Jyväskylän yliopiston julkaisuarkisto
Jyväskylä University Digital Archive

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

**This is an electronic reprint of the original article.**
**This reprint *may differ* from the original in pagination and typographic detail.**

**Author(s):** Saarinen, Minna K.; Jahnukainen, Markku T.; Pirttimaa, Raija

**Title:** The Social Networks of People with Intellectual Disabilities during the On-Campus Supported Adult Education Programme

**Year:** 2016

**Version:**

**Please cite the original version:**

Saarinen, M. K., Jahnukainen, M. T., & Pirttimaa, R. (2016). The Social Networks of People with Intellectual Disabilities during the On-Campus Supported Adult Education Programme. Journal of Education and Learning, 5(2), 302-317. https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v5n2p302

All material supplied via JYX is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of the repository collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone who is not an authorised user.

Journal of Education and Learning; Vol. 5, No. 2; 2016
ISSN 1927-5250 E-ISSN 1927-5269
Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education

# The Social Networks of People with Intellectual Disabilities during the On-Campus Supported Adult Education Programme

Minna K. Saarinen[1], Markku T. Jahnukainen[1] & Raija A. Pirttimaa[2]

[1] Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki, Finland

[2] Department of Education, University of Jyvaskyla, Jyvaskyla, Finland

Correspondence: Minna K. Saarinen, Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki, P.O Box 9, Siltavuorenpenger 10, FI-00014, Finland. E-mail: minna.k.saarinen@helsinki.fi

Received: February 7, 2016 Accepted: March 31, 2016 Online Published: April 11, 2016

doi:10.5539/jel.v5n2p302 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v5n2p302

**Abstract**

This article describes the social networks of four young people with intellectual disabilities in supported adult education, focusing on their inclusion in school and leisure environments. A multiple case study approach with content analysis was used. Data were collected through interviews with young people and their family members, relationship maps, observation journals and notes from Personal Futures Planning meetings. Relationships with family members, other relatives and neighbours were close. One participant had a friend of her own age with no disabilities. The other three had varying, superficial peer relationships and friends of the family. All the participants had heterogeneous relationship maps and had no difficulties in nominating the people who were important to them. All of them hoped to make friends with peers without disabilities.

**Keywords:** intellectual disability, inclusion, friendship, social networks, relationship maps

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Background of Friendship*

The concept of friendship is familiar to us all but not easy to define. The word “friendship” has been given many meanings by people of different ages (Reisman, 1979; Aristotle, 1989). The terms “pals”, “friends” and “acquaintances” indicate the varying intimacy of relationships, wherein pals and acquaintances are not as close as friends. “Pal” is a colloquialism also used in written texts (Ikonen, 1991) referring to a companion and a partner; some people use it synonymously with “friend”. Men may talk about pals, instead of friends, more than women (Pitkänen, 1997). An “acquaintanceship” is the most superficial of the three relationships.

People get to know each other and become friends in different communities, such as in schools, workplaces and during free-time activities. Friendships always develop and break up in the context of communities. So that friendships can evolve, individuals have to share surroundings with the other people of the same age. According to Rubin (1980), there are similar characteristics in friendships between people of all ages.

Friends are important parts of life, helping us to become “whole”, improve our well-being and giving zest to life (Janney & Snell, 2006, p. 6). Friends can be seen as a basic premise for a good life. With friends one can do and learn different things, find one’s strengths and weaknesses, abilities and limitations (Furnham, 1989). In terms of people with intellectual disabilities, becoming involved in neighbourhood activities improves their ability to join different groups and choose their company. According to Castles (1996, p. 67), friendship increases emotional security and hence promotes community membership.

Allan (1989) describes friendship as a voluntary, unofficial and personal relationship. Hartup (1993) supports this view, stating that friends are similar kindred spirits because they have many overarching characteristics like age, gender and maybe race. Allan (1989) suggests that a shortage of friendships may prevent a circle of friends from expanding. Although friendship is mainly based on similarity, friends also complement and learn from each other (Rubin, 1980). There are many definitions of and criteria for friendship, the most significant may be that friendship is a relationship based on two people’s genuine encounters and interactions.

Lutfiyya (1991) specifies that trust, discretion and forgiveness are elements of friendship. Friendship is always voluntary, and mutuality and companionship are interlinked with it (Kurth, 1970; Hays, 1988). With a friend one

can truly be oneself because one can expect acceptance and respect (Lutfiyya, 1991). Reisman (1979) asserts that helping and supporting is part of friendship because friendship means reciprocal sharing and receiving.

Friends spend a lot of time with each other because they like to do similar things. Commonly, but not necessarily, friends are the same gender and age (Allan, 1989; Porter & Tomaselli, 1989). Many researchers think that a strong sense of trust, mutuality, togetherness and identification unite friends (Rubin, 1980; Reisman, 1981; Lutfiyya, 1991; Berger, 1993; Janney & Snell, 2006, p. 5). As a relationship, friendship is deep and powerful adjectives are interlinked with it. Amado (1993) observes that friendship is not spontaneous but rather takes time to develop. In addition, Perske (1993) emphasises that friendship is unique. Friendship serves some purpose (Fine, 1981; Allan, 1989; Porter & Tomaselli, 1989). Friendship is not necessarily positive; Rangell (1963) notes that from a psychoanalytic point of view there can be ambivalent and negative feelings in friendship (see also Matheson et al., 2007). Ambivalence and conflicts result from friendship's increased intensity (Eidelson, 1980; Hays, 1985).

Regardless of one's age, friends play an important role (Kennedy & Itkonen, 1996, p. 287). Lewis (1982) states that in addition to friends, people ordinarily have lots of other social relationships that may be daily and significant but which are not friendships. Usually one can have more than a couple of close friends (Lewis, 1982; Matheson, 2007) and not everyone has friends. This consideration matters when someone with a disability meets someone without one.

There is vibrant international discussion on social relationships. Social relationships and acceptance of other people promote students' higher grades (Ward, 2010) and community membership (Forest & Pearpoint, 1992; Ward, 2010). A person is part of a group with its norms, operation models and culture. Belonging to a group and receiving social support is significant for everybody; individuals learn necessary social skills, such as helping and accepting differences, from their friends. With the help of friends, individuals can experience a sense of group solidarity in and feel more divergent individuality as group members.

### *1.2 The Social Networks of Young People with Intellectual Disabilities*

People with intellectual disabilities do not easily develop relationship networks (Whitehouse et al., 2001; McVilly et al., 2006). When a person with an intellectual disability is a fully participating member of society, he or she has an opportunity to become friends with people without disabilities (Lutfiyya, 1991; Ward et al., 2013). Allen (1981) asserts that an individual becomes part of the group with the help of friendship. Friendship depends on an individual's personal characteristics. Many researchers note that friendships are solid between a person with a disability and one without (e.g., Perske & Perske, 1988; Lutfiyya, 1991; Carter et al., 2013). Lutfiyya (1991) describes friendship as based on mutual between two friends. Mutuality indicates reciprocity, presented through friends' open interactions and intimate relationships (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 1989; Lutfiyya, 1991; Kennedy & Itkonen, 1996).

There are numerous psychological, developmental and sociological factors that make friendship important. Friendship improves social, cognitive and social-emotional abilities (Rubin, 1980; Hartup, 1993), provides support and help (Castles, 1996, p. 67) and helps one to "become a person". Further, the more friendships an individual has in early years, the more likely he or she is to have friends in the future (Buhrmester & Furman, 1986). Friendships are part of the social network of someone with disabilities, promoting their full authority in different communities (Strully & Strully, 1985). It is therefore important to consider friendships' foundation for people with disabilities of all ages.

Bogdan and Taylor (1992) and Pottie and Sumarah (2004) contend that people with disabilities find themselves appreciated and loved in their social relationships, finding that they receive more positive treatment than inhumane treatment. They also observe that people without disabilities believe in the abilities and talents of people with disabilities, highlighting that, in relationships, they are seen as individuals with unique characteristics.

Hayne (1997) and Robertson et al. (2001) claim that people with disabilities have sparser social networks than their peers without disabilities. Moreover, Sparrow and Mayne (1990) find that people with disabilities spend their leisure time either alone or with their family. Amado (1993) and Matheson et al. (2007) add that people with intellectual disabilities tend to drift within the group and may have little contact with people without disabilities. However, according to Allard (1975), experiences of belonging to a group increase the value of relationships. The Best Buddies concept has also arrived in Finland (from the United States), which promotes friendships between people with disabilities and people without disabilities (Hardman & Christine, 2006; Oulasvirta, 2010, p. 15)—friends are found on websites. The pilot is being used in thirty Finnish cities and through this the number of friends of people with disabilities has increased. Oulasvirta (2010, p. 13) shows that 79 per cent of the respondents in the study were able to find a true friend with Best Buddies, especially women. The objective of this study is to

describe the On-Campus students' social networks during the program, especially paying attention to the question of friendships.

## 2. Method

### *2.1 The Context of the Study*

Data was collected during the On-Campus programme in Finland. During the programme the social lives of persons with intellectual disabilities in school and leisure-time environments were explored extensively, as described by the young people themselves and their family. The On-Campus programme tailored an individual teaching schedule for four young people with disabilities studying at university, vocational school and a social services academy. The Finnish On-Campus programme was developed from the Canadian model (Uditsky et al., 1998; Pierce, 2001). The programme is based on the inclusive values and the directives for equality between people accepted by the United Nations General Assembly (1994). Although the programme is delivered through educational institutions, this study also considers leisure-time social relationships, as relationships from educational institutions often transfer into free time.

### *2.2 The Participants*

Two of the four participants of this study studied at university (one in the Department of Teacher Education and the other the Department of Physical Education) and the other two studied at a social services academy and at a vocational school respectively. They all attended auditing courses only, unlike their classmates, they did not have full student status. The four students were aged between 17 and 35. Maria, 17, was studying the clothing trade at a vocational school; 35-year-old Linnea was studying at a social services academy; 20-year-old Emilia was studying both in the Department of Teacher Education at the university and at a social services academy; and 24-year-old Tuomas was studying in the Department of Physical Education at the university. Two of the four students had completed their compulsory education according to the customary curriculum and had been in special education for specific language impairment; one had completed his compulsory education according to the syllabus of training education for people with intellectual disabilities (i.e., a fully individualized curriculum, see Pirttimaa & Kontu, 2010).

### *2.3 Data Collection*

Data was collected by two means; using relation maps and interviews. The relationship maps (see Figure 1) were drawn two to four times during the On-Campus programmes, depending on the length of studies of each participant. The relationship map efficiently presents an explicit idea of someone's social life. The students, accompanied by their family, independently determined where a nominated name was placed on the relationship map, and I acted as a secretary on these occasions. The participants were able to review the nominations and see me writing on the maps according to their comments. The map has four fields: family, friends, members of communities and authorities. The names of those closest to the person are written closest to their name, while those who are not so close are listed farther away (Enos, 1992, 1995). Every On-Campus student had a relationship map filled out in pursuance of interviews, and the students and their parents attended the interviews. When negotiating the relationship maps, students as well as their parents were interviewed. Interviews were based on the OVAALI interview method. Saloviita's (1995) OVAALI is a handbook aimed at the evaluation and development of the quality of disability services. Its themes are: participation, freedom of choice, appreciation, activeness, presence and independence. The interviews of the four students used questions adapted from OVAALI's "participation" section. The total number of relationship maps was four and transcribed interview data consists of 84 pages. In addition, notes written by the teachers in the On-Campus programme's follow-up meetings and observation journals were utilised as support material. The student's present state and previous state were outlined in the follow-up meetings.

### *2.4 Data Analysis*

This study is a qualitative case study. Social constructionism emphasizing the student's active role and interactivity is the ontological basis (Berger & Luckman, 1994, pp. 207-212). According to Laine et al. (2007, p. 11), a case study inherently focuses on one case or a small group of cases. In this study, I employed multiple case studies because there were four cases (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 69; Yin, 1993, p. 5). Case studies representing multiple case studies tend to involve different problems to those of studies involving only one case (Bryman & Burgess, 1994, p. 143). In this study, the richness of the work lay particularly in the multiple cases.

Data were analysed by the first author using qualitative content analysis (Patton, 2002). First, the material was grouped and arranged chronologically. The transcribed interviews were read through, and then the relationship maps were examined. The data concerning every student was organized and coded (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Moreover, memos were employed to support the analysis. These included notes and thoughts about the codes and descriptions of networks (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 193).

### *2.5 The Reliability and Ethicality of the Study*

The question of reliability lies in the collection of data, analyses, summaries, conclusions, the commitment of participants and the reporting of the results (Ely et al., 1991, p. 93). This study applied Lincoln and Cuba's (1985) reliability criteria: correspondence, transferability, the assessment of the research situations and confirmation. Correspondence was illustrated in the research environments' familiarity to the first author. As a researcher, she was involved in the On-Campus students' study contexts and was able to gain their trust. This was the starting point for the interviews and collecting relationship maps. The assessment of the research situation is seen in the study; variation was denoted in the researchers, the context and the phenomenon studied (Tynjälä, 1991, p. 391). Triangulation simplifies the complexity of a case study (Laine, 2007, p. 23). Data triangulation was utilised in the study—material was collected through interviews and relationship maps and therefore used different methods and different sources. Methodological triangulation was also used—the study used different data collection and research methods. Despite its difficulty, triangulation improves reliability, as Ely et al. (1991) state.

## 3. Findings

In this study the case study approach was used based on a multiple-case array. In the following the main findings are presented using the case descriptions concerning the social networks of young people with intellectual disabilities

### *3.1 Linnea*

For Linnea, the relationship map was drawn up three times. At the beginning of the first autumn term, Linnea's mother made the map with me and Linnea contributes nothing. Linnea's map centred upon her mother's friends of her age. Linnea was not acquainted with people of her own age. Her close network contained her mother, two aunts and an uncle and his wife. There were four names mentioned. There were thirteen nominations in the friends and neighbours network. The closest neighbour was Hilkka, who took care of Linnea occasionally and used to send her off to school. There was another woman in this network who took care of Linnea occasionally. These two people were close to Linnea.

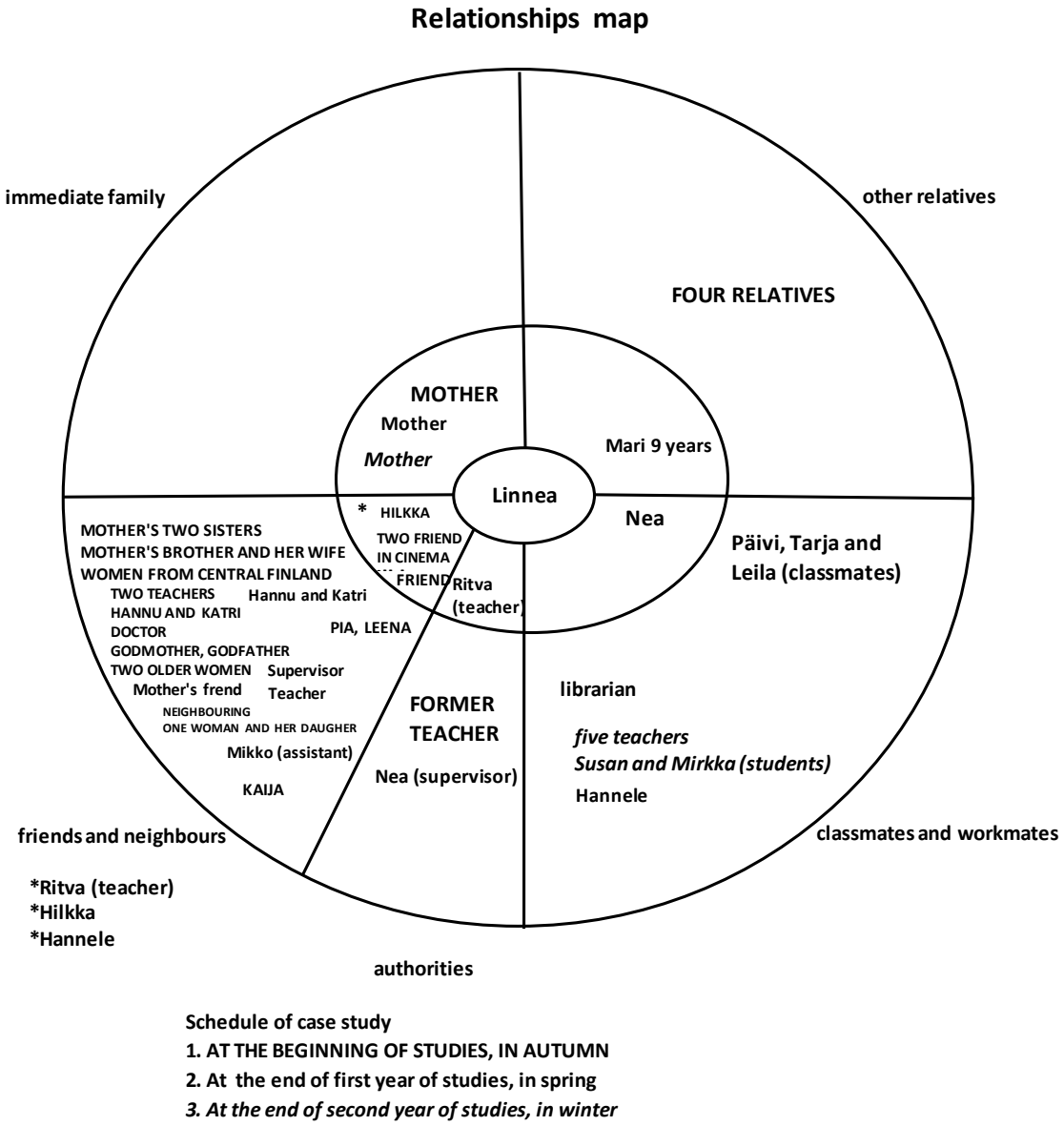


Figure 1. Linnea's relationship map

The friends and neighbours network also included a woman from Central Finland, Linnea's former teacher and her supervisor from the work activity centre. The mother did not count these people as part of the authorities network. Both the former teacher and the supervisor had taken care Linnea at one time. This part of the relationship map also covered one elderly lady and an intellectual disability specialist who tended Linnea (and Linnea's mother had also taken care of the specialist's children). Linnea's godparents were categorised in this network as were two very old women, Bertta and Martta. One was an acquaintance, while the other was a neighbour. Martta took care of Linnea; Bertta and Hilla also took care of Linnea as needed. Kaija, a neighbour, was a person to turn to when needing support. Linnea's leisure time activities included dancing, Hannu and Katri, and a mother and daughter, Pia and Leena. Only an On-Campus supervisor and a camp instructor were named in the authorities network. There were no classmates listed but Linnea's mother hoped that Linnea would gain some during her studies.

At the end of the school year, in the spring, the relationship map looked completely different. For instance, under the friends and neighbours network, the nearest was a friend of mother who sent Linnea to school and Hilkka. Under this network there was the previous supervisor from centre for daily activities, the teacher, her mother's friend, and Hannu and Katri. There was a new name, On-Campus teacher Ritva, who had become an important person to the family. In addition, Linnea had a close relationship with social services student Hannele. As for the

relatives, this field covered the same names save for the appearance of nine-year-old second cousin Mari.

There were changes under the classmates and workmates network; nominations had proliferated. Nea was nominated as a close "classmate", even though she was a trainee of the On-Campus programme. From the social services academy were two nursing students, Päivi and Tarja, and Leila, an older social services student who took Linnea to different places at school. Leila had approached Linnea at the beginning of the On-Campus programme and had brought much joy to Linnea, coming to talk to her and working with her on independent classwork. The academy librarian was also listed here; a co-worker Linnea had got to known via supported work. The extract below demonstrates how networks emerged in the course of the On-Campus studies.

> Something new and groundbreaking has happened on the front of classmates and fellow workers. Päivi and Tarja, practical nursing students, have brought something into this lobe. Even though they aren't true friends, they are support people. Sara, the librarian from the academy of social studies, is also included in and she is well able to support Linnea. In the autumn, Linnea met Leila, who is a student. This student has brought joy to Linnea; she goes and talks to Linnea and has taken her with her when there is independent work. (Linnea's follow-up meeting and the making of the second relationship map/MS)

We filled in the relationship map for the third time in the autumn of the second year, close to Christmas. In comparison with previous maps, the following had appeared: Mikko, a personal assistant, had become more central in the friends and neighbours section. A former employee of the work centre, a man named Jaakko, was also listed here. The greatest changes were in the classmates and workmates network. Five teachers and two students were included. However, the names of the students had changed: Leila, Päivi and Tarja were no longer there and instead, there was a general student, Susan, and a social education student, Mirkka.

### *3.2 Emilia*

I only compiled two relationship maps for Emilia because in the spring term she had to discontinue her studies due to long-term sick leave (over two months) resulting from depression. The first relationship map, drawn up with Emilia in the autumn, showed where Emilia positioned herself in her On-Campus studies. The second map illustrated the initial situation of the On-Campus studies, and it was formulated in the middle of the same term.

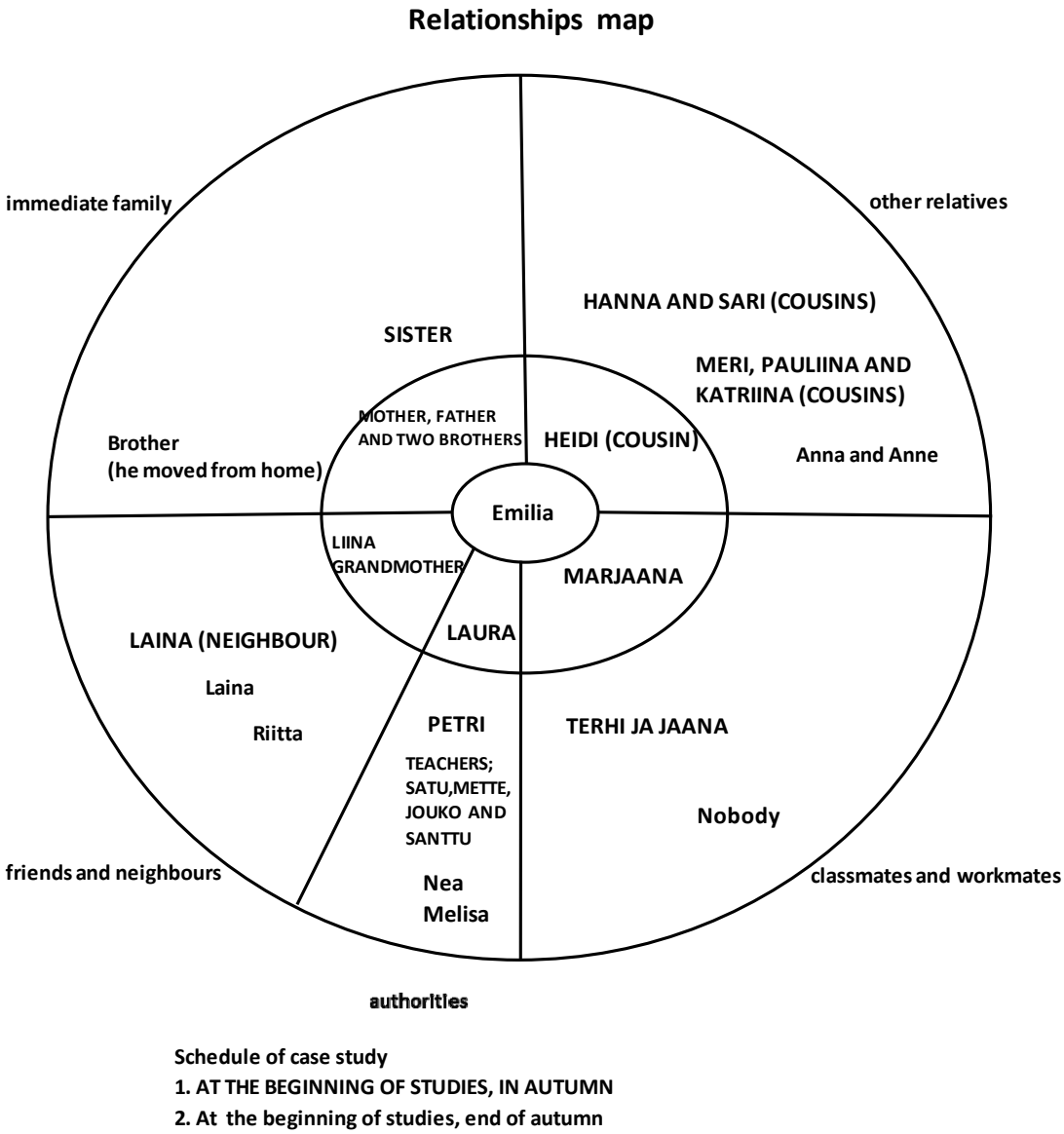


Figure 2. Emilia's relationship map

Emilia's household comprised her mother, father and two brothers. She also had a sister, but she had already left home. The family was religious and relatives played a big part in their social life. Emilia's network included many women. The closest was her cousin Heidi, then came more cousins, a second cousin and her uncle's wife. Six women were included. Under the friends and neighbours network only Laina, the lady from next door, was listed. The closest authority was Laura, a minder of people with intellectual disabilities. Then four former instructors from school were named; two men and two women. The previous chief of the work activity centre, Petri, was also included. In the classmates and workmates section, the closest was Marjaana, from a former school. Terhi and Jaana came from the same high school.

At the time of the second map Emilia's family situation had changed. One of her brothers had moved out home and was therefore placed farther away in the family network. Under the relatives network, many of the same people were found, though Hanna's and Sari's name had disappeared and three new names emerged, firstly close relatives, Anna and Anne, and secondly Riitta, the wife of her father's cousin. Laina was still under friends and neighbours. The authorities network was totally altered. New names included Nea, a trainee from the On-Campus programme, and Melisa, Emilia's former rehabilitation instructor. Nea's role in the course of her practical training was to support Emilia in finding friends in places where other religious youth go. At this stage, Emilia listed no classmates. Emilia's mother had the clear view that Emilia's friends should be religious like

their family, despite worrying that Emilia would not be able to find such friends. Religion regulated the criteria for friendships for Emilia's mother more than the other On-Campus students. The extract below portrays Emilia's ideas about her number of friends and her expectations of friends.

> Interviewer: Well, how is it in the company of older people? What kinds of relations are they? What do you do with them? What kind of things do you do and how do you spend your time?
>
> Emilia: [Silence].
>
> Interviewer: Do you think you have enough friends?
>
> Emilia: I have quite a few friends.
>
> Interviewer: Yes. Well, er, do you feel like you would like to have more friends? To increase your number of friends?
>
> Emilia: I don't know.
>
> Interviewer: Well, how could you get more of them? If you want to get more of them?
>
> Emilia: Usually when I go to school after the autumn break. There are strange people and you get to know them, become acquainted with them.
>
> Interviewer: So, you're expecting that you will get to know your peers at school, aren't you?
>
> Emilia: I am.
>
> (Emilia's OVAALI interview/MS)

Emilia had close relationships with her family members. Relationships with other relatives were also fairly rich. Elderly people were central to Emilia's network. Authorities played a big part in Emilia's networks: previously known authorities and an employee of the On-Campus programme, Nea (working with her on her master's thesis), were naturally involved in this network. Although former schoolmates from a segregated school environment were involved in the first relationship map, they had disappeared by the time of compiling the second map and no one from the university environment of the On-Campus programme replaced them.

### *3.3 Tuomas*

Two relationship maps were compiled for Tuomas. Tuomas's close family network included his mother and father, his brother and his sister's two children. His sister and her husband were also important to Tuomas but were not in the close network. Tuomas's network mostly consisted of men aged between 50 and 70 years. Important people in the friends and neighbours network were Pate, the cottage neighbour, Eetu, who lived next door, and four other men Tuomas met and talked with at the community centre. The authorities' network covered three male teachers from the Department of Physical Education and two men from the work activity centre, the chief and an instructor.

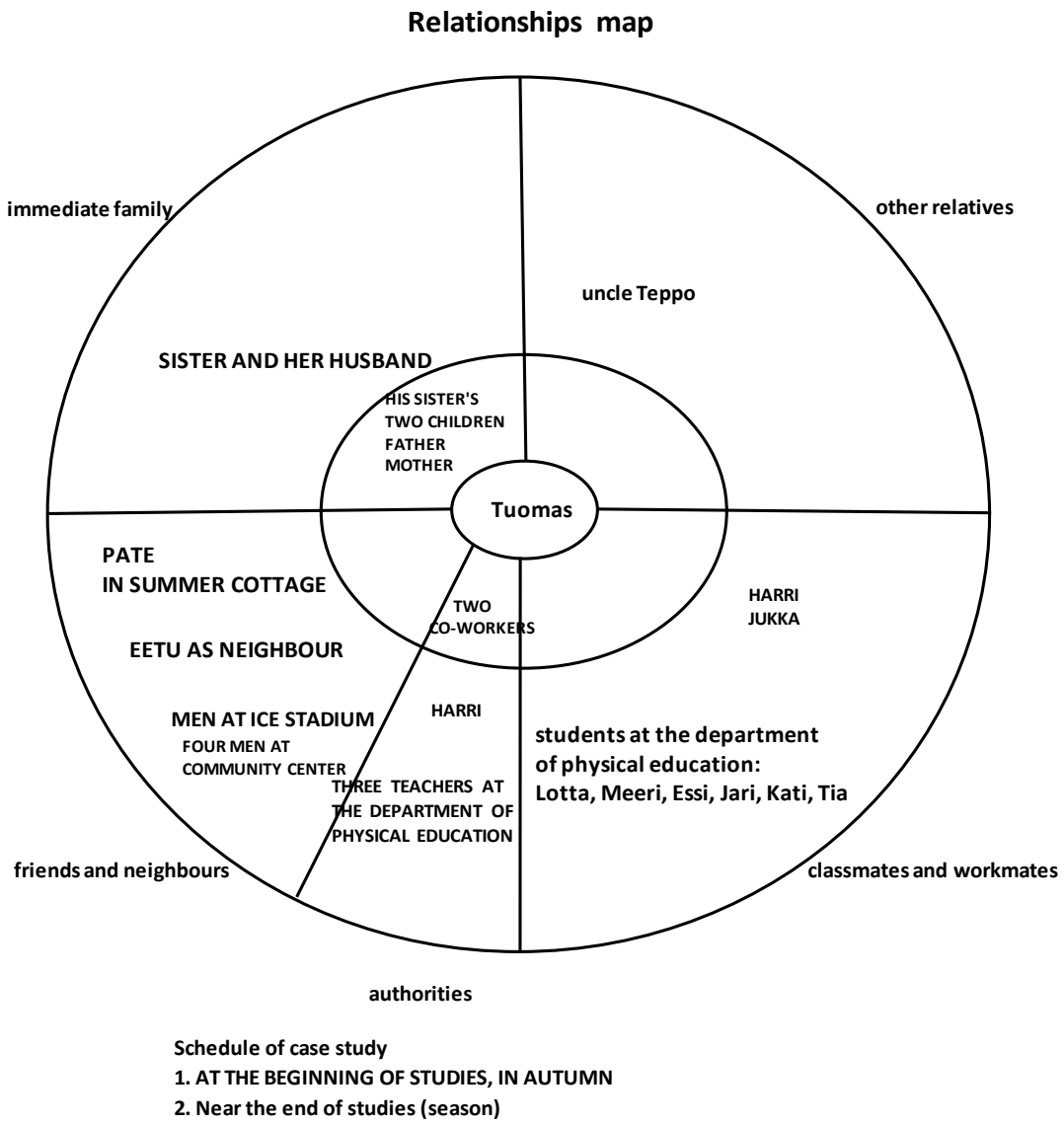


Figure 3. Tuomas's relationship map

Under the classmates and workmates network, Tuomas nominated one male student from the Department of Physical Education who he used to play ice hockey with and they spent a lot of time together. In addition, Harri from the On-Campus programme, who was studying to become an intellectual disability instructor, was familiar to Tuomas through sports.

> I spoke with Tuomas and his mother at the Department of Physical Education about the social relationships Tuomas has. Tuomas's relationship map consists mostly of people who are either elderly or family members. Tuomas has become friends with the elderly men at thepublic sports centre. They talk about sports. He asks the instructors from the work activity centre to accompany him on his trips. Tuomas speaks about Harri (from the community centre) a lot and they know each other especially well. (Tuomas's assessment meeting/MS)

When Tuomas's completed his second relationship map there were no changes under the categories of friends and neighbours or authorities, so I will not discuss these. In the relatives category, Tuomas mentioned his uncle, Teppo. The names in the classmates and workmates network had changed. Tuomas named Jari, a first-year physical education student, and three women, including two sisters who played floor ball: Lotta, Essi and Meeri. They were not friends per se but Tuomas found them important. Tuomas wished for more company. He would have liked to have more friends without disabilities.

*3.4 Maria*

Four relationship maps were made for Maria. Compared to other On-Campus students, Maria had managed to develop richer social relationships and had more friends her own age. Her friends included former schoolmate Pirjo and Alina, who followed stadium sports, and in the course of the second year, new school friends Siiri and Laura.

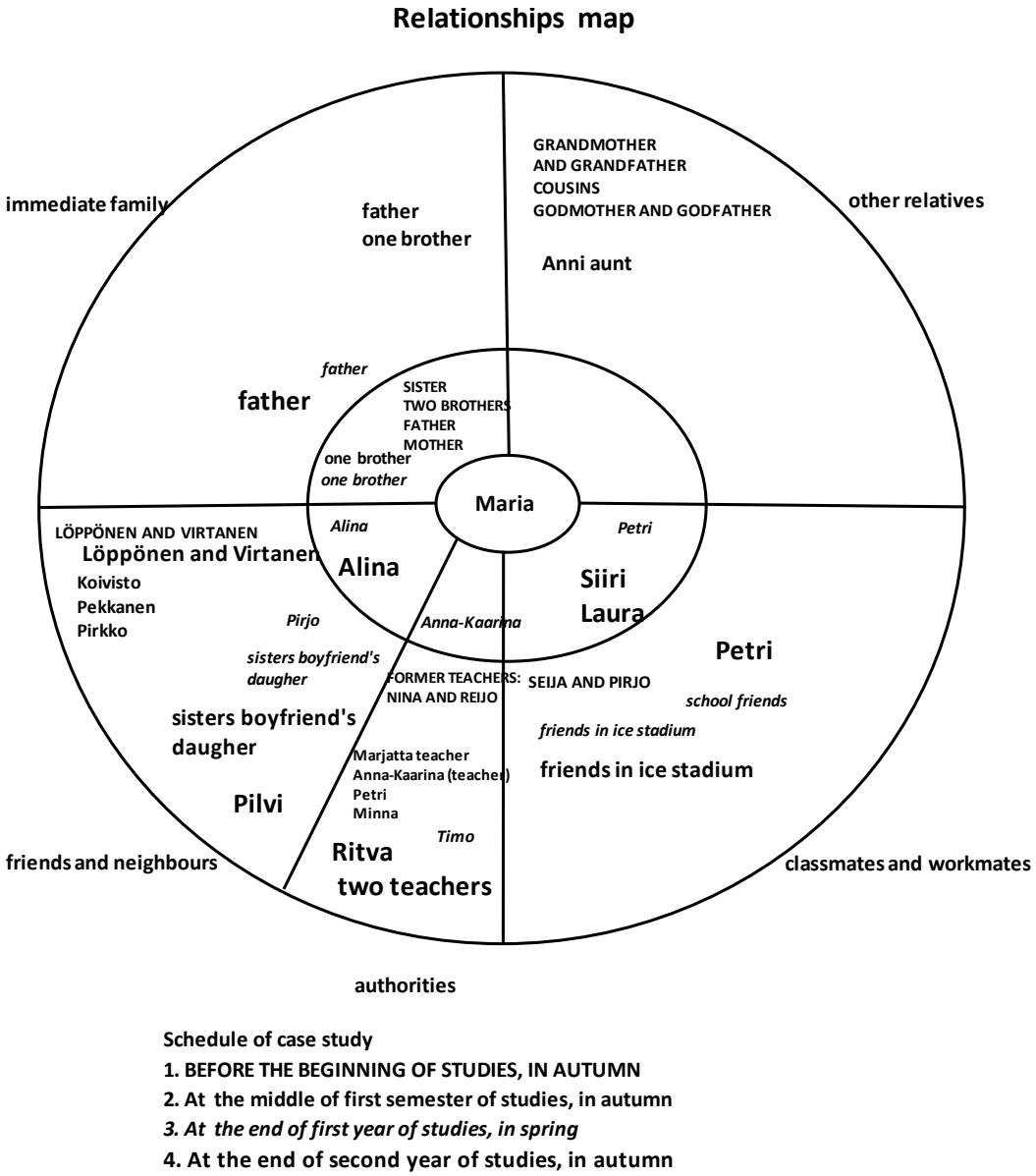


Figure 4. Maria's relationship map

Maria's close friend, Alina was a young person without a disability. Their friendship emerged when Maria began her first term of On-Campus studies at a vocational school. They met each other at the first game of the season and started to hang around at stadiums together and browse the shops in town. At the ice stadium, the fans are young, while Alina was 18 years old at the time and thus she and Maria were older. Ice hockey players were happy for and they could tolerate the girls hanging around them. Alina would contact Maria but Maria would rarely get in touch with Alina. After the ice hockey matches, the players try to get girls into their cars. Alina went, but Maria did not because she is shy and her parents had warned her about this.

The girls also took the bus to other towns to watch games every Thursday when a game was on—Maria's parents would drive her to the bus stop. Sometimes, they returned late and Maria behaved like the other young people of her age. Maria followed ice hockey matches in the newspapers and talked about the matches a lot to those classmates and vocational teachers who were interested. She paid more attention to sports than to her clothing trade studies. When Maria saw players in town, she would greet them and discuss the games. Maria had collected a file of players' autographed pictures. The extract below illustrates Maria's relationship with Alina.

> Maria got to know Alina at the ice hockey stadium. She actually met Alina at a practice (the boys' ice hockey practise). Maria hangs out at the stadium until late at night. However, she does not inform her mother how she will be coming home, and the mother is quite worried about where she is. Maria collects players' autographs with Alina. (Maria's assessment meeting/MS)

Heli was Maria's classmate from her first year who followed ice hockey matches at the stadium. However, although they had gone to the stadium together, their relationship was not yet listed on the relationship map.

> Maria asks Heli, "Were you at the match on Monday?" Maria says she saw Heli there. Heli answers very distantly. The girls call out for the teacher. Maria comments: "she can't hear us". The teacher enters the room. The girl argues emphatically that the break was so short they should get off earlier. The ADP teacher counters that the girls haven't been waiting in the class as long as they claim to have been. Maria laughs with me and looks backwards, at me. The teacher comes to Maria and asks what should be done now. The teacher's standardsseem high. (Notes/MS)

Siiri was a classmate from the second year; a redhead who had completed an assimilated syllabus. Maria improved during the year: she went on breaks with the others and often spent time with Siiri at school, more so than her other classmates. Maria talked a lot about Siiri to her On-Campus teacher. Siiri was a role model for Maria and supported her studies. There was a small problem between them when Siiri felt that Maria was too curious about her personal affairs, but this was sorted out through the teacher's moderation. Siiri also said that Maria was more interested in sports than her studies. Siiri said she met with her other friends in her spare time and, so they were only schoolmates. However, despite what Siiri said, the girls had met outside school when they went to the movies (although they were working on a school assignment related to the movie).

> Over the week I have seen Maria a couple of times. Right from the very first day, she came up to me with another girl. The girls were having a vivid discussion with each other. When we met a couple of days later in the schoolyard, Maria was accompanied by the same girl. [...] I went to the school to see Maria's teacher. She said that Maria had introduced herself when it was her turn like everybody else. The girl Maria moved around with was in the same class. (Notes/AKL)

Pirjo was Maria's former classmate from her previous studies in the segregated school community. Maria spent a lot of time with this girl at the beginning of her On-Campus studies. During leisure time, the girls would hang around at the ice stadium.

> Maria telephones her friends, like Pirjo. She has written to her friends too. Pirjo is Maria's former classmate with whom Maria goes to ice stadium. Pirjo is a year younger than Maria. Pirjo lives in Leppälä. Pirjo goes independently to the ice stadium by bus from Leppälä, and Maria takes a bus from her home. (A follow-up meeting/MS)

Laura was Maria's classmate from second year. Laura described going for lunch with Maria at school and they spent breaks together. Maria spent time with Siiri at the beginning of the second autumn term, but then began to spend more time with Laura.

> The girls work eagerly. Maria laughs with Laura and says something to her I can't hear. At one stage, Maria says: "I can't" and pulls something from her bag. Again she has bandage on her finger. Everyone is concentrating on their work very well. Maria interacts with Laura and Natalia. (Notes/MS)

## 4. Summary of the Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the social networks of four On-Campus students with intellectual disabilities in supported adult education. In other words, the study describes how the adolescents' social networks have developed during adult education studies based on their inclusion in their school and leisure-time environments. This was analyzed and explained through the young people and their parents' interviews and network maps descriptions. The social life of the On-Campus students was summed up in the relationship maps. The collected data in the study and their detailed analysis reveal the following.

*Young people with an intellectual disability may define relationships differently from their peers* (Duck, 1991). On

the other hand, the concept of a pal may have been stretched as a synonym for the concept of friend even though the meaning of this concept differs and the depth of such relationships varies. All the young people's relationships with their relatives were close-knit. Heyne (1997) states that the relationships with relatives are significant and tight in the lives of people with disabilities.

*Everyone had very close family relationships and relationships with their other relativeswere also close-knit*. This is not surprising: Heyne (1997) states that relationships with relatives are significant and tight in the lives of people with disabilities. There were not many peer relationships in the young people's lives. The same was found by Dudley (2005); the young people had important friendships with authorities and family members. There was *a therapeutic aspect* to social relationships. This means that other people supported the On-Campus students. Friends can serve as a safety net; Emilia lacked these safety nets that could have helped her to use her everyday sociality (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001). Young people in this study had also important *friendships with authorities*. Tuomas, Maria and Linnea had rich social networks while, in contrast, Emilia had a sparse network that increased her experience of loneliness. Emilia's mother hoped that she would make friends with other people from the same religious movement as the others in the family.

*All the young people involved in the On-Campus programme wanted friends, particularly friends without disabilities*. Researchers have found that it is difficult for people with disabilities to become friends with people without disabilities, but researchers still believe it is possible and that such relationships can be positive. According to Giddens (1991), limitedness is involved in modern relationships. This means that relationships break off when people shift communities. This happened to all of the On-Campus students. Having scarce relationships with peers reduces the social-emotional development of young people with an intellectual disability. A paucity of friendships may impact on mental health problems, as may be the case with Emilia. Perlman and Peplau (1982) show that there is a clear relation between loneliness and mental health. The interconnection between loneliness, depression, neurosis and other illnesses that threatens mental health can also be observed in Polansky's (1986) study.

*In this study only one student had made a friend of her own age with no disabilities*. Maria was the only one who had a boundary-breaking friendship, her friendship with Alina, who had no disability. There are many descriptions of friendships between people when one has a disability and one does not in the research literature (e.g., Salisbury & Palombaro, 1998, p. 81). The empowerment that other researchers discuss (Bayley, 1997) also appears in Alina and Maria's relationship. Maria's lifestyle was athletic and she was an ice hockey fan. A former schoolmate may have helped Maria to become friends with Alina, because she introduced them at the ice hockey stadium. Maria and Alina's friendship was firm and satisfied the criteria of reciprocal friendships. Maria's friendship with Alina verifies other researchers' results showing that mutual friendships can develop when one friend has a disability and the other does not (e.g., Salisbury & Palombaro, 1998). Friendship promoted Maria's independence, confidence in moving around independently, cognitive skills, self-confidence and many other skills. In addition, many researchers (like Azmitia et al., 1998, p. 184) highlight that friendship increases self-esteem, especially for girls.

*Social relationships changed and varied frequently*. Over the On-Campus studies, artificial contacts with peers have emerged but they changed or even disappeared during the course of their studies. Social relationships changed and varied often. Even though the On-Campus students studied from half a year to a year and a half in inclusive school communities, they did not make long-lasting friends, contrary to the results of Bunch and Valeo's (2004) study. Salisbury and Palombaro (1998, p. 92) observed a popular student over two years. His friend nominations varied between four and ten, and they consider this a typical result compared to other researchers' findings. In addition, according to Lobban (2002), in the results of the Australian Up the Hill project, the young people observed were friends with their classmates at university.

*Conclusive remarks*. The On-Campus students all had a lot of classmates and possibilities to make contacts, but what prevented them from becoming friends and forming close relations with them? Even though the On-Campus students were observed in their school environment from half a year to a year and a half (which is usually sufficient time frame for the creation of friendships), not even the inclusive school environment was able to support the spontaneous emergence of relationships (cf., Bunch & Valeo, 2004). Perhaps the time frame was too short to become friends. The other possible reason might be that students with disabilities were not familiar to other students and at schools, the academy and the university there was no inclusive culture. One possible limitation of this study could be that the programme did not include any information about large-scale interventions. In the future, an action research type of approach should be organised to promote of inclusive intervention. This study will be followed by a qualitative longitudinal survey in which the social networks of persons with intellectual disabilities will be compared from 1995 to 1996 and from 2011 and 2013. The follow-up study will examine the

causal relations from the perspective of the students altered social networks.

We like to stress that inclusion always involves contacts with others: networks, involvement and participation in the construction of communities and roles. In education it is important to emphasise the significance of friendships at schools and in different communities (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 1998, p. 150). Also the UN Convention has been accepted in many countries in order to ensure justice, impartiality and accessibility.

**References**

Allan, G. (1989). *Friendship: Developing a sociological perspective*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Allard, E. (1975). *Att ha, att älska, att vara* [To have, to love, to be]. Lund: Argos.

Allen, V. L. (1981). Self, social group and social structure: Surmises about the study of children's friendship. In S. R. Asher, & J. M. Gottman (Eds.), *The development of children's friendship* (pp. 182-206). Cambridge: University Press.

Amado, A. N. (1993). Working on friendships. In A. N. Amado (Ed.), *Friendships and community connections between people with and without developmental disabilities* (pp. 279-298). Baltimore: Paul. H. Brookes.

Amado, R. S. (1993). Loneliness. Effects and implications. In A. N. Amado (Ed.), *Friendships and community connections between people with and without developmental disabilities* (pp. 67-84). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Aristotle. (1989). *Nikomakhoksen etiikka* [Nicomachean ethics]. Helsinki, Painokaari.

Azmitia, M., Kamprath N. A., & Linnet, J. (1998). Intimacy and conflict: The dynamics of boys' and girls' friendships during middle childhood and early adolescence. In L. H. Meyer, H. S. Park, M. Grenot-Scheyer, I. S. Schwartz, & B. Harry (Eds.), *Making friends. The influences of culture and development* (pp. 171-188). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Bayley, M. (1997). Empowering and relationships. In P. Ramcharan, G. Roberts, G. Grant, & J. Borland (Eds.), *Empowerment in everyday life learning disability* (pp. 15-34). London: Jessica Kingsley.

Berger, C. R. (1993). Goals, plans and mutual understanding in relationships. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Individuals in relationships* (pp. 3-59). London: Sage. http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483326283.n2

Berger, P., & Luckman, T. (1991). *The social construction of reality* (6th ed.). London: Penguin Books.

Bogdan, R., & Taylor, S. (1992). The social construction of humanness. Relationships with severely disabled people. In P. M. Ferguson, D. L. Ferguson, & S. J. Taylor (Eds.), *Interpreting disability. A qualitative reader* (pp. 275-294). New York: Teachers College Press.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1982). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Bryman, A., & Burgess, R. G. (1994). *Analyzing qualitative data*. London and New York: Routledge. http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203413081

Buhrmester, D., & Furman, W. (1986). The changing functions of friends in childhood: A neo-Sullivan perspective. In V. J. Derlaga, & B. A. Winstead (Eds.), *Friendship and social interaction* (pp. 41-61). New York: Springer-Verlag. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4612-4880-4_3

Bunch, G., & Valeo, A. (2004). Students' attitudes toward peers with disabilities in inclusive and special education schools. *Disability & Society*, *19*(1), 61-76. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0968759032000155640

Carter, E. W., Asmus, J., & Moss, C. K. (2013). Fostering friendships: Supporting relationships among youth with and without developmental disabilities. *Prevention Researcher*, *20*(2), 14-17.

Castles, E. E. (1996). *We're people first. The social and emotional lives of individuals with mental retardation*. London: Praeger.

Duck, S. (1991). *Friends, for life. The psychology of personal relationships*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Dudley, J. R. (2005). Best friends of people with mental illness and mental retardation. *Psychiatric Services*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.56.5.610-a

Eidelson, R. J. (1980). Interpersonal satisfaction and level of involvement: A curvilinear relationship. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *39*, 460-470. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.39.3.460

Ely, M., Anzul, M., Friedman, T., Garner, D., & McCormack Steinmetz, A. (1991). *Doing qualitative research:*

*Circles within circles*. London: The Falmer Press.

Enos, J. (1995). Building relationships with friends and other community members. In J. M. Everson (Ed.), *Supporting young adults who are deaf-blind in their communities. A transition planning guide for service providers, families, and friends* (pp. 185-201). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Fine, F. A. (1981). Friends, impression management and preadolescent behavior. In S. R Asher, & J. M. Gottman (Eds.), *The development of children's friendships* (pp. 29-52). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Forest, M., & Pearpoint, J. (1992). Families, friends, and circles. In J. Nisbet (Ed.), *Natural supports in school, at work, and in the community for people with severe disabilities* (pp. 65-86). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Furnham, A. (1989). Friendship and personal development. In R. Porter, & S. Tomaselli (Eds.), *The dialectics of friendship* (pp. 92-110). London: Routledge.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity. Self and society in the late modern age*. UK: Polity Press.

Green, F. P., & Schleien, S. (1991). Understanding friendship and recreation: A theoretical sampling. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, *25*(4), 29-40.

Grenot-Scheyer, M., Staub, D., Peck, C. A., & Schwartz, I. S. (1998). Reciprocity and friendships: Listening to the voices of children and youth with and without disabilities. In L. H. Meyer, H. S. Park, M. Grenot-Scheyer, I. S. Schwartz, & B. Harry (Eds.), *Making friends. The influences of culture and development* (pp. 149-168). Baltimore: Paul. H. Brookes.

Hardman, M., & Clark, C. (2006). Promoting friendship through best buddies: A national survey of college program participants. *Journal of Practices, Policy and Perspectives*, *44*(1), 56-66. http://dx.doi.org/10.1352/0047-6765(2006)44[56:pftbba]2.0.co;2

Hartup, W. W. (1993). Friendships and their developmental significance. In H. McGurk (Ed.), *Childhood social development* (pp. 175-205). Howe: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hays, R. B. (1988). The day-to-day functioning of casual versus close friendships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *5*, 21-37.

Heyne, L. A. (1997). Friendship. In S. J. Schleien, M. Tipton Ray, & F. P. Green (Eds.), *Community recreation and people with disabilities. Strategies for inclusion* (pp. 129-150). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Ikonen, T. (1991). *Kieliopas* [Guide to Language]. Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä.

Janney, R., & Snell, M. E. (2006). *Social relationships and peer support*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Korkiamäki, R. (2013). *Kaveria ei jätetä. Sosiaalinen pääoma nuorten vertaissuhteissa* [Afriend is not left out! Social capital in young people's peer relationships] (Doctoral thesis). University of Tampere, Finland. Retrieved from http://tampub.uta.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/68124/978-951-44-9124-5.pdf?sequence=1

Kennedy, C. H., & Itkonen, T. (1996). Social relationships, influential variables, and change across the life-span. In L. K. Koegel, R. L. Koegel, & G. Dunlop (Eds.), *Positive behavioral support. Including people with difficult behavior in the community* (pp. 287-304). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Kurth, S. (1970). Friendships and friendly relations. In G. J. McCall, M. M. McCall, N. K. Denzin, G. D. Suttles, & S. B. Kurth (Eds.), *Social relationships* (pp. 136-170). Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Laine, M., Bamberg, J., & Jokinen, P. (2007). Tapaustutkimuksen käytäntö ja teoria. In M. Laine, J. Bamberg, & P. Jokinen (Eds.), *Tapaustutkimuksen taito* [Practise and theory of a case study] (pp. 9-40). Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

Lewis, C. S. (1982). *Neljä rakkautta* [The four loves]. Helsinki: Kirjaneliö.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (2000). The only generalization is: There is no generalization. In R. Gomm, M. Hammersley, & P. Foster (Eds.), *Case study method* (pp. 27-44). London: Sage.

Lobban, M. J. (2002). *A journey of self-discovery: Inclusion of individuals with intellectual disability in university* (Bachelor's thesis). Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1984). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. Belmont, ITP: Wadsworth.

Lutfiyya, Z. M. (1991). "A feeling of being connected": Friendships between people with and without learning difficulties. *Disability, Handicap & Society*, *6*(3), 233-245. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02674649166780271

McVilly, K. R., Stancliffe, R., Parmenter, T. R., & Burton-Smith, R. M. (2006). "I get by with a little help from my friends": Adults with intellectual disability discuss lonelines. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, *19*, 191-203. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-3148.2005.00261.x

Matheson, C., Olsen, R. J., & Weisner, T. (2007). A good friend is hard to find: Friendship among adolescents with disabilities. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, *112*(5), 319-329. http://dx.doi.org/10.1352/0895-8017(2007)112[0319:AGFIHT]2.0.CO;2

Narayan, D., & Cassidy, M. F. (2001). A dimensional approach to measuring social capital: Development and validation of social capital inventory. *Current Sociology*, *49*(2), 59-102. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0011392101049002006

Oulasvirta, T. (2010). *Best Buddies-kaveritoiminnan arviointi. Kaveri-projektin loppuraportti* [Assessment of the Best Buddies friend activity. Final report of the Friend Project]. Kehitysvammaisten tukiliitto ry. Ylöjärvi: Painohäme Oy.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pearpoint, J., Forest, M., & O'Brien, J. (1996). MAPs, circles of friends, and PATH. Powerful tools to help build caring communities. In S. Stainback, & W. Stainback (Eds.), *Inclusion. A guide for educators* (pp. 67-86). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Perlman, D., & Peplau, L. A. (1982). Loneliness research: A survey of empirical findings. In L. A. Peplau, & S. E. Goldstein (Eds.), *Preventing the harmful consequences of severe and persistent loneliness* (pp. 13-46). Rockville, MD: NIMH.

Perske, R. (1993). Introduction. In A. N. Amado (Ed.), *Friendship and community connections between people with and without developmental disabilities* (pp. 1-6). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Perske, R., & Perske, M. (1988). *Circles of friends*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Pierce, K. (2011). *A healthy, thoughtful, insightful discussion about social inclusion in a post-secondary institution* (A doctor of philosophy in special education). Edmonton: Alberta.

Pitkänen, M. (1997). Oletko ystävä, tuttava vai kaveri? [Are you a friend, an acquaintance or a pal?]. *Kielikello*, *2*, 22-25.

Pirttimaa, R. A., & Kontu, E. K. (2010). Teaching methods and curriculum models used in Finland in the education of students diagnosed with having severe/profound intellectual disabilities. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *38*(3), 175-179. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-3156.2009.00571.x

Polansky, N. A. (1986). *Treating loneliness in child protection*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

Porter, R., & Tomaselli, S. (1989). *The dialectics of friendship*. London: Routledge.

Pottien, C., & Sumarah, J. (2004). Friendships between persons with and without developmental disabilities. *Journal of Practices, Policy and Perspectives*, *42*(1), 55-66.

Rangell, L. (1963). On friendship. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, *11*, 3-54. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/000306516301100101

Reisman, J. M. (1979). *Anatomy of friendship*. New York: Irvington Publishers.

Robertson, J., Emerson, E., Gregory, N., Hatton C., Kessissoglou S., Hallam, A., & Linehan, C. (2001). Social networks of people with mental retardation in residential settings. *Mental Retardation*, *39*, 201-214. http://dx.doi.org/10.1352/0047-6765(2001)039%3C0201:SNOPWM%3E2.0.CO;2

Rubin, Z. (1980). *Children's friendship*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674422766

Salisbury, C. L., & Palombaro, M. M. (1998). Friends and acquaintances: Evolving relationships in an inclusive elementary school. In L. H. Meyer, H. S. Park, M. Grenot-Scheyer, I. S. Schwartz, & B. Harry (Eds.), *Making friends. The influences of culture and development* (pp. 81-104). Baltimore, MD: Paul. H Brookes.

Saloviita, T. (1995). *Osallistuminen, valinnanvapaus, arvostus, aktiivisuus, läsnäolo, itsenäisyys. Vammaispalvelujen laadun arviointi ja kehittäminen* [Participation, freedom of choice, appreciation,

activeness, presence, independence. The quality evaluation and development of services for disabled persons]. Jyväskylä: Yliopistopaino.

Saloviita, T., Lehtinen, U., & Pirttimaa, R. (1997). *Tie auki työelämään. Tuetun työllistymisen käyttäjäkeskeiset työtavat* [A pathway to working life. The user-centred working methods of supported employment]. Jyväskylä: Tie auki!-projekti. Department of Special Education, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Jyväskylä: Yliopistopaino.

Schalock, R. L. (1997). *Quality of life*. *Volume II: Application to persons with disabilities*. Washington, DC: AAMR.

Sparrow, W. A., & Mayne, S. C. (1990). Recreation patterns of adults with intellectual disabilities. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, *24*, 45-49.

Strully, J., & Strully, C. (1985). Friendship and our children. *Journal of The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, *10*(2), 224-227. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/154079698501000406

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, *15*(9), 1277-1288. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687

Tynjälä, P. (1991). Kvalitatiivisten tutkimusmenetelmien luotettavuudesta [On the reliability of qualitative methods]. *Kasvatus: Suomen kasvatustieteellinen aikakauskirja*, *22*(5-6), 387-398. Retrieved from https://ktl.jyu.fi/julkaisut/kasvatus

Uditsky, B., Frank, S., Hart, L., & Jeffery, S. (1988). On campus: Integrating the university environment. In D. Baine, D. Sobsey, L. Wilgosh, & G. M. Kysela (Eds.), *Alternative futures for the education of students with severe disabilities* (pp. 96-103). Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.

Ward, A. (2010). When they don't have to sit there they don't. They'll go and sit somewhere else. *Kairaranga*, *11*(1), 22-28.

Ward, K. M., Atkinson, J. P., Smith, C. A., & Windsor, R. (2013). A friendships and dating program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A formative evaluation. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, *51*(1), 22-32. http://dx.doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-51.01.022

Whitehouse, R., & Chamberlain, P. (2001). Increasing social interactions for people with more severe learning disabilities who have difficulty developing personal relationships. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, *5*, 209-220. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/146900470100500301

Yin, R. K. (1993). Application of case study research. In *Applied Social Research Methods Series* (Vol. 34). Newbury Park: Sage.

UN. (1993). *Standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities*. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its 48th session on 20 December 1993 (resolution 48/96).

**Copyrights**

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).