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*Print these out in COLOUR if you can*

**BNIM Intensive**

## **Materials Booklet –Interviewing**

**Please BRING [THESE SESSION MATERIALS] WITH YOU.**

**Duplicates will **not** be available.**

Taken from the free *BNIM Short Guide and Detailed Manual*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Hi!

We're looking forward to meeting you.

By now you should have had a look at the *BNIM Short Guide and Detailed Manual*. You may find the *Short Guide* helpful. These 'Materials Brochures' are designed to be read AFTER looking at the Guide and Manual.

## 1.1. So, what's the methodology?

1) The initial Sub-session starts with a SQUIN, a Single *Question for Inducing Narrative*.

Were you to eventually use BNIM for your own research, you will need to design your own SQUIN. On p.5 below, you will find a template for designing a first draft form for an actual or imagined SQUIN.

2) On p.8, you will find a summary of BNIM interviewing principles.

- The most difficult thing you have to do in the BNIM interviewing training is *learning to push for PINs*. *PIN = a Particular Incident Narrative*.

On p.9, one column has the right sort of PIN-seeking questions ( ; the other has what you will be tempted to do instead. *The differences are small but crucial*. You will speed up your interview-capacity much faster if you study the two columns very closely beforehand.

3) On p.10, you will find the timesheet that we will use to time your first practice interview. You will notice that there is

2-minutes for setting-up

**4 minutes for the initial subsession 1**

2 minutes for an interlude

**12 minutes for subsession 2**

10 minutes for discussing the principles of / targets for/ being a better BNIM interviewer

4) Starting on p.11 below, you will find the most recent version of the BNIM NOTEPAD that you will use in your BNIM interview practice. If you familiarise yourself with it, it will be less surprising when you come to use it. A blank notepad sheets you can reproduce for your future interviews is on p.16.

5) Key to learning how to do BNIM interviewing is knowing *what to do in the interlude between subsession 1 and subsession 2*. The task of doing the notes and the task of preparing subsession 2 is illustrated on p. 14 onwards. You will find it difficult but rewarding to work through the example

6) *In subsession 2*, you use your notes and go on noting to follow the 'faint line in the sand' of subsession 1 and then its extended development in subsession 2. The key rule is ***don't go back or the gestalt goes crack!***. To clarify what this mean, the example of BNIM noting given on p.11 is discussed in detail on p.14. This way, you can see precisely where the interviewer *is* at that moment in their deepening and following the gestalt..... and what topics and questions they *cannot go back to*.....

7) The final note on ABOUT-PINs and pushing for more detail to get an IN-PIN is of the utmost importance. To succeed in getting full value from BNIM, please read this last section very thoughtfully.

Give yourself time to get familiar with the materials, which will be used on the first days.. It might take a day.

## 1.2. In what ways the exercises in the 'interview training' can't be like the real thing...

### 1. Shortness of time.

BNIM interviews typically last around 2 to 3 hours. In the training, we do not have time for even one full-interview. So we give you experiences of condensed BNIM interviews, much shorter (20 minutes, 40 minutes). Therefore the 'time for both partners to slowly think', the non-rushed nature of actual BNIM interviews, cannot be replicated. Please bear this in mind. However, we hope you will be surprised by how fruitful and supportive even the short period of time used for the abbreviated interview trainings can be.

### 2. As interviewer, your interviewees are unusually BNIM-conscious!

This means that as a trainee BNIM interviewer, you will have 'interviewees' who know too much about the methodology. This can lead to 'too easy interviews' or 'too difficult ones' in the trainee practice interviews. As interviewee, you will know what the 'interviewer' wants. Make it not too easy for him or her to get PINs from you.... Give him or her practice in *not getting PINs straight away*....

### 3. Selection of items for and in subsession 2 of your practice interviews

*In an actual BNIM interview*, you will have designed your SQUIN to fulfil the needs of *your* research question, and the interviewee comes along to support your research and follow the lines of inquiry that *you* raise. After the SQUIN, it is true that the interviewee provides in subsession 1 all the agenda items for subsession 2. However, the interviewee is likely to feel it natural that, in sub session 2, you determine which of the subsession 1 items you select for further inquiry and how long you pursue each item for.

However. Unlike in real life.....

*In a 'training interview'*, it is the *interviewee* who selects the SQUIN that she would like to be trainee-interviewed about.

As interviewer, you have no Central Research Question (CRQ) that is embodied in the SQUIN and then guides your selection of subsession 1 topics to ask about in subsession 2, and to guide when and how you stay with one item or move onto the next,

As a result, *as a trainee interviewer in a 'taster' practice interview*,

(a) you will feel more at sea (than you would be in your own designed research interview) about which subsession 1 items to pick for subsession 2; and

(b) in subsession 2, you will have no CRQ-criteria to use in deciding what to follow up, what not to follow up, and how long to stay with any topic that you do follow up. Good for your intuition!

### 1.3. How to select items in the short 'practice' interview?

(1) You need to be attentive to what is emotionally salient to the interviewee who chose which SQUIN she or he wanted to be practice-interviewed with. Take as your implicit CRQ: *"Explore what seems to your interviewee to be most important for her personally to explore"*.

(2) You need to choose those *'items' that seem most likely to yield PINs quite quickly* (signalled by emotion-words or value-terms, or non-linguistic markers of personal importance). Once you have got your first Particular Incident Narrative (PIN), the interviewee should typically start to be happier to operate at that level of prior original experiencing (from which the PINs emerge) which is where, consciously or unconsciously, they can comfortably do the work of biographic narration.

You will take part in nine practice interviews over the two days of the BNIM-Interviewing Intensive. By the time of the sixth one, you will feel fairly confident that you can mostly get it right and can notice when/how you got it wrong.....

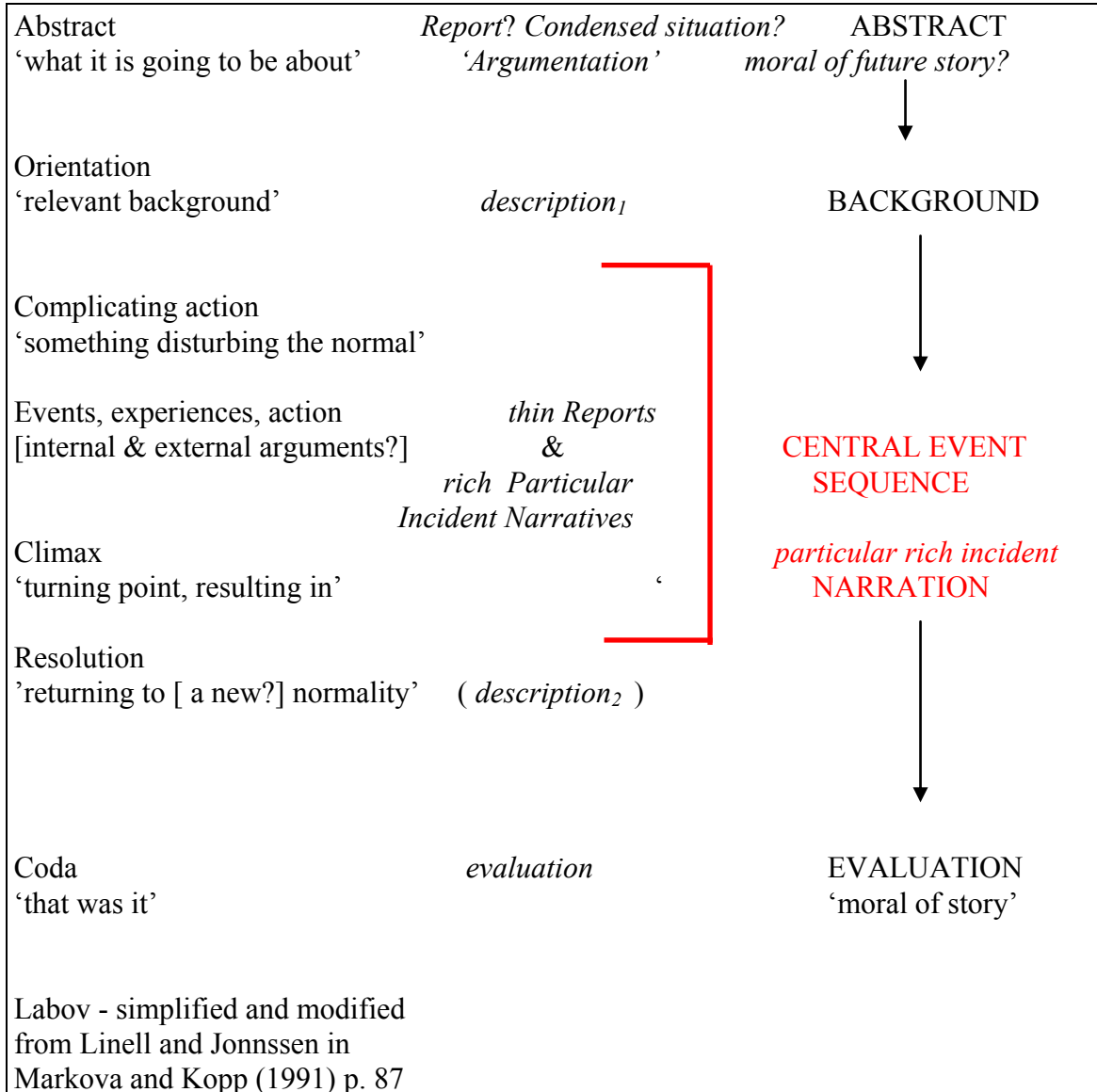
All this may sound a bit negative.

It is important that you be in a position to expect some of the 'frustrations inherent in training' and so not be thrown by them. There's quite a lot of hard work in unlearning and re-learning

However, our experience of these trainings is that people (including ourselves!) are quite exhilarated by them and get much more than they expected. We hope that will include you!

## 2. LABOV'S NARROW CONCEPT OF NARRATIVE,

This diagram includes references to the BNIM textsorts, including DARNE/GIN <sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> DARNE/DRAPES refer to the 'textsorts', the manners in which a topic may be spoken about. This is a term used for BNIM interpretation work. [See Booklet TWO: DARNE Box]. Don't worry about the textsorts at this stage.

The textsorts include:

Description	Argumentation		(Condensed Situation)
Report	Narrative	Evaluation	
GIN = generic incident narrative		PIN =	IN-pins    ABOUT-pins

**3. DESIGNING YOUR SQUIN THAT STARTS SUB-SESSION 1**

**3. 1. SQUIN –Design-Your-Own proforma**

The Central Research Question for my project as a whole is.....

The Central Research Question for my BNIM interviews is.....

The type of person I’m planning this SQUIN for is.....

=====

“As you know, I’m researching.....

“So, can you please tell me..... the/your story of.....

*Don’t bother to read this out: it is standard for all SQUINs*

.... All those events and experiences that were important for you, personally.

I’ll listen, I won’t interrupt. I’ll just take some notes in case I have any questions for after you’ve finished. Please take your time. ... Please begin wherever you like...

### 3.2. Choosing a SQUIN for the practice interviews + 3 sub-sessions

#### 3.2.1. SQUIN: Single Question aimed at inducing Narrative(s)

Please tell me

*the story of... [choose one]*

- 1. the last/the first/ important turning point in your life*
- 2. a chosen aspect of your life before X, after Y, from N to M*
- 3. how you came to change your view of things*
- 4. your relationship with a person you've known for at least 10 years*

All the experiences and the events which were important for you, personally, ~~[up to now]~~,

Start wherever you like

Please take the time you need : *[we've got about [4] minutes for your story]*

I'll listen first, I won't interrupt

I'll just take some notes in case I have any further questions for after you've finished telling me about it all" *[Repeat first para. "So please..."]*

#### 3.2.2. The THREE SUB-SESSIONS

**ONE.** Initial SQUIN - and initial response/account

- facilitation but no direction or interruption  
"any way they tell it is fine"; let silence happen.....
- note taking; cue-words on topics for Subsession 2

**AFTER 2-10 MINUTES** -----

**TWO.** CUED-Questions on Mentioned Topics in order only

- only topics raised in subsession ONE
- only in the order of their raising
- only using the words used by the narrator
- follow up topics, note, push for IN-PINs (until/unless 'no')

**AFTER A 'WEEK':** *maybe after analysis of material from ONE / TWO*

**THREE.** All further questions relevant to the

- Interests and Theories of the Researcher
- some topics may arise from ONE or TWO
- others almost certainly won't

## 4. KEY PRINCIPLES of BNIM INTERVIEWING

1. **Two subsessions separated by a normally short interlude. You need a minimum 2 hour slot:** if possible, 3 hours, though you are unlikely to use all of it. Total time normally 90-120 minutes, first subsession one-third of time, second sub session two-thirds. You write private field-notes immediately afterwards. You can do an optional *third subsession* but only after subsessions one and two have been inspected.
2. **Subsession 1: the SQUIN.** You ask only one carefully designed question to start the interviewee off in telling their story. This question known as the SQUIN (the single question aimed at inducing narrative) is designed with several components all of which are necessary for the interview to work well. In the interview you must deliver the question as designed, not adding to it or missing bits out, or varying the wording. A car only works with all its components in place, properly sequenced. The same is true of initial subsessions programmed by the initial and initiating SQUIN.
3. **Subsession 1: facilitation, but no interrupting or intervening** until the unprompted interviewee insists that they have finished. Part of the SQUIN is a promise by you not to interrupt or intervene. Keep this promise. Even if the interviewee asks you to guide them, you must support them deciding whatever they wish to do with the task. Even if you cannot see the point of what they are saying, especially if you cannot see it, you must support them in saying whatever they do say and in not saying whatever they don't say. Facilitation but no direction. You destroy a joke if you interrupt before the punchline; you destroy the BNIM interview at the moment that you attempt -- or consent -- to co-steer the interviewee. Instead you support them: wherever they take their story at whatever length is right.
4. **Subsession 1: making cue-phrase notes.** You make notes of 3 to 4 words of the key topic-phrases that they use as they tell their story. These key phrases will be used by you in subsession 2 to cue them back to bits of their subsession 1 overall story, when you ask them to amplify those points. Make notes on the special BNIM notepad.
5. **Interlude.** When they insist, unprompted, that they have finished their story, you normally have an interlude in which you choose items on the notepad to be probed in subsession 2. This interlude might last on average from 3-10 minutes. The selected items must include the 1<sup>st</sup> item that they brought up, the last item and your selection in between. For each item chosen, you underline the cue-phrase and write down one 'magic word' from the list at the top of the BNIM notepad for insertion into the 'magic formula' you will later use in subsession 2. [“*You said [cue-phrase].. Can you remember particular [magic word] ....?*”] Practice interviews: 3 minutes to select 3 magic words!
6. **Subsession 2: pushing for (IN)-PINs.** You use the notepad to “push for PINs” on each items selected. Particularly on the 1<sup>st</sup> one. A 'PIN' is a *Particular Incident Narrative, as exemplified in the footnote at the bottom of each page of the BNIM notepad.* You push for them by using the *magic formula at the top of each notepad page* – “*You said [cue-phrase]. Can you remember a particular [magic word]... how it all happened?*”. During their response, you continue making notes of their key phrases. After the response, *after checking the PIN formula at the bottom of the notepad page*, if you see that you did not get a PIN, you use the magic formula again, revising it as necessary. In difficult cases, and to start with, you may need 7 or 8 repetitions to get to a PIN. Do your best to stay with an item till you have obtained at least one rich IN-PIN or a clear refusal: it is crucial to push for a PIN on the first item.
7. **Subsession 2: you can leave items out but you must not go back** to earlier items. “If you go back, the gestalt goes crack”. Use only their cue-words; use only the magic formula provided; use only your selection from the list of magic words to fit into that formula. In addition, do not try to combine items, or communicate your thoughts about anything. Subsession 2 ends with their last PIN (or refusal) raised in relation to the last item they originally mentioned at the end of their initial subsession 1.
8. After the interview (1+2), write your **free-associative debriefing field notes**. Easily skimmed and not taken seriously, rich field-notes are crucial for supplementing your tape and for starting the post-session process of your informal tacit-sense-making. And if your tape-recording fails.....!
9. **Subsession 3 (optional and at least a week later).** If, after interpreting the material from sub sessions 1 and 2, you find you have further questions or questions arising, you can arrange a subsession 3. When found necessary, this is most frequently takes the form of a more conventional semi-structured depth interview



**5. PIN-SEEKING (narrative-pointed) QUESTIONS, and others**

Topics in the order mentioned and in the terms used by the interviewee	‘Narrative-tolerating’ questions which only ‘allow for’ a narrative response but don’t point very strongly at one, or which even ‘point elsewhere’  They might at best be ‘dangerous candidates’ ↓ for pro-narrative nudges ‘images, thoughts, feelings’ Danger: not getting back to 5-10	‘Narrative -pointed’ questions CUE-QUINs- <i>underline in each draft answer the BNIM-M word you chose from the list below: ...</i> 1-4 → 5-10  1 situation → 5. day 2. time 6. occasion 3. phase 7. happening 4. example 8. event 9. incident 10. moment
Mother – hit me once when I wouldn’t go to school	Why do you <i>think</i> she did that? What’s your <i>understanding</i> of how that happened? How did you <i>feel</i> at the time? What do you <i>think/feel now</i> about that? What <i>meaning</i> do you think that had for your life? <i>Tell me about that</i> Tell me about <i>that kind of situation</i> Do you remember anything <i>more about your role in that situation</i>	“You said XXX...[Their Cue-Phrase] Can you remember that particular <i>day</i> in any more detail? How it started? How <i>all that happened</i> ?
Mummy was angry when I was small	What <i>sort of person</i> were you at the time? What was she <i>like</i> as a mother? Do you think she was <i>justified</i> ? How might this <i>shape your life</i> ? <i>Was she always</i> like that?	You’ve spoken about when she hit you once when you wouldn’t go to school. ( <i>After being answered</i> ) . Does any other incident come to mind?
I’m always feeling stupid <sup>2</sup>	Can you <i>tell me more</i> about feeling stupid? What do you <i>mean</i> by ‘feeling stupid’? How would you <i>explain</i> that you get this feeling? <i>Can you tell me more about that kind of situation, kind of feeling</i>	Can you remember a <i>moment</i> when you felt particularly stupid, a <i>moment</i> that stands out? Do you remember any particular <i>occasion</i> when you didn’t feel (so) stupid?
Father – can’t recall anything about my father	Why do you think you can’t? Can you <i>say more</i> about that? Do you think this is a <i>common occurrence</i> ? What do you <i>think this says</i> about him or about you? You <i>must feel</i> bad about that... how awful! <i>I feel</i> for you.	Do you remember any particular <i>event relating to</i> your father? Have you ever had any sort of <i>image</i> of him? Or <i>feelings</i> about him? [if yes] How did that happen? What <i>thoughts</i> have you (ever) had about not recalling anything about your father?

A narrative-seeking question (a question pointed towards narrative) is a ‘closed and pointed’ question which aims to induce a narrative response, and to discourage a non-narrative response, such as the production of a theory, an argument, an unhistorical description, a justification, a declaration of official values, an expression of felt emotions etc.

<sup>2</sup> In terms of arrowing back to 1-6 on the right hand side, these next 2 examples are increasingly difficult: the last one requires a pro-narrative nudge.

**6. TIME-SHEET for a PRACTICE BNIM interview 4 + 12**

Inter-vals	Planned Times –	Activity	
		<i>Interviewer</i>	<i>Interviewee</i>
		<b>2 minutes set-up time</b>	
00.00		Fill in ‘Planned Times’  Check that you are using the one-page BNIM note-pad to take notes	You give interviewer your SQUIN sheet, having told them the topic they should interview you on
+2		<b>4 minutes initial subsession</b>	
		Use their SQUIN-sheet to deliver the full SQUIN (no rush) Take BNIM notes of key-phrases for subsession 2	Interviewee: Respond to SQUIN. Take all the time 4 minutes
+5		1 minute before end, say quietly “ <i>We have 1 minute left</i> ” or “ <i>Anything else you’d like to add?</i> ”	
+6		<b>Up to 2 minute Interlude</b>	
		You select <b>first + last phrase and 1(N) other</b> . For each, you select + write down on notepad the <b>one best ‘magic word’</b> for your initial N-pointed Question Start again when ready	Interviewee:  Silent reflection and any notes on experience
+ 8		<b>12 minutes Subsession 2</b> (3 minutes x 3 for 3 PINs, first triad)	
		Using BNIM notepad, push for PINs on each of your N selected key-phrases from subsession 1 (including last one) Continue BNIM-noting. Do not leave any key-phrase, until a PIN has been clearly given or refused. You can take 30-second time out to get better Q from interviewee or observer. Then go back in role. <i>Don’t end early – data is valuable!</i> Thank interviewee for interview + “ <i>Any other points you want to mention?</i> ”	Interviewee:  Respond to questioning. Unlike subsession 1, give shortish answers.  This gives the interviewer the chance to work a little for their PINs, the practice they need
+15		Say quietly “We have 3 minutes left”	
+ 18 - > 28		<b>10 minutes</b> Interviewee feedback: learning about better BNIM interviewer practice	

## 7. THE BNIM NOTEPAD

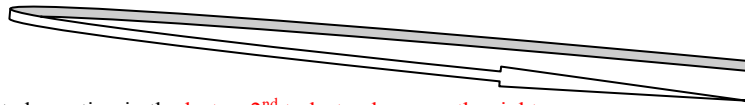
### 7.1. BNIM Notepad – the three bundles (purple, yellow, red) in close-up

stand ard quest ion	topic key- phra se	<i>nudge towards narrative Q- only if necessary</i> <b>PURPLE</b>	Beta n-pointed question  <b>YELLOW</b> <b>RED</b>	Alpha n-pointed question  “IT ALL” “ALL THAT” <b>BLUE</b>												
“You said	<b>XX XX</b>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <i>Situational evocation– where it all happened – the café</i> </div> <p><i>Do you have any images or feelings about that, that struck you at the time [or only if necessary, “strike you now?”]<sup>3</sup> Or any thoughts? [Then go back to 'images' as above]</i></p>	<p>Do you remember [any more about] that</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>particular</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">any } 1-4                      6-10</p> <p style="text-align: center;">→</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">1. situation</td> <td style="width: 50%;">5. day</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. time</td> <td>6. occasion</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. phase</td> <td>7. happening</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. example</td> <td>8. event</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>9. incident</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>10. moment</td> </tr> </table> <p>How it all happened?</p>	1. situation	5. day	2. time	6. occasion	3. phase	7. happening	4. example	8. event		9. incident		10. moment	<p>Do you remember any more details about how</p> <p><i>all that happened?</i></p> <p><i>it all happened?</i></p> <p><i>all that occurred?</i></p>
1. situation	5. day															
2. time	6. occasion															
3. phase	7. happening															
4. example	8. event															
	9. incident															
	10. moment															

Unspecific non-directional prompt – use ‘within’ a response for hesitation

“Can you remember anything more about all that ?”

“ Does Any other thing that happened come to mind?”



YOUR AIM is an N-pointed question in the **last or 2<sup>nd</sup> to last column on the right.**

TO GET THERE, you may need **first to move up-and-left** and **then move down-back –and- right**, towards **Beta-Red** or **Alpha-Blue**

In case of doubt, use “**Beta-Red**”! And when this is not appropriate, the less specific **Beta-Yellow** often works to get back towards **Beta-Red** on the right!

The DANGER COLUMN is the ‘Purple’ one which is a non-narrative present-tense question. It is a necessary occasional tactic. The danger is that you slide off into pursuing images and feelings and argument at the expense of narrative. The ‘tactic’ has taken over the ‘strategic direction’ and your interview becomes non-narrative... CAREFUL! TECHNICAL NOTE: the stress on “**it all happened**” in the SQUIN, in Beta-Blue and in Alpha. This phrase should suggest to the interviewee that (a) there’s a single coherent narrative to be told (the “it”) and (b) that it is to be composed from several events (the “all”). Use ‘Alpha-blue’ only when a particular “it all” is subjectively established.

<sup>3</sup> Most people are visualisers. [Some (blind people) will respond to questions about other modalities: smell, hearing, touch, emotional feel, how their body felt (kinaesthetic), etc. Everybody’s different.]. Do ‘reconstruction of the scene’ (e.g. “*the café where it all happened*”) any way that works.....

before moving back to...  
the right hand side words to go for your PIN.....

## 7.2. Blank page of BNIM BNIM notepad – please use in your pilot and other interviews

1. Emotional recognition (if necessary); working through / time out (if necessary)
2. Push towards narrative, push for PINs  
(if necessary via left-hand bundles **back towards the right-hand one**)

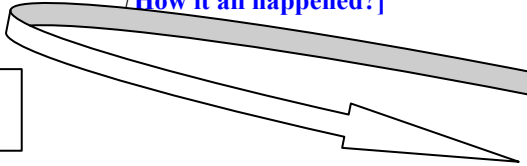
Use this magic formula + choice of magic word from One of the three bundles

<p>You said XX- below their words</p>	<p><b>“Do you remember (any more about) that particular.....</b></p>	<p>...time –situation phase – example period</p>	<p><b>occasion - incident event – moment – happening, day</b></p>
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[any *image-feeling*  
*thought?*]

[**How it all happened?**]

*Scenic Reconstruction – where it all  
happened – “the café”*



**ROUND 2 MAGICWORDS    ROUND 3 MAGICWORDS    ROUND N MAGICWORDS**

**PIN = Particular Incident Narrative**

*“We were there, a Saturday evening...he said...she said...What I do is...I’m thinking ...Then what happens is...  
Afterwards I remember feeling (I’m still feeling it a bit) feeling.... Now I feel a bit different, I feel... ... Looking back I  
think it was quite a critical moment, because....”*

### 7.3. Example of interlude work: selecting, underlining cue-phrase, selecting magic-word

1) Imagine that the interviewee responded to the SQUIN by saying

*“It’s difficult to start. I don’t know what to say. Well, my mother hit me once when I was small”.*

2) *At the time, you wrote down* on the left side of your notepad

*Difficult to start. Mother hit once when small*

3) *During the interlude*, your first task is to underline the words they spoke (the cue- phrase XX) to put into the first part of the magic formula “*You said XX...*”

4) So during the interlude, *inspecting your notes, you underline* as follow

*Difficult to start. Mother hit once when small*

5) Your second task is to *select one from the list of magic words* which one you are going to use in subsession 2 when you speak the second part of the magic formula: “*Can you remember.... a particular YYY?*”.

6) For that first item, you are lucky. Because the interviewer started by referring to a unique event, you can select from the ‘bunch of words’ on the right of the notepad. These are “**moment, happening, day occasion, incident, event,**”. You decide that the best word for such a micro-action of hitting is “**day**”. You write down your selected magic word for use after the interlude. Your notepad now reads

*Difficult to start. Mother hit once when small DAY*

7) You then move down your list through all the candidate items for being used, and, for each candidate you choose (not the others), you underline the cue-phrase and in block capitals (to avoid confusion) next to that cue-phrase you write down the selected magic word [selected from the three ‘bunches of magic words at the top’ of the notepad] with which you plan to start the N-seeking questioning on that item.

Another example. For the last item on the ‘Notepad example’,  
*I don’t like talking about my father, I can’t recall anything about him*  
the interlude work of underlining and magic-word-writing might be  
*I don’t like talking about my father, I can’t recall anything about him FEELING*

To summarise the interlude: you select the first, the last, and other items in your notes. For each item chosen, you underline the cue-phrase and you write down the chosen magic word from one of the 3 bundles that you will – in subsession 2 -- insert into the full magic formula

*“You said XX [cue-phrase] ... ..  
Can you remember...any particular YYY [magic word].  
[How it all happened.]*

**7.4. Example page, see also next 2 pages for discussion**

**FIRST.** If appropriate, verbally recognise any emotional upsetness or difficulty [and only if necessary help work it through] so as\ to help interviewee cope with it. [This may be their difficulty or, in some circumstances, your own]

**SECOND.** Pause, and then move from the ‘emotional recognition’ to N-pointed question:

You said “Do you remember(anything about) ... **time –situation occasion - incident**  
 XX- below (any more about) **phase – example event – moment –**  
 their words that particular..... **period happening, day**  
 [ have you any **IMAGE-feelings** thoughts about that?] **(How it all happened?)**

Mother – hit me once when I wouldn’t go to school **DAY**  
 “She told me this; I’ve forgotten”

Mummy was angry when I was small **TIME**  
 2a) Doesn’t matter. // University was very peculiar **PERIOD**  
 2a1) Married in my final year  
 2a2) Lots of friends in 1<sup>st</sup> year  
 2a3) Missed grandfather **EXAMPLE**  
 2a31) Told me a story once about a mouse  
 2a32) They didn’t tell me when he died  
 2a33) I couldn’t find his grave

I’m always feeling stupid **THOUGHT / IMAGE?**

I always feel good in the countryside **EXAMPLE**

Grandma died before I was born **TIME**

Went to university and did reasonably well **PERIOD**

Father – can’t recall anything **FEELINGS**

*Note that you always ask about the first and last item; that you never go backwards; that you push for PINs, especially on the first item so as to set the PIN-target for yourself and your interviewee. The magic words on the right in bold are the best; you use ones in the middle or on the left to get material to be able to circle back and use the ones on the right. “Do you remember any more about that particular occasion (etc); how it all happened”*

**FIRST, N IN MIDDLE, LAST**

*Don’t leave the first and any later chosen sub-session-one item till you get one PIN! Or flat refusal or request not to push that line of questioning further*

Use MAGIC FORMULA at the top of the page (inserting your chosen appropriate magic word):

Be mechanical, stick rigidly to the magic formula at the top of the page: “You said XXX; ...Do you remember....?”.

Try to use straight away or eventually a word from the **right-hand bundle**

AFTER EACH RESPONSE, Pause. Then Check at the bottom of the page to see whether you got a GOOD-ENOUGH PIN or not: If you didn’t get a good-enough PIN, PUSH FURTHER for a PIN on that item, then more IN-PIN detail. Don’t give up too easily – but you must instantly accept a clear request to stop a line of questioning.

<sup>4</sup> **PIN = Particular Incident Narrative:** A close-up story of something that happened at a particular time and place.  
*“We were there, a Saturday evening...he said...she said...What I do is...I’m thinking ...Then what happens is... Afterwards I remember feeling (I’m still feeling it a bit) feeling.... Now I feel a bit different, I feel... ... Looking back I think it was quite a critical moment, because....”*

### 7.5. A note on the diagram on the example first-page of the BNIM notepad

1) For ease of reference here I have inserted numbering into the notes on the example-page. You are unlikely to want to do this in real life!

**2) Your note-taking needs to enable you to be clear about what you can still ask about and what are items that are now closed-off because you have gone beyond them.** This is a way of operationalising the “*You can’t go back or the gestalt goes crack*” philosophy of following the ‘improvised faint line in the sand and deepening it’ – instead of confusing matters by tramping backwards and forwards across the items in your own boots! Without good notes, in a normally long and normally complex interview, you will mess up your interviewee and your interview!

**3) You basically move on a top-left to bottom-right dimension** as you work down the items raised in the initial subsession 1. *Using different columns as you work through the ‘rounds’ of questioning, noting the keywords of their answering, about an item helps you keep clear.*

#### 4) What is the point in the interview that the Example page (p. 14) represents?

In the interlude, the interviewer chose all the items and marked up key cue-phrases for each, with ‘magic words’ from the appropriate ‘three bundles of magic words’.

On item 1: the phrase “*hit me once*” that seemed to promise a pin straight away turned out not to do so. The interviewer might have asked about the moment that the mother told the child that she had hit him once, but either did not see the possibility or decided against it. Since it was the first item, and one should always if one can push for a pin on the first item, it was a shame that this opportunity – for a pin on a different moment than that originally envisaged – was not taken.

On item 2: this item is currently been very productive, and the interviewer is handling it well. She is not fazed by the jump from the original topic focus “*mummy*” to “*University*” but instead she follows the track laid down by the interviewee. She asks about that particular ‘period’ and gets a 3-item response (2a1-3). She chooses to go straight to the third item (2a3). By doing so, she closes off the possibility of going back and asking questions about items 2a1 and 2a2.

On item 2a3 she asks (a bit clumsily) “*You said you missed your grandfather: can you remember any particular example of that?*”. She has just got a 3-item response: 2a31, 2a32, and 2a33.

*This is where she is at the moment. She can see her options.*

The interviewer has not yet got a PIN but might get one from any or all (probably all) of items 2a31- 2a33. If interviewer pushes for a PIN on 2a31, the other two are still open. If she starts with 2a33, the first 2 are closed.

*What should she do?*

Given that all three of these items are very close to PINs, the interviewer should probably *push for a PIN on the first item* (the “first, last, and some in the middle” concept), *envisaging* to do likewise on the next two (2a32, 2a33).

## 8. FROM ABOUT-PIN THROUGH MORE DETAIL TO IN-PIN

### 8.1. An About-pin can hide quite different in-pins: push the In-pin.

In her initial interview Sub-session One, one trainee mentioned in passing that she “did once have some trouble with her daughter”. The interviewer noted the cue-phrase “some trouble with daughter”.

In Sub-session Two, she was pushed for more detail on this, [*“You said you had once some trouble with your daughter: can you give me a particular example of this, one particular occasion when you had that sort of trouble?”*] and, after giving some context, the interviewee said

*“My daughter refused to walk home. I decided she would just have to wait while I went down the street to get her father. She could see me all the way to the house.”*

Unfortunately, the interviewer was satisfied with this ‘about-PIN’, and went on to another cue-phrase from Sub-session One. A mistake.

There are three clear events here:

*(i) the refusal; (ii) the decision; (iii) the action.*

However it is still a very abstract and unfleshed-out account of a particular incident.

*How exactly was “the refusing” done? What was the form of the “deciding”? How did the “action” of going down the street happen? .... We are still not yet in the experience. We don’t hear the words, we have to imagine them. We don’t know the feelings, we have to imagine them.*

We are not yet in the experience because the speaker has not yet spoken *from within* the Particular Incident Experience, from ‘within the PIE’: she is still reporting on it from an emotional distance. It is still an ‘about-PIN’ ----- and not an ‘in-PIN’.

If you had been the interviewer, had received this ‘about-PIN’ and had then said “*Can you tell me in more detail how all that happened?*” and had she been telling, or had she then told, an ‘in-PIN’, the lived experience might have emerged in this more detailed about-PIN, perhaps even an in-PIN (the voice quality would be important to determine which it was):

*“My daughter said quite coolly “I’m not coming. You go if you like but I’m staying here”. I said, just as coolly, though it was quite an effort, “I’ll go and get your father”. We nodded. She could see me all the way. I was quite relaxed as I walked along the sunny street. I felt quite relieved. I thought then, and I think now, we both handled that rather well. The next day, the three of us laughed about the incident. I think we really came together as a family over it”.*



Or, the lived experience might have emerged as very different:

*“My daughter clung to the lamp-post and screamed. I was terrified of what people would think. I hissed at her “You silly idiot! Stay here till your father comes. I’m going to get him”. I then walked fast down the street, hoping desperately that she would come. I said to myself as I walked “You’ve really handled this very badly”, and I was weeping as I shouted through the door for my husband to come. [bursts into tears..... long pause] I never abandoned her like that again..... I can see her white socks now”.*

The point I wish to make is that the original account-from-a-distance –

*“My daughter refused to walk home. I decided she would just have to wait while I went down the street to get her father. She could see me all the way to the house.”*

is quite compatible with either of these two concealed, offered, or pushed for ‘expanded in-PIN versions’. It is the in-PIN detail that you need to grasp the ‘intersubjective’ lived experience that actually happened.<sup>5</sup>

By comparison with the alternative in-PINs given above that it might conceal, you should be able to appreciate better how uninformative such ‘thin-PINs’, ‘about-PINs’, are about the subjectivity we are researching. Hopefully, you would not be satisfied with the original about-PIN, an about\_PIN which is evasive of important ‘lived detail’.

*“My daughter refused to walk home. I decided she would just have to wait while I went down the street to get her father. She could see me all the way to the house.”*

It is partly a question of getting more detail; but as you push for more detail, you may be successful in achieving the more important goal, that of getting the interviewee to move from an ‘about-PIN’ to an ‘in-PIN’ telling.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> If you asked for more detail on two points of this in-PIN, to get “further in”: What two cue-phrases would you use? Why did you select those phrases?

<sup>6</sup> But you must always be prepared to gracefully and completely accept any refusal by the interviewee to probe for more detail and get closer to the original experience. You push gently towards in-PINs, but only as long as they don’t indicate that they want you to stop.

## 8.2. Diagram from about-pin to in-pin

ARGUMENT –

NARRATIVE-

DESCRIPTION

