like it wasn't a shock because we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. just argued all the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Helen yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Jane but the couple who lived next door went out to work together in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. morning hand in hand came home at at night y'know always went</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. out together you never saw one without the other yet he'd been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. having an affair for two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Helen exactly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Jane well when had he done it (laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Helen yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Jane was what you know I used to think well how has he and apparently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. he'd been meeting this woman at lunchtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Helen yeah you wonder w- how they do it really</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Jane mm (.) and he just one morning he'd just gone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>right and i- that happens in a i- in a lot of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspects of life y'know you it's like you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know you it's like when a man leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leaves his wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and and you think ‘oh that would they'd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never part never’ and they do</td>
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<tr>
<td>and ‘n’ y- you just grow up you just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>realise it’s not a bowl of cherries like you</td>
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<tr>
<td>oh I’ve heard about this meal</td>
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<tr>
<td>yeah</td>
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<tr>
<td>exactly</td>
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<tr>
<td>yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yeah you wonder w- how they do it really</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jane</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no cos I yeah cos when me and Gary who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m going out with on Sunday night for a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meal (laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when we split up y’know it was like it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wasn’t a shock because we just argued all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the time</td>
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<tr>
<td>but the couple who lived next door went</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out to work together in the morning hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in hand came home at at night y’know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>always went out together you never saw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one without the other yet he’d been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having an affair for two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well when had he done it (laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was what you know I used to think well how has he and apparently he’d been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meeting this woman at lunchtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mmmm and he just one morning he’d just gone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final extracts in the chapter (22-27) are included as illustration of an exception in the data where Jane tells the first story. Generally Jane's stories follow those told by the others but this is the one case where this general pattern is disturbed.

1. Jane he's just being Kevin
2. Stella ye:es=
3. Jane =off er::r (.) (laugh)
4. Stella [exactly that's how she describes him (laugh)
5. Jane tell her I had one ((laugh)
6. Stella [I said well ((laugh)
7. Jane [Josh's just developed into himself
8. Stella =four years you had
9. Jane again (.) from being Kevin for about four years=
10. Stella of it oh::h (.) I mean y- you just have to go through it and it's a nightmare though (isn't it
11. Jane ye:: eah
12. Stella but (.) eventually you get back what you started [with
13. Jane [I can remember
14. Stella but (. ) eventually you get back what you started [with
15. Jane Lucy saying to me one day (1) she rang me up and she said (1)
16. Stella 'Josh spoke a whole sentence to me today' ((laugh) and we just=
17. Stella ((laugh)
18. Jane =cracked up laughing because he just never spoke=
19. Stella =no=
20. Jane =for about
21. Stella two years he just didn't [speak at all (.) he just used to grunt like=
22. Stella ((laugh)
23. Jane =Kevin (laugh) so it was really

81. Jane one of the other things that I've asked people is do you think that
82. Stella er::rm=
83. Jane =at all=
84. Stella =relationships with (. ) er::r yeah (.) well of course they
85. Jane have (.) I mean (2) I've got our Jennifer (1) back (laugh) from
86. Stella teens (.) a horror
87. Jane (laugh) from being a teenager d'y'mean
88. Stella yeah (.) er::rm [yes because we get on
89. Jane [what d'y'mean you've got her back
90. Stella hm
91. Jane what [d'y'mean got her back
92. Stella [well I mean (. ) we've got this normal person back
93. Jane oh right
94. Stella yeah (laugh)=
95. Jane =(laugh) right she's back to being Jennifer=
96. Stella =yes:s cos
97. Stella I mean (. ) sh::h- that took a long time didn't it (.) y'know (.) what
98. with (1) I mean we get on very well now [actually
99.
**Stella**

fifteen

(mm getting very very awkward y’know I mean he’s not (. ) he’s not doing anything (1) he’s just being (. ) awkward about t- (. ) t- deal with er y’know he’s not getting into trouble or anything like that y’know [he’s not ye:es= [exactly that’s how she describes him (laugh)

[I said well [(laugh)

=four years you had of it oh:::h (. ) I mean y- you just have to go through it and it’s a nightmare though [isn’t it but (. ) eventually you get back what you started [with

[(laugh) =no=

[(laugh)

**Jane**

oh:::h (. ) yeah (. ) awkward age [(laugh)=

[he’s just being Kevin =off er::r [(.) (laugh)

tell her I had one [(laugh)

[Jamie’s just developed into himself again (. ) from being Kevin for about four years=

[ye::ehah

[I can remember Lucy saying to me one day (1) she rang me up and she said (1) ‘Josh spoke a whole sentence to me today’ [(laugh) and we just cracked up laughing because he just never spoke= =for about two years he just didn’t [speak at all (. ) he just used to grunt like Kevin (laugh) so it was really

one of the other things that I’ve asked people is do you think that your relationships have changed over (1) the years =at all= (laugh) from being a teenager d’y’mean [what d’y’mean you’ve got her back what
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>well I mean (. ) we've got this normal person back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yeah (laugh)=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=yes:s cos I mean (. ) sh:::h- that took a long time didn’t it (. ) y’know (. ) what with (1) I mean we get on very well now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actually</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d’y’mean got her back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oh right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=(laugh) right she’s back to being Beverley=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G: Fieldwork timetable

The fieldwork for my research took place in a context of many different personal and academic experiences. Some of the most significant of these are included here to illustrate how the series of research conversations were positioned alongside other life demands. In 2004-5 I have also worked alongside writing up my research, teaching in a range of institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29/04/2002</td>
<td>Interview with Kate Rivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/05/2002</td>
<td>Interview with Rebecca Jay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/07/2002</td>
<td>Practice run of photograph interaction with Lucy and Cassie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2002</td>
<td>'Constructions of personal relationships: Older women in conversation', 1st year postgraduate conference, Open University, Milton Keynes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/08/2002</td>
<td>Conversation with Kate and Rebecca about their photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/10/2002</td>
<td>Interview with Helen Jacobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/10/2002</td>
<td>Interview with Millicent Robertson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/10/2002</td>
<td>Interview with Marie Richards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/11/2002</td>
<td>Conversation with Helen and Marie about their photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/11/2002</td>
<td>Interview with Stella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2003</td>
<td>&quot;I think you know the story&quot;, Second stories: An analyst's orientation to a participant's story', Postgraduate Seminar in Biography and Narrative, Gender Institute, LSE, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2003</td>
<td>'Constructions of personal relationships: Older women in conversation', Open University, Work in Progress Seminar, Milton Keynes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On 26th April 2003 my twin granddaughters were born. They were born just after midnight with Abigail Daisy (4lb 10oz) born a minute before Katie Poppy (4lb 12oz).

August 2003
'Constructing relationships in talk about age'; International Conference of Critical Psychology, University of Bath, Bath

September 2003
Constructing second stories in talk, BPS Social Psychology Conference, LSE, London

Oct 2003
"Doesn't she look old": Talking about age', Open University Postgraduate Research Day, Milton Keynes

26/11/2003
Conversation with Ellen and Audrey about their photographs

Dec 2003
"It's easier if I ask you them Mrs Awkward": Constructions of familiarity in relationships', CABS/CPA seminar, London

February 2004
"That's my grandma when she was forty...but doesn't she look old": Constructing personal relationships in talk around photographs', WSCA Annual Convention, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, US

May 2005
'Remembering' in talk about relationships, Present and Future Pasts, Centre for Biographical and Ageing Studies 10th Anniversary Conference, Open University, Milton Keynes
References


References


Sage.


