THE INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWING OF CHILDREN

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Abstract

Four studies examined the investigative interviewing of children. Their purpose was to consider the way that children are interviewed, particularly about suspected sexual abuse, so that broader contextual factors were explicitly taken into account. To facilitate the research, an ecological framework was adopted. This stressed the importance of obtaining children’s views and relating findings to the child’s position, and of studying investigative interviewing in a wider practice and policy context than has previously taken place.

In the first study, children who had been the subject of an investigative interview for sexual abuse participated in indepth interviews. The second experiment contrasted child and adult interviewers finding out what had happened during a videotaped event. Children’s help-seeking behaviour in relation to bullying and parental arguing was explored through a questionnaire in the third study. Finally, training on the Memorandum of Good Practice in Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs) was surveyed via a questionnaire.

Findings from the first and final studies suggested that the Memorandum is too heavily evidential at the expense of children’s welfare. In practice, investigative interviews resemble interrogations, rather than opportunities for children to talk about problems. The studies of children’s help-seeking, and their experiences of investigative interviews, contained a number of pointers for individual practitioners. In particular, children want supportive and empathic professionals. However, the need to reconsider children’s social networks in relation to professional intervention was highlighted by the absence of professional helpers chosen to assist with interpersonal problems. The value of interviewer training was emphasised by the study of children-as-interviewers and the survey of ACPCs’ training. The research demonstrated the importance of considering the wider context of investigative interviewing, and specifically the influence of the criminal justice system. The ecological approach proved a valuable framework, but the problems of researching macro-level systems and power structures remain.
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Children find themselves the 'subjects' of interviews in a host of different contexts. For example, they may be interviewed by Education Welfare Officers in schools if they have been truanting, or by Court Welfare Officers if they are caught up in a contested divorce and custody dispute. Such interviews may be relatively informal; for example in the case of truanting, if it has occurred just once and the adults involved are only mildly concerned, or if in the divorce or custody proceedings the child is judged to be too young to hold a real perspective on what is going on. However, if the adults’ deliberations are more serious, and the child’s welfare is a genuine cause for concern, the interviews may well be more formal, and might accurately be described as ‘investigative’.

The term ‘investigative interview’ is, however, more usually associated with the professional response to suspected child abuse, and especially child sexual abuse. There is no clear introduction of the term into social work parlance, and previously the term applied to investigations carried out by the police or Inspectors from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). Possibly the influence of the police in joint investigations of child abuse, and particularly child sexual abuse, led to the introduction of the term into mainstream social work. Certainly, in this area there is a much heavier emphasis on the discovery of potentially criminal behaviour (e.g. incest) and on the possibility of criminal prosecution.

It was the increasing awareness of, and interest in, child sexual abuse that provided the impetus for the current research on investigative interviewing. In the burgeoning literature on child sexual abuse there appeared to be little account of children’s experiences and perspectives on investigations in which they were involved. There also seemed to be little attempt to consider investigative interviewing in the light of children’s experiences of communicating generally, and their social support networks. Further, links were not being made between the different professional contexts in which investigative interviewing was an issue, for example, training, day to day practice. In an
attempt to explore some of these issues, a series of studies was proposed. However, in order to link these studies and make sense of the issues, a framework was required.

An Ecological Approach to Investigative Interviewing

Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979) has outlined an ecological approach to child development. According to this approach, when we consider how a child develops we need to closely examine the different systems which surround the child, as well as their inter-relationships. This chapter will describe how an ecological approach can inform the study of investigative interviewing of children, and the various dynamics involved. Without this framework, it is easy to overlook important elements.

The ecological approach

Within the ecological approach there exist four inter-relating systems, with the child situated at the centre of all. The most simple system is the microsystem, described by Bronfenbrenner as

a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics. (1979, p22)

This includes dyadic relationships (e.g. mother-child), and different settings such as home, school etc. where face-to-face interactions occur. The next level comprises the mesosystem, which is a system of microsystems created whenever an individual moves from one setting to another. More formally, the mesosystem

comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, relations among home, school, and neighbourhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work and social life). (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p25)

The third level of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model is the exosystem, which
refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person. (1979, p25)

For a child, the exosystem might include a carer's work place, the school class of a sibling, their parents' network of friends. Finally, there is the macrosystem, which refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies. (1979, p26)

At this level, then, Bronfenbrenner is talking about society-wide perceptions of children, women, minority groups etc. The other important aspect of Bronfenbrenner's approach is its emphasis on the child's personal perspective. Thus, it is necessary to understand the child's environment as she or he views it, rather than attempt to identify any objective reality.

*Ecological dimensions of investigative interviewing*

Adopting an ecological approach moves the study of investigative interviewing of children forward for two reasons. Firstly, it helps separate out the different systems operating when a child and adult(s) participate in the interview. Secondly, it encourages a child-centred approach, since professionals should attempt to understand the interview from the child's perspective.

Returning to the different systems defined above, they can immediately be related to the investigative situation. At the level of the *microsystem* is the interviewer-interviewee dyad in the interview setting. For the *mesosystem*, the relationship between the interview and the child's home situation, their social support networks, and their schooling can be explored. The *exosystem* here may include social services' departments, police stations and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) offices where
decisions are made about interviewing children, and policies and procedures developed. Finally, the macrosystem will consist of current society wide beliefs concerning children, and particularly in this context their capabilities as witnesses. These beliefs will also be reflected, in different ways, in the professional subcultures involved, such as social work, the police and psychiatry.

The four studies reported here explore aspects of the micro-, meso- and exosystems. However, initially it is important to briefly consider recent changes in the macrosystem relating to children as witnesses, and investigative interviewing, in order to understand the context in which the research took place.

The Macrosystem: The Context for the Current Research

That this thesis is devoted to the investigative interviewing of child witnesses is itself an indicator of the momentous changes in recent years affecting children, and perceptions of children. Internationally, there has been the recognition that children themselves have rights, finally dispelling the image of children as mere appendages to, or property of, their parents. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1989, and entered into force for the United Kingdom on 15 January 1992. Of particular relevance are the notions in the Convention that children have the right to justice and the right to be heard (Article 12). Specifically,

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law. (p6)
Implicit in Article 12 is the assumption that children actually have something worthwhile to say about their situation, a belief that has also been embodied in the most influential piece of legislation ever to affect children in England and Wales - the Children Act 1989. For example, Principle 25 of the Act's 'Principles of Good Child Care Practice' (Department of Health, 1989) states:

Young people's wishes must be elicited and taken seriously. Even quite young children should be enabled to contribute to decisions about their lives in an age appropriate way. (p12)

The Convention and the Children Act 1989 thus represented significant changes in macro-level beliefs about children generally, and specifically about children's rights and abilities to participate in judicial proceedings affecting them. In line with the ecological approach, the child's personal perspective was also emphasised as important. This positive view of children was further reflected in developments in criminal courts resulting from the Criminal Justice Acts of 1988 and 1991 (Spencer & Flin, 1993). Through the introduction of videolinks (or 'livelinks', Davies & Noon, 1991), and pre-recorded videotaped evidence-in-chief (Davies, Wilson, Mitchell & Milsom, 1995), attempts were made to facilitate the reception of children's testimony, most notably concerning allegations of abuse.

Inevitably, such major changes in macro-level beliefs had knock-on effects on policy and practice in the exosystem. As noted above, settings which had previously excluded young children almost entirely (ie criminal courts) were deliberately changed to enable more children to participate in them. Implementation of the Children Act and the Criminal Justice Act 1991 led to an overhaul of policy and practice in social services departments; the revised 'Working Together' document (Department of Health, 1991), and the new 'Memorandum of Good Practice on Video Recorded Interviews with Child Witnesses for Criminal Proceedings' (Home Office, 1992), accorded even more weight to inter-agency co-operation between social workers and police officers. Joint training courses were developed specifically to assist workers in understanding and implementing the new legislation and guidance.
To the degree to which *Working Together* also spelt out the roles of various agencies involved with the child's welfare, the mesosystem was also implicated in these changes. Curiously though, there has been comparatively little activity at this level; and within one setting there has even been something of a 'backlash' against the emphasis on children's rights. In schools, teachers have vociferously complained that the Children Act's emphasis undermines their authority and influence over the children they teach (for example, see 'Abused by an Act of kindness', 1994). Paradoxically, the difficulties of involving teachers in child protection forums (case conferences, and related training) have been noted by other professionals, who would value a more active input from teachers, with their detailed knowledge of particular children (for example, see 'Confidence is the first step in the march against abuse', 1994).

It is more difficult to establish what effects these changes have had on individual relationships in various microsystem settings. Specific professional-child interactions in investigative interviews have been the subject of intense scrutiny in inquiries following the 'scandals' of Cleveland and Orkney (Butler-Sloss, 1988; Clyde, 1992), with some attempt to broaden the critique from an individual practice to agency level focus. Additionally, the significance of the child's position has been noted, as with Butler-Sloss's oft-quoted dictum that the child 'is a person and not an object of concern' (p245). The preceding sentence of Butler-Sloss's comment cautions against overlooking the individual child herself in the pursuit of wider aims, once again emphasising the focus of the ecological approach on the particular child in question, and her perception of the situation. The dictum might even be refined to 'the child is a person who has concerns'.

These, then, are some of the contextual issues surrounding the investigative interviewing of children which provide the backdrop for the series of studies reported here. Before moving on to discuss the research itself, it is important finally to note just how fluid this macrosystem remains. For example, fundamental changes in the way child abuse investigations are carried out have been signalled by the Department of Health, who want social workers to have a more supportive role of families generally, whilst concentrating their investigations on the most serious cases (Department of Health, 1995). The way investigative interviews themselves are carried out seems
likely to undergo some change, as the Home Office and Department of Health evaluations of the *Memorandum of Good Practice* revealed some serious outstanding issues for practitioners and managers (Davies *et al.*, 1995; Holton & Bonnerjea, 1994). Revisions to the *Memorandum* seem inevitable. Nevertheless, despite this fluidity, it is to be hoped that the major steps forward that have been made in listening to children and taking their views seriously will be permanent, enshrined as they are in legislation.

**Four Studies: Their Aims and Relationship to an Ecological Approach**

Against this macro-context, four studies were designed to look at the other systems, which aimed to maintain an emphasis on the child or child’s perspective. Two studies concentrated on the microsystem, and one each on aspects of the meso- and exosystems.

The first study examined children’s views on investigative interviews for suspected sexual abuse (Westcott & Davies, 1996a). Simply, the aim was to find out from children what is was like to be interviewed. At the time this study was conducted there were few similar published studies, and so the research aimed to put children’s perspectives squarely on the interviewing agenda. Consistent with this aim, a qualitative approach was adopted, relying on indepth, semi-structured interviews with children and young people. This study therefore focussed upon the most fundamental ‘component’ of the microsystem - the child.

In the second study, children were themselves put into the role of interviewers (Westcott & Davies, in press). Interviewers are the essential other participants in the interview situation, and this study aimed to examine them as part of the microsystem. Again, though, the focus was on children’s performance, in an attempt to see whether there was anything to be learned by adult interviewers from taking this point of view. Apart from the detailed experimental study of suggestive questioning techniques (eg Doris, 1991), there has been surprisingly little empirical study of interviewer behaviours. School children witnessed a videotaped event and were later questioned by either their peers, or by adults, none of whom had seen the video.
The third study moved on to examine the mesosystem, and children's social support networks and help-seeking behaviour (Westcott & Davies, 1995). Investigative interviews may be seen as one part of a spectrum concerning children's help-seeking behaviour when they are confronted with problems of an inter-personal nature. It may be particularly important to take this broader view with some children. For example, consider a child who sees their parents regularly portraying the police as interfering aggressors with whom contact should be avoided at all costs. If this child later comes to the attention of professionals as a suspected victim of child abuse, it may well be that he or she is expected to talk to a police officer about allegations involving highly intimate and illegal acts. The child's experiences at home could then act as a strong disincentive and stressor in the interview situation. The purpose of this study was therefore to explore children's reports of their hypothetical and actual help-seeking behaviour, in order to start providing some of this broader contextual information. In particular, interest was centred on two inter-personal problems of relevance to child protection - parents arguing, and bullying. A questionnaire was completed by school children and young people aged 8 to 17 years.

The fourth and final study looked at training issues in investigative interviewing as part of the exosystem (Westcott & Davies, 1996b). Training is an example of a setting in which decisions are made and activities occur which affect children (and are affected by children), yet in which children do not directly participate. There are other examples, such as social services, police and CPS offices. However, publication of the Department of Health and Home Office evaluations of the Memorandum of Good Practice raised a number of important training dilemmas, and it became apparent that in fact there was relatively limited knowledge about the training being offered and associated issues. A questionnaire was therefore designed and sent to all Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs) in England and Wales. This returned largely descriptive information, which was complemented by a small number of indepth interviews with professionals having a key role in investigative interviewing training.
Notes on Thesis Layout

Having outlined the framework and design of the four studies, each is now presented in
detail in the following chapters. The final chapter reviews the studies in the light of the
ecological approach, and raises issues for policy, practice and research. Given the
purpose and design of the first study, and specifically its presentation of verbatim
extracts from children and young people, the relevant chapter (Chapter Two) is longer
than the others.

A final comment on terminology is required. For ease of presentation, the term
‘children’ is used in this thesis to include all children and young people up to the age of
18 years. Also, the female gender has been used throughout to refer to interviewees,
and the male gender to refer to interviewers.
CHAPTER TWO: THE MICROSYSTEM
SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWS

The spur for this study was the belief that children, as participants in investigative interviews, continued to be 'overlooked'. At the time this research was conceptualised, there was a proliferation of articles and books instructing practitioners 'how to interview' children, and especially sexually abused children (see for instance, Furniss, 1991; Jones, 1992; Vizard, 1991). With the exception of Wattam's (1992) work, however, there were no published sources at this time documenting the process from the perspective of the child. This seemed both a disservice to children, who have the right to talk about their experiences (see Chapter One), and also to practitioners, who might benefit from feedback on the child's perspective. The ecological approach underlines the scale of this disservice, since the child is a key actor in the interviewer-interviewee dyad. It also emphasises the importance of trying to understand situations from the child's personal point of view. Garbarino and Stott (1989) comment,

A rule of thumb is to try to understand the interview situation and the specific question being asked from the perspective of the child. This is difficult to do, since, to a certain extent, adults are always alien to the world of children. This varies, however, as a function of an adult's experience, training, empathy, and relationship with the specific child being approached. (p177)

In brief, then, the current study aimed to directly obtain children and young people's perspectives on being interviewed, with a view to enriching the information base of adult interviewers so that they might increase their 'empathy', and facilitate their 'relationships', with future child interviewees.

An emphasis on the child's viewpoint seemed particularly important given the recent introduction of the Memorandum of Good Practice (Home Office, 1992; see Chapter One). This document was designed to aid professionals conducting 'video recorded interviews with child witnesses for criminal proceedings'. Generally, videotaped interviews conducted according to these guidelines should fulfil the evidential requirements for them to be
admissible as evidence under the Criminal Justice Act 1991. The Memorandum relates to Working Together (Department of Health, 1991) and advocates that 'if handled properly, the video recorded interview will be in the interests of the child and in the interest of justice' (p1). This contention has become the subject of vigorous debate, as the perspectives and roles of all participants are brought together and magnified in the interview situation. A number of professionals have expressed their doubts as to whether such interviews are indeed the best way to further the interest of the child, or to attain the interest of justice (eg Wattam, 1992, Westcott, 1994a).

The Literature on Children's Perspectives

Wattam conducted a three-year ethnographic study of the ‘disclosure’ of child sexual abuse from the perspective of the child (1992). From her observations of social workers, her study of case files, and her interviews with several child victims, Wattam concluded that disclosure is an organisationally driven process, in which the needs of children themselves are typically overlooked and not taken into account. Children’s feelings, wishes and actions are not ‘accountable matter’, and they are subjected to organisational constraints without consultation, preparation or anticipation of consequences. Further, Wattam concluded that the immediate needs of children are secondary to evidential needs when an allegation of sexual abuse arises. Consequently, children enter the disclosure process confused, anxious, distressed and unsure what is going to happen to them.

Specific difficulties mentioned by the children in Wattam’s study included perceived harassment by the interviewer, perceived isolation (in the interview room), and perceived suspicion on behalf of the interviewer (not feeling believed). As Blagg (1989) notes, although interviewers may begin by saying they believe the child, ‘the actual process of legal verification may undermine the child’s confidence in this belief and reinforce feelings of guilt, self-blame and worthlessness’ (p19). Blagg, in his discussion of the ‘credible victim’, refers briefly to some comments made by teenaged sexual abuse victims in a survivors’ group. These victims felt that, although their interviews had generally been conducted sensitively, too much emphasis was placed on their own role in the abuse: ‘why didn’t you say no?’, ‘why didn’t you tell anyone?’ ‘why did you go back again?’ being typical questions (Blagg, 1989, p18).
Since Wattam's leading research, and the fieldwork for this study, a number of other studies have been published which incorporate feedback from children caught up in child abuse investigations. Roberts and Taylor (1993) studied the impact of sexual abuse upon children and young people in Scotland, noting the depth of children's feelings and particularly their fear of what had happened and of the abuser. Children found it difficult to describe their experiences, and felt ambivalent about their abusers, whom they often considered when thinking about the consequences of disclosing their abuse. The children reported a lack of preparation for the intervention, with professionals 'just turning up'. The majority of children were very positive about talking openly of their abuse, and would tell other sexually abused children to do the same. They stressed the importance of being believed, and of being consulted about the intervention process.

In England, Sharland, Seal, Croucher, Aldgate and Jones (1993) examined professional intervention in child sexual abuse, combining a survey of consecutive referrals with in-depth interviews of a smaller sample of families. Investigative interviews represented the only intervention for the majority of children, and despite experiencing mixed feelings and a lack of real choice about whether or not they were interviewed, over half felt professionals should talk to children in similar situations. Significant qualities of the intervention were found to be the importance of professional belief, listening to and understanding children, and the quality of the 'child centredness' in the professional approach.

Barford (1993) spoke to children from four families about their views of child protection social work. Again children reported that social workers had just turned up, and some children had felt rushed by the process. This could lead to social workers not getting the full story from children. The children complained about being seen in the presence of other people, such as their parents, and reported an ambivalence about telling of their experiences. Social worker gender was not important to the children, except when combined with issues of race. Children appreciated social workers who were caring, who listened, and who had a sense of humour. Disliked social workers lacked these attributes, and additionally 'didn't look' at the child.

Prior, Lynch and Glaser (1994) studied children's evaluations of the professional response to child sexual abuse. Overall police officers and social workers were perceived very
positively by children, who particularly appreciated the police officers' sensitivity and supportiveness, and the social workers' explanations of difficult matters and legal processes. Most importantly, the majority of children reported feeling believed by police officers and social workers, which was significant given the difficulty they experienced in talking about their abuse in the required manner.

Abused children were also involved in a study of casework within the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC; Westcott, 1995a), in which their parents and NSPCC social workers (Child Protection Officers or CPOs) were also interviewed. Again, children liked CPOs who were perceived as kind, caring and possessing a sense of humour. Gender was not apparently important, although one girl specifically discussed how she had benefitted from talking with a male professional who had himself been sexually abused. Although children and young people expressed relief about speaking out about their abuse, they reported initial confusion and anxiety about the professionals’ intervention.

Finally, Berliner and Conte (1995) interviewed sexually abused children in America. Most of the children felt they received a positive and supportive response to their disclosure, often because their fears about telling did not materialise. Disclosure stirred up a mixture of feelings for the children, not of all of which were positive (for example, guilt; feeling ‘exposed’). The children reported positive and negative feelings about the professional intervention, such as being told it was not their fault (positive) or feeling that the practitioner was ‘pushy’ (negative).

The Literature on Interviewing

The studies cited above stem predominantly from a social work practice perspective. Much has been written about interviewing, however, that derives from psychological research or clinical experience. The size of this literature prohibits a comprehensive review here; instead, some of the more relevant work on interviewing in general, and particularly on interviewing children who are thought to have been abused, will be presented.
Guidelines on interviewing children and young people have proliferated in recent years (eg Jones, 1992; La Greca, 1990; Vizard, 1991), as the importance of eliciting information (especially from potential child witnesses) has been recognised. A number of interview protocols have been suggested (eg Boggs & Eyberg, 1990; Jones, 1992; Kanfer, Eyberg & Krahn, 1983), which generally advise on how interviewing can be facilitated, whilst minimising sources of 'contamination'. Young, O'Brien, Gutterman and Cohen (1987) identified 26 typical sources of 'misinformation' in clinical interviews. These sources may affect the success of the interview, and can be classified into those emanating from the structure of the interview (including the formulation of questions), those from the interviewer, and those from the interviewee.

Structure of the interview

Most of the structural factors identified by Young et al (1987) relate to the formulation, number and structure of questions. What assumptions are embedded in the question? How many sub-questions are contained within a single question? Are the questions about sensitive or threatening topics? Many of these issues will apply to questions used in interviews with children or young people who are suspected child abuse victims.

Brennan and Brennan (1988), Perry, McAuliff, Tam, Claycomb, Dostal and Planagan (1995), and Saywitz (1995) among others (see Westcott, 1995b, for a review), have examined question structure and terminology used by legal professionals examining child witnesses. These authors have particularly focused on the way defence counsel use complex adult-oriented questions which undermine children's capabilities and credibility as witnesses. White (1990; White & Edelstein, 1991) contends that multiple choice questions are similarly too complex for the child to be able to respond easily. Dennett and Becketian (1991) describe 'question stacking' - the tendency of an interviewer to ask more than one question before allowing the child an opportunity to respond. The child may subsequently be unable to remember the questions, and may not know which question the interviewer wants answered. As well as having deleterious effects on the quality of information the child produces, question stacking may lead to the child feeling more stressed in the interview.
The controversy surrounding 'leading questions' is also relevant here, and the value of these questions (especially in legal contexts) has been widely debated (e.g., Home Office, 1992; Jones, 1992; Spencer & Flin, 1993; White, 1990). The extent and direction to which a question is leading reflects the assumptions held by the interviewer, and as such can be a further source of contamination in the interview.

Finally, the way in which the nature of the alleged experience is perceived as threatening by the child has clear implications for questions that must be asked about it (Blagg, 1989). This situation is even more likely to be true for children or young people trying to describe events that they know break 'societal rules' or 'taboos' such as adult-child sexual relations. In a study of five and seven-year-old girls' memories of a physical examination which involved genital touch (Saywitz, Goodman, Nicholas & Moan, 1991), socio-emotional factors were implicated in the suppression of reports by older children who experienced genital contact during their examination - in effect, emotional 'blocking'. Accordingly, emotions such as embarrassment, anxiety, or self-consciousness amongst the older girls interfered with their ability to report their experiences.

**Interviewer factors**

Young *et al.* (1987) classified the following as issues for the interviewer: preferences and biases, emotionality, understanding of the questions, and recording errors (or 'systems contamination', White, 1990). A number of personal characteristics of the interviewer can directly affect his ability to interact well with the child in the interview. For example, the interviewer's age, gender and perceived status. Kaplan, Becker and Tenke (1991) questioned male adolescents who were undergoing evaluation in a sex offenders' clinic. Overall, the young men reported that they were significantly more comfortable with a female interviewer, particularly if they had themselves been sexually abused.

Studies of children's eyewitness testimony have shown that children's suggestibility can be reduced when the status of the interviewer suggesting the misleading information is decreased (Ceci, Ross and Toglia, 1987). This factor closely relates to the respondent's 'need to give socially desirable answers' (Young *et al.*, 1987), and could clearly be operating in investigative interviews. For example, it may be more difficult for a young
person to relate intimate experiences to an unfamiliar adult than it is to tell them to a friend of a similar age.

In a clinical study with adults, Nugent (1992) explored the affective impact of social workers’ interviewing styles. In brief, interviewers conducted their interviews in either ‘obstructive’ or ‘facilitative’ styles. ‘Obstructive’ techniques included blaming, lecturing, leading questions, arguing, put-down questions, and negative interruptions. ‘Facilitative’ techniques included active (empathic) listening, summary statements, negotiating statements, positive reframing and praise statements. Nugent found that the two interviewing styles produced quite different emotional reactions in clients. Obstructive techniques tended to elicit negative feelings, whilst facilitative styles elicited positive affective responses. Inconsistency in use of different interviewing behaviours within the same interview led to a negative response (and confusion) on behalf of the client. This finding is potentially relevant, since the need to employ evidential interviewing skills (as opposed to more therapeutic techniques) may lead to confusion and negative affect for the young person being interviewed.

Interviewee factors

The final group of effects discussed by Young et al (1987) stem from the interviewee herself. These include the perceived need to give socially desirable answers, lack of understanding of the questions, experience of questioning as stressful, perceptions of interview purpose, and cognitive abilities. Additionally, factors like the timing of the interview are important for the interviewee, especially when she is a young child (Rich, 1968).

The need to give socially desirable answers can result in children making statements they hope will please the (adult) interviewer. Moston (1990), for example, found that children changed their answers to questions that were repeated, believing that their first answer was somehow incorrect or unacceptable. This situation is likely to be exacerbated where questioning concerns sexual abuse, and societally acceptable behaviours or their violation.
The child's motivation to tell about their experiences, at that particular time, is another predisposing factor (Rich, 1968). It may be that other issues are of higher resonance to her than the investigative interview. Thus, one woman has described how, as a child, the prospect of her parents' imminent divorce was more absorbing of her attention than the fact that her grandfather was sexually abusing her (Westcott, 1993). Participation in an investigative interview may not be viewed by the child or young person as the most pertinent way to address those issues currently concerning him or her (see also Butler & Williamson, 1994).

It has previously been noted how the threatening nature of the subject under discussion may be influential. The social work literature leaves no doubt that telling about abuse is frequently a traumatic experience for the victim. Peters (1991) has demonstrated the way in which stress experienced during recall of an event can adversely affect children's testimony.

This review has briefly raised a number of issues that may be relevant to the current study. Although interview structure, interviewer, and interviewee factors have been discussed separately in this review, they will interact in any one interview situation.

**Method**

The study comprised semi-structured interviews with sexually abused children and young people who had undergone investigative interviews prior to the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

**Recruitment of Children and Young People**

All children were recruited through one NSPCC team, with the prior consent of the local social services, police constabulary and education authority. Team members selected girls and boys who had been sexually abused, with whom they had worked either on an individual or group basis. The team thus screened out any young person whom they felt would be harmed by participation in the research, but a mixture of previous and current cases was obtained. Young people received an introductory letter explaining the purpose of
the research, and were asked to contact the author via the prepaid envelope if they were interested in participating. Letters were sent out from September 1992 through June 1993.

Recruitment proved exceedingly difficult: approximately 40 young people were approached, with less than half agreeing to participate. Barford (1993), Butler and Williamson (1994), Davies et al (1995), Prior et al (1994), and Westcott (1995a) experienced similar problems in recruiting children and families for their research. It does not seem to be simply that children are disinterested, although some may be. Even after they had agreed to participate in this project, it was very difficult to maintain communication with many of the young people about arrangements. They would say they forgot to reply to letters (stamped, addressed envelopes had been provided) or telephone calls. One girl forgot to turn up for her first interview. This forgetfulness did not relate to a lack of enthusiasm in the research interview itself; however, and children and young people gave full and detailed accounts, as reflected below. It seems possible that participation in a research project was difficult to keep as a priority, and other issues were more likely to demand the children’s attention (see Butler & Williamson (1994), and Phoenix (1994) for discussion of similar problems in social research). This may mirror earlier findings that abused children do not necessarily view their participation in investigative interviews as the most important ‘problem’ with which they have to cope, or as the most beneficial means of resolving their situation (Wattam, 1992; Westcott, 1993).

Once the author received the slip expressing a willingness to participate, she sent a letter suggesting arrangements for the interview. A letter explaining the research for carers was also available, but was not requested by any young person or their carer.

Pilot Study

The first four children who responded (two boys and two girls, aged 14-17 years) acted as pilot interviewees. The draft interview schedule was employed to ascertain its suitability. In fact, only minor amendments were deemed necessary after the pilot, and no problems were encountered during this phase of the research.
The Children and their Backgrounds

Fourteen children and young people participated in the main study, nine girls and five boys from different socio-economic backgrounds. All the participants were white European apart from one Chinese girl. With the exception of one boy with mild learning difficulties, all were non-disabled. Table 2.1 presents relevant personal information.

Originally, it was anticipated that only young people over the age of 11 years would participate in the research. However, the severe problems encountered in recruiting interviewees, and also the willingness of some younger children to take part, meant that several younger children were included. Altliough special care was taken to make sure these children understood the research questions, and to tailor the interview appropriately, the nature and detail of their responses fully justified their inclusion in the project.

The children and young people ranged in age from 6-18 years at time of research interview (mean age 14 years, modal ages 16 and 17 years), and from age 5-16 years at investigative interview. Time lapsed between investigative and research interviews ranged from one to four years.

All perpetrators were male, and all were known to their victims. A variety of sexually abusive acts were perpetrated upon the children and young people, including touching, vaginal and anal intercourse. The abuse came to light through a disclosure by the victim in most cases, although for two young people investigations followed a disclosure by their siblings. Two children in this study were siblings.

No interviewees were under any legal orders at the time of the research interview, although four children had previously been the subject of legal action in relation to their abuse. For eleven children, there had been a criminal prosecution against the perpetrator. One offender received a £400 fine, and the remainder jail terms ranging from six months to five years. For the three remaining children, one perpetrator confessed while substantial concerns remained about the other two children’s safety.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age at Research Interview</th>
<th>Age at Investigative Interview</th>
<th>Perpetrator</th>
<th>Details of sexual abuse</th>
<th>How abuse came to light</th>
<th>Child Protection Legal Action?</th>
<th>Criminal Prosecution?</th>
<th>Conviction Sentence</th>
<th>Any Other Relevant Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>Male outside of family</td>
<td>Masturbation of and by perpetrator, simulated sexual intercourse</td>
<td>Victim reported abuse to teacher</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes - 4 years</td>
<td>Other victims</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Male   | 17 years                  | 15 years                      | Uncle      | Masturbation of and by perpetrator, buggery of victim | Victim reported abuse to social worker | No                          | Yes                 | Yes - 3 years   | 1. Younger sibling also abused  
2. Perpetrator confessed |
| Female | 16 years                  | 15 years                      | Grandfather | Vaginal intercourse    | Victim reported abuse to mother | No                          | Yes                 | Case postponed because of defendant's ill health | Perpetrator confessed |
| Female | 16 years                  | 14 years                      | Grandfather | Sexual abuse (no further details available in case file) | Victim reported abuse to step mother | No                          | Yes                 | (No further details available in case file) | --- |
| Female | 13 years                  | 12 years                      | Male lodger | Fondling, touching breasts | Sibling disclosed abuse, victim then reported her abuse | No                          | Yes                 | Yes - 6 months | 1. Sibling also abused  
2. Perpetrator confessed |
| Male   | 11 years                  | 9 years                       | Male lodger | Touching                | Victim told elder sibling | No                          | Yes                 | Yes - 9 months | 1. Sibling also abused  
2. Perpetrator confessed |
| Female | 16 years                  | 13 years                      | Male adult known to victim | Threatened with knife, rape and attempted murder of victim | Victim told teacher | No                          | Yes                 | Yes - 5 years   | --- |

*table continued*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age at Research Interview</th>
<th>Age at Investigative Interview</th>
<th>Perpetrator</th>
<th>Details of sexual abuse</th>
<th>How abuse came to light</th>
<th>Child Protection Legal Action?</th>
<th>Criminal Prosecution?</th>
<th>Conviction Sentence</th>
<th>Any Other Relevant Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Indecent assault, Touching of breasts and genitals</td>
<td>Victim’s sibling disclosed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>(No further details available in case file)</td>
<td>Mother charged with aiding and abetting assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>Touching</td>
<td>Victim reported abuse to sibling</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes - £400 fine</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Male cousin</td>
<td>Oral sex on victim, digital penetration of victim</td>
<td>Victim reported abuse</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No - victim’s family requested counselling for perpetrator</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Perpetrator confessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>Sexual abuse (no further details available in case file)</td>
<td>Victim reported abuse to friend</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>(No further details available from case file)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Male taxi driver</td>
<td>Perpetrator touched victim’s genitals whilst transporting victim to school</td>
<td>Victim reported abuse to mother</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>A number of other boys independently made similar accusations. All agencies believed allegations to be true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Perpetrator touched victim’s genitals</td>
<td>Victim reported abuse</td>
<td>Yes (Father supervised access)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Sexual abuse allegations against younger sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Mother’s cohabitee</td>
<td>Sexual abuse (no further details available in case file)</td>
<td>Victim reported abuse to cousin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Defendant jumped bail and has not since been caught</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Schedule

Appendix One presents the interview schedule used in the current study. The questions were derived by the author from previous studies, and from consultation with professional colleagues in and outside of the NSPCC. None of the questions probed details of the abuse perpetrated upon the young person. It was felt unnecessary and traumatising to raise it with the young person, when such information could be obtained by the author from case files at a later date.

The questions were used flexibly with each interviewee, allowing the interview to "flow" as much as possible, and avoiding repetition if the information was spontaneously offered by the child before they were asked about the issue. The final question concerned the child's view of the research interview they had just undergone. This served as a helpful way of closing the interview, and enabled the author to check on the emotional wellbeing of the interviewee before leaving them. It also provided useful and very positive feedback to the author as interviewer.

Conducting the Interviews

Interviews were conducted during November 1992 through June 1993 and children were offered a choice about where they were interviewed. Twelve were interviewed at home and two at NSPCC offices near their homes. Interviewees were seen on their own except where they requested a parent or friend to be present. After initial introductions, the purpose of the research was again described and the author went through the consent form, explaining the child's rights as a participant. It was stressed that the interview would focus only on the investigative interview itself, and not on the abuse suffered by the child. Interviewees were reminded that the researcher knew nothing about what had happened to them, only that they had agreed to participate in the research. It was explained that, if they were willing, background details would be obtained from their case files. It was interesting to note how many of the children were obviously amazed that the author did not already have all their details, and would openly ask "you really don't know?" during the research interview. Often, they would then proceed to explain at least part of their experiences.
The child signed a form consenting to participate, and was asked to sign also if they consented to the researcher tape-recording the interview, seeing their case file, and viewing videotapes of their interviews where they existed. In fact, no video recordings were available for the research. All but one interview was tape recorded; written notes were made in the remaining interview at the request of the young person. All interviews were conducted by the author, and lasted from 12-35 minutes, with a mean length of 22 minutes. After the interview the author explained the subsequent stages of the project and likely timescales. A thank you letter was sent to the interviewees some days subsequent to the interview, enclosing a small address card and reminding the young person how they could contact the author should they have any queries or other comments to make at a future date. The draft research report was later sent to those interviewees who wanted a copy (the majority), inviting their comments. No responses to the draft were received from the children and young people, which may reflect some of the factors discussed in relation to recruitment.

Post Interview Arrangements

The author collated available information from case files pertaining to the children’s abuse, and any civil or criminal proceedings that took place. For some interviewees, case file information was particularly sparse.

Tape recordings were transcribed by the author and subjected to content analysis with the assistance of the computer programme ‘Textbase Alpha’ which facilitates the coding and analysis of open-ended and unstructured interview responses.

Study Method: Notes

In subsequent discussions, where quotations appear, use of ‘...’ between words indicates that text has been omitted. For example, ‘have a choice...I suppose because’.

There is a danger, in qualitative research of this nature, of over reliance on verbatim extracts from the most talkative or most ‘colourful’ interviewees. The whole range of responses need to be represented, including those which appear less extreme or less
‘interesting’. Attempts have been made to avoid misrepresentation of this kind by summarising the whole breadth of responses obtained in response to any one question, and by monitoring the number of excerpts reproduced from any one individual. (A number of interviewees in this study are of the same age and so, for example, a quote from ‘girl, aged 16 years’ could be from any of four young women in this age group.)

This is but one example of the problem of preserving rigour in qualitative research - specifically, an awareness of the tendency to make data look more regular than it is (Sandelowski, 1986). A number of researchers have discussed problems of reliability and validity in qualitative research (eg Barriball & White, 1994; Kirk & Miller, 1986; Leininger, 1994; Sandelowski, 1986; Smith, 1996), often situating their discussion in the context of the ‘quantitative versus qualitative’ research debate. Particular researchers differ, for example, in the degree to which they feel it is appropriate to use terms such as ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ which are derived from the quantitative literature to assess the merits of qualitative research. However, a number of criteria or steps have been suggested to ensure that qualitative research (of whatever nature) is of an acceptable standard.

Some of these steps were built into the research design for this study, but failed in practice to have effect. For example, ‘triangulation’ (see, for example, Smith, 1996) was anticipated through the analysis of the children’s videotaped interviews in addition to their verbal reports. However, it transpired that no videotapes were available. The author also presented the children and young people with copies of the draft report for their comments, thus seeking ‘member validation’ (Smith, 1996) or to increase the project’s ‘truth value’ (Sandelowski, 1986). In the event, no responses were received from the participants. Despite these failings, as argued later in this chapter, the consistency of the findings with those of other similar studies lead to some confidence in the study’s results.

Other measures that can be undertaken to improve the rigour of qualitative research interviews include the following. First, an awareness of the participants’ particular characteristics and how these may relate to the study’s findings, for example, are they a representative sample, how do they compare to non-participants who declined to take part in the research? The ‘opt-in’ anonymous recruitment procedure (see Prior et al, 1994) used in this study hampered such an analysis, although in hindsight some comparison might have
been possible. Secondly, full transcription of interviews (as undertaken here) makes the primary or 'raw' data available (whether theoretically or in practice) for analysis by others, reducing the possibility of researcher error, and allowing an 'audit' of the researcher's analytic decision trail (eg Barriball & While, 1994; Sandelowski, 1986; Smith, 1996). Linked to this, another member of the research team, if such exists, can listen to a number of the interviews conducted or read the transcripts, at an early stage (eg pilot) to see whether s/he agrees with the preliminary analysis offered by the interviewer. Thirdly, the researcher can explicitly acknowledge at the outset of the research his or her informal hypotheses and expectations regarding the nature of the findings, to ensure that s/he is not simply seeking data to confirm such expectations. In the current study, expectations were reflected in the core questions posed to interviewees (see Appendix One), but the benefit of a qualitative approach lies in the flexibility with which such questions can be used in the interview situation (eg Barriball & While, 1994). Here, for example, the children and the young people were able to 'digress' from the questions asked to expand on any points or other issues they wished. The pilot also offered the opportunity for children and young people (as opposed to adult researchers) to define issues of importance for the research.

Finally, at a more general level, the overall approach to the research process can enhance its value by particular regard to the power issues that are operating (eg Westcott, 1996). This is reflected in a sensitivity to the power relationships between researcher and participants, such as in the current study when as much choice as possible was offered to the children and young people (eg when and where they were interviewed, who else was present). Feminist researchers in particular have done much to highlight the nature of power in research (eg Maynard & Purvis, 1994; Roberts, 1981).

Results

Investigative Interviews: Details

Many of the children and young people in this study had experienced a number of investigative and therapeutic interviews with different agencies. To clarify which interview was discussed during the research interview, they were asked which interview they had had was the one they judged most important. For most this was easily identified as the 'one
with the police’, during which a statement had typically been taken. Where the interviewee was undecided the author suggested the ‘police interview’ (or most significant police interview, if there was more than one), to ensure consistency throughout the project. Thus the study focused only on investigative interviews which had taken place when the abuse first came to light. Table 2.2 presents information about the interviewers, location and other persons present for these investigative interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young Person (gender-age at investigative interview)</th>
<th>Location of Interview</th>
<th>Interviewers Present*</th>
<th>Other Persons Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male - 12 years</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Police Officer (male)</td>
<td>Mother, Stepfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male - 15 years</td>
<td>Elderly Persons' Home</td>
<td>Police Officers (male, female)</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - 15 years</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Police Officer (female) Social Worker (female, Indian)</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - 14 years</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Police Officer (female) Social Worker (female)</td>
<td>Stepmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - 12 years</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Police Officers (male, female)</td>
<td>Mother, Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male - 9 years</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Police Officer (male)</td>
<td>Mother, Sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - 13 years</td>
<td>Police Station</td>
<td>Police Officers (both male)</td>
<td>Mother, Stepfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - 16 years</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Police Officer (female) Social Worker (female)</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - 14 years</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Police Officer (female) Social Worker (female)</td>
<td>Aunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - 5 years</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Police Officer (female) Social Worker (female)</td>
<td>Mother, Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - 14 years</td>
<td>Police Station</td>
<td>Police Officer (female) Social Worker (female)</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male - 15 years</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Police Officer (female) Social Worker (male)</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male - 9 years</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Police Officer (female) Social Worker (male)</td>
<td>Mother, Sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - 14 years</td>
<td>Relative's House</td>
<td>Police Officers (both male)</td>
<td>Aunt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All interviewers were white, with one exception as shown

Predominantly, children were interviewed at their home (n=9), although police stations, school and an elderly persons’ home were also used. A relative’s house was used for one victim. Although most young people were interviewed by joint police and social services investigating teams (n=8), six young people had been seen by police interviewers only.

All male interviewees had at least one male interviewer, and two male interviewees had not had a female interviewer present. All but one female interviewee had had at least one female interviewer present, and two female interviewees had been seen by at least one male
professional. Only one professional involved in these interviews was not white (an Indian social worker).

**Context Within Which Interviews Took Place**

For most young people, the investigative interview seemed to be something that ‘just happened’ with no warning or preparation. Thus they talked of interviewers ‘just turning up’, and who ‘just came to my house’ or ‘just take a statement here and now’. The apparently rushed nature of the interview was commented on unfavourably by several children, who felt it was all ‘too sudden’ or ‘all too quick’. One boy (aged 13 years) commented,

> The way they came without us actually knowing, I reckon that was a bit surprising. It didn’t help much.

when asked if anything about the interview had been unhelpful.

Of the young people, only three had been given any choice over where they were interviewed. However, given the circumstances, most felt comfortable with the location in which they had been seen (n=11). Three interviewees said they would have preferred to be interviewed elsewhere: one girl who was seen at home felt ‘uncomfortable’ there and wished she had been interviewed at NSPCC offices. Another girl seen at home wished she was interviewed at her friend’s house, and one boy interviewed at an elderly persons’ home would have preferred a police station. For the two girls, this seemed to stem from their desire for privacy from family members who could enter the interview at any time as it was conducted at their home. Two girls commented favourably on the location of their interviews - school and friend’s house - as they were familiar and made the young people feel safe.

Only two children had not been accompanied by any other person (apart from the interviewers) during the interview. One or both parents were usually present (n=10), and aunts had remained throughout for two girls. Three children had been asked who they would like to be present, and six could remember being given no choice. One girl had
asked for a girlfriend to be present but was denied this support, and another girl interviewed alone felt the beginning of the interview was tense as a result of this.

Three boys said they felt ‘okay’ or ‘alright’ about the presence of others during the interview, and three girls were positive about the supporters, saying they felt ‘better’, ‘reassured’ and ‘looked after’. Five children did not want the other persons present; three had asked them to leave the room. Reasons for this included the children’s wish to protect others’ feelings and also a desire for privacy. For example, one girl (aged 18 years) said:

I would’ve preferred it if she wasn’t there, but I didn’t really have a choice...I suppose because of the details I had to tell the police, I didn’t want anybody to know really.

Another girl stressed how important it was that she had, indeed, been given a choice about who was present.

It did matter, because I’m sure if I’d have been with someone I didn’t want, I probably wouldn’t have said quite honestly and openly about more of these things that went into my statement. (Girl aged 17 years)

Although they had been unprepared for the interview itself, all children said they had understood why they were being interviewed. The youngest child in the study, a girl aged six, said simply ‘because of (perpetrator)’. Other young people stated that ‘they (interviewers) had found out about it’ or interviewers wanted to find out ‘what had happened’, and several gave quasi-legal responses - ‘to take statement’ or ‘to get enough evidence really for the case’.

Eight children said they had received an explanation about what would happen either during or subsequent to the interview, and for half of these the explanation had centred around taking a statement. Six young people had not received any explanation. One boy (aged 17 years) stated:

No one explained, I knew it and they just did it.
How the Interview Progressed: Form and Feelings

When asked how the interview had started, the majority of children replied that the interviewers had 'just started asking questions'; some had had the purpose of taking a statement explained again. Only one interviewee remembered a 'rapport' phase:

They just didn't talk about it at all at first, about ten minutes they were just talking about you know school and that lot and they gradually got into it. (Girl aged 16 years)

Interviewees vividly recalled how they had felt at the beginning of the interview: 'nervous' (n=8) and 'scared' (n=5). Others described feeling apprehensive, uncomfortable and upset and some reported crying or shaking.

Felt really nervous. I kept thinking that they wouldn't believe me and I could feel my face going red, really red and I was getting really hot. (Girl aged 16 years)

I know I was really scared because I thought you know like it says you got to say it all correct otherwise you get sent to prison...I was so scared they was saying things like 'what was you wearing' and I was thinking 'oh my', cos it was over a year now...cos I used to change my clothes about five times a day. (Girl aged 16 years)

Several children feared that the interviewers would not believe them - one young woman was later told the disbelieving stance was necessary to find out if her allegations were true.

Very scared and frightened, at one point one policeman, he was quite a nasty policeman, and I had a nice policeman, both male...one sort of made me feel like I was lying and the other one believed me. But I got told that was natural because they had to find out if my allegations were true so they had to bully me in a way but they also had a nice one to say 'alright we do believe you'. (Girl aged 17 years)
As the interview progressed young people remembered more questions, and interviewers writing things down. Some mentioned that the interviewers had tried to clarify points, and again referred to the difficulty they had had in recalling details:

I'd talk most of the time but maybe I would sometimes slip and slip something back at the beginning that was supposed to be in my past a bit before what I was talking about at the present and then (policewoman) would ask if she wanted to get things clearer. (Girl aged 17 years)

The initial anxiety began to disappear for a few of the children, who reported feeling 'more comfortable' or 'alright' as the interview progressed. One girl said she felt 'better than I thought I would'. Others, however, remained 'nervous', 'tense' and 'scared', crying or shaking. One girl commented that she felt like an 'idiot' and 'disgusting', whilst one boy said he felt worse as a result of being 'rushed' by interviewers he felt were too 'blunt'.

Children found it difficult to remember how the interview had ended, although a few referred to reading and signing their statement. One of the youngest children in the study, an 11 year old boy, remembered:

They gave me a felt (sic) of the radio and we started playing jokes and we had a bit of fun and then came back on to it and then it ended and the police went.

On the whole, young people felt better once the interview had ended: eight said they were 'relieved', 'pleased' or felt 'better it was out of my system'. For example, one 14 year old boy commented:

Sort of like, I was quite relieved that I'd got it out in the open.

Some children still felt 'shaky' or 'upset'. This was not just for themselves - two girls explicitly mentioned their concerns about people who would be affected by their disclosure:

Upset about my grandma, because it would upset her. (Girl aged 16 years)
I did feel relieved afterwards. I knew then from that point whatever I had endured for three years it would finish... I was scared that I’d have to face me mum, and scared that if ever my stepdad came after me cos he’d always said if I told I’d be in trouble. (Girl aged 17 years)

One boy aged 17 years emphasised his negative feelings at the end of the interview:

Not relieved, because of the way they were just like blunt or something, I couldn’t say the whole story and I never did and haven’t now.

Interviewers' Questions

Three inter-related questions were asked about the questions the interviewers put to the children and young people. These asked about the perceived difficulty of the interviewers' questions, how many of the interviewers' questions they could understand, and how many of the interviewers' questions they could answer. Generally, the questions were judged to be moderately difficult to understand and to answer, and on the whole interviewees had not experienced too many problems.

Several issues kept recurring, however. Language used by interviewers - long and complicated words and sentences - created most difficulties for the young people. Their abuse was also a difficult and embarrassing thing to talk about, and remembering specific details was difficult. Comments made by the six year old girl were particularly illuminating; she first described the difficulties she had faced with the interviewers' language:

They kept talking longer then small, so I couldn’t keep up with it, and they kept talking a question then a different question before I answered.

She then went on to describe how the interviewers could have helped her:

Think I would speak clearly and little words cause if the little girl won’t understand us, I would have to say a different question then.
Other children and young people described problems with interviewers’ questions as follows:

Words of the question. Difficult topic to talk about and she used quite long words. (Girl aged 13 years)

Cause if she asked a question, she like went on about it for ages and then she goes, 'what do you think?' I'd completely forgotten what on earth she was going on about. (Girl aged 16 years)

A couple of interviewees had further suggestions for improvements:

Talk nice and level and slow (so) I could understand him. (Boy aged 11 years)

Be easier, less blunt. (Boy aged 17 years)

Reasons for their abuse being so difficult to talk about seemed twofold. Firstly, there were a group of issues around the nature of the experience - it being embarrassing, personal and threatening. For example,

I mean it got easier as I went along but you still had to get down to the very nitty-gritty and actual wording for things like that, and that was very, very embarrassing. (Girl aged 17 years)

Perhaps more seriously for the investigative interview, however, was a second group of issues which centred around the difficulties children encountered in describing their abuse in the way in which the interviewers required. Specific details were difficult to remember, and were not particularly salient aspects of the abuse for the child.

Well, they were questioning me about dates and that, and I couldn’t remember, that got to me, and times, I mean you don’t remember that sort of thing really. How long it went on for an’ all that. (Girl aged 16 years)
Like when (police officer) asked what were the room like, it was hard to remember, but I tried to, I pictured it in me mind but it kept slipping back out. (Boy aged 14 years)

One young woman spontaneously provided an analogy of what it was like, trying to distinguish separate abusive episodes for the interviewers.

Because she was like, say like you pick a pin up and then put it in a pile of pins and its sort of like pick that pin up, you know, and it was like it had to be the way, you know, and I couldn’t remember. (Girl aged 16 years)

A few children simply did not want to talk about their abuse, and felt it was their own business.

Interviewers

Children were asked what they liked or disliked about each interviewer they had had; there were no apparent trends in attributes depending on whether the interviewer was a police officer or social worker. Positive attributes outweighed the negative; five children could think of nothing they liked about one of their interviewers, but fourteen could think of nothing they disliked about one of their interviewers. The top three positive attributes were 'nice' (n=4), 'understanding' (n=3) and 'made me laugh' (n=3).

She were kind and understanding. She were polite. (Girl aged 13 years)

The way she spoke, her attitude, she spoke to me quite alright, she spoke to me nice. (Boy aged 17 years)

I liked him a lot, he tried to make me laugh at times. Yeah it did relax me a lot more, I felt a bit more comfortable in front of him. (Girl aged 17 years)

Other interviewer characteristics which the children appreciated included: being friendly, comforting, not pressurising, being sympathetic and supportive, listening, believing, and being good to talk to. One boy (aged nine at investigative interview) had liked the
policeman bringing his hat and radio for the boy to play with. The top negative attributes were 'made it feel unimportant' (n=2) and 'didn’t say anything' (n=2).

Don't like the way they sit, at the time I just felt they're not interested, it's not important. (Boy aged 17 years)

She just sat there really bored, she weren't asking no questions, she just sat there staring at me like that, she weren’t even blinking. (Girl aged 16 years)

Additionally, children complained of interviewers who 'spoke posh', were 'snotty', 'spoke to me as if I were just a piece of filth', were disbelieving, blunt, 'chopped and changed my words', or 'treated me younger than I am'. Generally, though, interviewers were well liked, which was important - only one boy said it did not matter whether he liked the interviewer or not. Interviewees felt it was important because they would otherwise not be able to talk openly.

Very important because I wouldn’t have been able to speak to her if I didn’t like her very much and I didn’t get on. (Girl aged 18 years)

Yeah, her attitude. If I didn’t like her I wouldn’t have gone through with it. (Boy aged 17 years)

An earlier comment by a different boy revealed how he had not spoken of everything that had happened to him as a result of his dislike of the interviewers.

Children generally felt they had been believed; they gave a number of reasons why they felt the interviewer had believed them or not. Primarily, for those who felt believed, it was the way in which the interviewer spoke to them:

The way he actually asked me things, he comforted me. He said you don’t have to tell us if you don’t want to, it’s alright...and stuff like that. (Boy aged 13 years)
The way she was speaking to me she were kind and everything. (Girl aged 13 years)

Other things which made the children feel believed included the perceived helpfulness of the interviewer, encouragement from the interviewer, and a caring attitude. Also interviewers listening to the young person, and, for one boy, simply the length of time the interviewer spent talking to him.

Young people who did not feel believed mentioned a lack of facial expression or emotion on behalf of the interviewer, as well as bullying tactics. One girl in particular found it difficult to decide whether she had been believed or not - the interviewer’s expressed wish to catch the perpetrator was positive, but her repeated questioning was not.

Well I felt that she believed me but like...she weren’t out to, you know like care for my feelings, she was just out to get this bloke, you know, she just wanted him put away, so yeah she did believe me. But you know like, I don’t think she did actually cos she went over and over everything so she might have been just like not believing me, it felt like she did at the start. (Girl aged 16 years)

Perhaps one of the biggest issues concerned interviewer gender. Nine children (seven girls, two boys) said interviewer gender was important, and they all preferred a woman - including one girl who had been interviewed by two male police officers. Four interviewees (one girl, three boys) said interviewer gender was not important, and one girl did not respond. Reasons for wanting a female interviewer included the following: a man would remind them of their perpetrator and abuse, being ‘off men’ at that time, not trusting men, women being more understanding, women easier to talk to.

Because if I had a bloke it could remind me. (Girl aged 16 years)

Because what I was going to, having to explain I think women will understand more I suppose. Men, policemen I don’t think they really care to be honest. (Girl aged 18 years)
Preferred it to be a woman, because it would be a lot easier to talk to. Well, women understand a man's problem and it's hard for a bloke to understand a man's problem. (Boy aged 14 years)

Children who did not think interviewer gender was important did not see any difficulties in talking to either men or women:

Be just the same. (Girl aged 6 years)

Cos I like talking to men and ladies. (Boy aged 11 years)

It didn't matter really. I'd speak to both of them. (Boy aged 17 years)

Children were questioned about the interviewers' race and culture, and whether it was important to them. It was not, with the exception of one girl who had had an Indian social worker. She made the following comment:

Don't get me wrong. I'm not racist. But I prefer white people. (Girl aged 16 years)

However, most young people were emphatic that it would make no difference. One girl in this study was Chinese; she responded

It didn't bother me at all. No, not at all...as long as I have not had any racism from them it is okay to me. (Girl aged 17 years)

Other Issues Relating to the Interview and Interviewee

Interviewees were asked how they felt about the length of the interview. Five (including four boys) felt it was 'ok' or 'alright', and two girls felt it was 'too long'. Two girls said the time had 'flown by' and two tried to explain how time had passed slowly yet quickly at the same time.
When asked whether anything about the interview had been helpful, six interviewees said ‘no’. Two young people said they had appreciated giving the statement, and one girl liked the explanation of what would happen next. One girl said it was helpful to be interviewed in a familiar room. Three young people found it helpful to talk about their abuse.

Talking, the way us talked about it. (Boy aged 17 years)

Me telling them everything. It took, like a load off my mind and I didn’t feel so awful inside, I didn’t feel so much it was my fault cause I kept saying it’s my fault. I think that’s what my dad’s family think. (Girl aged 16 years)

It is better to talk to people about it. Knowing he would get to be put away, and he wouldn’t be out doing it to any other little kid. (Girl aged 16 years)

Although almost half the interviewees did not find anything about the interview particularly helpful, only four mentioned aspects they had found especially unhelpful. One boy again referred to the fact that his stepfather had been present against his wishes, and another boy emphasised the lack of warning he had received that the interviewers were coming. One girl again said the interview had been too long, and another mentioned ‘too many questions’.

When specifically asked if anything about the interview itself had upset them, seven interviewees said not. Three girls additionally commented that it was their abuse, and not the interview, which had been upsetting. Two young people said that ‘actually describing what had happened’ was upsetting. Other issues raised included the arrival of a (disliked) social worker without warning; having to make a statement; the questions asked, and the expressed disbelief of a male police officer.

Children were asked what would have made them feel more comfortable in the interview; that is, made it easier for them to talk about what had happened. Comments related to earlier complaints; for example, the exclusion of parents and siblings, warning that the interview was to take place, a different location for the interview.
I liked it when Mum and Dad went out. When Mum and Dad was in there I wouldn't talk - I wouldn't say owt. No, I knew it would upset them and they would start crying, and I did not want that. (Girl aged 16 years)

One young woman, who had been interviewed by two male police officers, would have liked a female to be present - she was 'embarrassed talking about certain things with a man there'. Another girl wanted to 'get to know' the interviewers first before they 'gradually got into it'.

One interviewee referred to the police uniforms:

If they weren’t wearing uniforms. Police uniforms just psych me out! I’m not used to the Police being good. I felt like I’d done something wrong with them sitting there and all the uniforms, with the walkie talkies and that on.

(Girl aged 16 years)

Other responses included asking fewer questions, giving the young person better privacy, and better preparation:

I would have told her exactly who was coming to the interview, I would have said how long it actually would last and told them exactly what would happen in it. (Girl aged 16 years)

Several children suggested making better efforts to ensure the interviewee was more comfortable, by displaying greater understanding, and performing more sensitive introductions:

I would have introduced myself by my first name. Policewoman introduced herself as PC whatever. It just sounded too formal. (Girl aged 16 years)

I think I would have made the person who I was going to interview feel a bit more comfortable because I was just sort of shoved in the room and interviewed really. I was introduced but I wasn’t, I didn’t really feel very
comfortable at first because I was upstairs crying because I didn’t want to speak to them because I didn’t know anything about them and you know complete strangers - I didn’t know whether I could trust them or not. (Girl aged 18 years)

Let them talk and showed it understood as if I was a counsellor. Made (them) feel more comfortable. (Boy aged 17 years)

Well, I’d have been more understanding, you know, and I’d of like asked her if she wants to stop and we could go out for a drink. (Girl aged 16 years)

A further question asked the interviewees whether they felt better or worse about what had happened to them as a result of the interview. Two young people felt worse, with reference to the perpetrator. For example:

Well, worse cause when he comes out he might send somebody after me, cause I was the only one who got it out. (Boy aged 14 years)

Four young people felt better as a result of the interview. This reflected their relief at speaking openly about their abuse:

Better. Well, for six years I’d been quiet about it...so now when it was finally out in the open and I hadn’t to hide it anywhere. (Girl aged 16 years)

Over half the young people (n=8), however, reported mixed feelings. Again, relief about speaking openly about what had happened to them, but simultaneously a variety of negative feelings:

I was feeling better because everyone knew but I felt worse because Grandma and Grandad knew and they were like ignoring the whole subject and he was me Grandma’s son, you see, so that made it even worse, you know. (Girl aged 16 years)
I felt a bit better getting it off me chest but I felt a bit bad, I don’t know why.  
(Boy aged 13 years)

It was a relief telling someone knowing something was going to be done...but me personally I felt guilty for betraying a secret...I was told I wasn’t allowed to tell anyone. I know that myself but it doesn’t stop. (Girl aged 17 years)

Two related questions asked the interviewee (a) whether they would have gone through with the interview if they had known what it was going to be like, and (b) what they would recommend a friend to do, if they knew that he/she was being abused. The majority of children (n=11) said they would, indeed, have gone through with the interview. Two girls said they would not:

Er, no. Because nothing really happened after for months and months. (Girl aged 16 years)

If I’d had found out what everything’s led to now. No! (Girl aged 16 years)

Finally one girl aged 17 years wasn’t sure:

I don’t really know, maybe if I knew the outcome now I would of still gone through with it but at the time I don’t think I would have, no I don’t think I’d have known to have gone through all that again. It caused so many upsets. If I’d have known...how it would upset everybody and how much it would have upset me, I don’t think I’d have gone through with it, I’d have just kept carrying on how I was.

As far as their hypothetical friends were concerned, the majority of children and young people would advise them to talk to someone (n=11). In fact, one interviewee had found herself in this position:

I’ve been in this situation. I told her to tell her mum - she did. It took me a while to persuade her to but did it in the end. (Girl aged 13 years)
One girl added a caveat to her advice to tell someone - the friend should have someone, 'probably a social worker', first explain what would happen to her if she did talk.

Summary

Children and young people raised a number of issues relating to all aspects of the investigative interview. They felt unprepared, and for most it had taken place without any prior warning. A lack of choice about where they were interviewed, and about other people present, had left some feeling uncomfortable.

On the whole, children liked the professionals who had interviewed them, and generally they felt that interviewers believed them. Interviewer attributes which were appreciated tended to be those that were supportive, whereas negative attributes tended to be those that alienated the child. Interviewees felt it was important that they liked the interviewer, and also that they felt believed. Gender of interviewer was quite a major issue, with the majority preferring female interviewers.

Some difficulties were encountered with the questions employed. Language was a problem, with interviewers using words and sentences that were complicated and age-inappropriate. It was difficult for the children and young people to recall the specific details that were required, and they sometimes objected to the way in which they were spoken to. Their abuse itself was a very challenging thing to talk about, and some felt they did not want to discuss it.

The interview was experienced as stressful by the majority of the children, especially at the beginning. Most described themselves as nervous and/or scared initially. Although these feelings receded for several children as the interview progressed, some still felt distressed at its end. Talking openly about the abuse was generally, for all its difficulties, experienced as a good thing, although several young people felt disturbed about the unpleasant ramifications of their disclosure.
Discussion

The children and young people in this study have raised a number of issues relating to investigative interviews. These have been loosely classified according to Young et al.'s (1987) scheme introduced earlier: structural (questioning) issues, interviewer issues and interviewee issues. The presentation of verbatim excerpts has highlighted the personal consequences many of these issues can have, and helps to promote insight into the child's perspective as interviewee. Before proceeding further, however, some methodological issues need to be considered.

Firstly, the study comprises a small number of interviews with non randomly selected children, so care must be taken not to over generalize. Further, with one exception, all children and young people were white, and much greater attention is required to the particular perspectives of children from minority ethnic communities. Similarly, viewpoints from young people who are disabled and from younger children should be sought. The children in this study were recruited via one specific voluntary agency (the NSPCC) and from one county in England, and possible biases resulting from this must be acknowledged. A much larger study is required which randomly samples children and young people from all over England and Wales, through the different statutory authorities and voluntary agencies. This should also overcome problems associated with the identification of possible participants dependent upon a small number of practitioners. It is worth noting, though, the real problems which can be anticipated in setting up such a project, as highlighted by a number of authors (Barford, 1993; Butler & Williamson, 1994; Davies et al, 1995; Prior et al, 1994; Sharland et al, 1993; Westcott, 1995a).

The high percentage of criminal prosecutions in this sample is also noteworthy (n=11 or 79%), as is the high proportion of voluntary disclosures made by interviewees (n=12 or 86%; see Sorenson & Snow 1991). Both these factors would be anticipated to yield more favourable responses from young people as they are likely to be those children who are most ready to participate in and to have most positive experiences of their investigative interview - belief in their testimony being evidenced by concrete actions by professionals (prosecution, conviction). The fact that these children and young people volunteered to participate in this study may also be influential in this respect. However, if this group of
atypical children can report doubts and difficulties, how much more so will the majority of other 'less believed' children undergoing investigative interviews?

Future research would benefit from including children at the very early stages of their referral for possible abuse (eg Roberts & Taylor, 1993), thus including both children whose cases do and do not get taken forward for criminal proceedings post investigative interview. This would also overcome the problem in the current study whereby some children were talking about interviews which took place as much as four years earlier, and could thus be susceptible to retrospective biases. However, it is likely that many agencies and professionals would object to early research involvement on the basis that the research interview may interfere with possible criminal or civil proceedings, and be unhelpful to the children's welfare. Roberts and Tayor (1993) have shown that children's perspectives can change over time, so a follow-up interview would be helpful, and less likely to potentially 'interfere' with proceedings.

It is worth commenting here on the ability of the children and young people to discuss so fully their experiences of being interviewed. Without doubt, this was made possible by the actions of professionals from social services, police and other agencies, including the NSPCC. The fact that these children participated at all is a testament to the help they have received. Although, in presenting the child's perspective, this research raises criticisms, the constraints and pressures operating upon interviewers at time of interview should be acknowledged.

Having pinpointed a number of weaknesses associated with this study's methodology, the findings will now be discussed in relation to the Memorandum of Good Practice (Home Office, 1992) and previous research. While the discussion must be regarded with some caution in the light of the study's limitations, the consistency with the growing number of studies in this area does offer the current findings some support.

The Interview Context

The Children Act 1989 specifies that young people should be enabled to contribute to decisions about their lives; the rushed manner in which these interviews appear to have
been conducted does not help their contributions to be elicited in a meaningful way (see also Barford, 1993; Roberts & Taylor, 1993). The young people reported the interviews as coming without warning, and without preparation. The circumstances leading up to the interview had not been explained, although some explanation about what would happen either in the interview itself or subsequently was described and appreciated - in agreement with Prior et al (1994). The guidance in the Home Office Memorandum of Good Practice (1992) does not help to clarify issues around pre-interview contact with the child. The purpose of the interview is not to be explained to the child until the rapport phase (MOGP, p16: para 3.7), which could leave the child uninformed from the time she is taken by the social worker or police officer to the interview. If there is pre-interview contact with the child, which might help to prepare her, then the investigating team will be open to allegations of coaching by defence counsel.

This is just one example of the tension between meeting evidential requirements (which essentially is what the MOGP does) and meeting the needs of the child. Even so, evidential requirements may not be satisfied. Preliminary results from an interesting study of the process of disclosure with young sexually abused children found that eight children out of 30 (27%) who had previously talked informally about their abuse did not talk about it when formally questioned (Glaser, 1994). Sharland et al (1993) found a similarly complex picture concluding that the investigative process was ‘less successful’ as an evidence gathering tool towards prosecution.

The lack of choice offered to young people about where they were interviewed, and about who was present, raised difficulties for a number of children (as reported by Barford, 1993; Prior et al, 1994). It is clearly unacceptable that some young people were put in the position of having to ask their parents to leave the room. In many ways this problem has been superseded by implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, and Memorandum interviews will now typically take place only in specialised video interviewing suites. There are still implications, however, for those people ‘listening in’ on the interview from behind one-way mirrors; children may be aware of their presence and be affected by it. The Memorandum’s guidance in excluding others from the interview room would seem appropriate in most cases, although it does not allow for those young people (who are not ‘very young or distressed’, MOGP, p13: para 2.27) who appreciated the support a chosen
familiar person could offer - and which could indirectly improve the quality of evidence they are able to provide (Moston, 1992). Where the child is disabled, then it is almost certain that another adult will be present - not so much to support the child (though this may occur), but to act in the capacity of interpreter (for example if the child is deaf) or as someone who is familiar with the child and his or her daily routine and system of communication (for example if the child has multiple impairments and communicates via non verbal means). There are numerous issues associated with such a role, although the Memorandum itself is contradictory (Westcott, 1994b). Marchant and Page (1993) provide a more detailed introduction to the issues surrounding child protection investigations where the suspected victim is a disabled child.

Interview Structure: Question Formulation

Interviewees reported some difficulties with questions asked of them, although they felt able to answer most. A number of difficulties related to question complexity, and similar problems to those encountered in lawyers’ language were reported (e.g. Brennan & Brennan, 1988; Kranat & Westcott, 1994; Perry et al., 1995; Saywitz, 1995). Age inappropriate words and sentence structure were used by interviewers (Graffam Walker, 1993), and ‘question stacking’ (Dennett & Bekerian, 1991) was also noted. Some children and young people were inhibited by the way in which interviewers spoke to them.

Their abuse itself was certainly a very personal (‘threatening’) subject for the young people to talk about, as reported in previous research (Berliner & Conte, 1995; Saywitz et al., 1991; Wattam, 1992; Westcott, 1993). Some interviewees stated simply that they had not wanted to talk about it. Discussing the ‘nitty gritty’ was especially difficult, and evidential requirements for specific details were experienced as problematic (see also Prior et al., 1994). For example, information kept ‘slipping out’ of the children’s memory, or they simply had not remembered their abuse in the way evidence demands it (for instance, exact dates and times). One young woman’s comments nicely illustrated the difficulties encountered in distinguishing particular abusive episodes from one another (or from the memory ‘script’; Nelson, 1986).
Say like you pick a pin up and then put it in a pile of pins and its sort of like pick that pin up...

Unfortunately for children, this is exactly the manner in which evidence demands they recount their experiences.

Although the Memorandum specifically advises on careful use of language with younger children (p9: para 2.4), interviewers should be aware that they may be using language that is inappropriate for older children and young people also (see MOGP pp18-19). The Memorandum’s statement that ‘personal questions may be particularly upsetting for the child’ (p10: para 2-8) is worth stressing in the light of this research; however, it perhaps does not anticipate sufficiently the real difficulties children will encounter in giving precise details. This may reflect a lack of understanding of the dynamics of sexual abuse and how it differs from other experiences/events the child may be questioned about (Wattam, 1992). Special care will be needed if the child has a learning difficulty, has multiple impairments or does not have English as a first language (Westcott, 1994b). Hutcheson, Baxter, Telfer and Warden (1995), studying child witnesses in general, speculate that very open questions may not provide sufficient support for children who are attempting to retrieve information. The Memorandum does at least begin to acknowledge these complexities (MOGP p27: para 3.53 and 3.54).

Interviewer Issues

A number of different comments were made by children and young people concerning their interviewers whom were generally liked, in agreement with previous studies (eg Prior et al, 1994; Sharland et al, 1993). The importance of liking their interviewers was stressed, and it appears that dislike did, and could, lower the young person’s motivation to participate (Butler & Williamson, 1994; Rich, 1968). Those children who disliked their interviewers could find little (sometimes nothing) positive to say about the interviewer; their comments relate to the ‘obstructive’ interviewer style described by Nugent (1992). For example, they described interviewers as ‘snotty’ ‘disbelieving’ or making it feel ‘unimportant’. By contrast, those interviewers who were described positively (Nugent’s ‘facilitative’ style) were thought to be supportive, sympathetic, good to talk to, listening and having a ‘good
One of the most frequently suggested ways for improving the interviewer-interviewee relationship was to demonstrate a more facilitative style through greater understanding and empathy. Again this is awkward for interviews conducted according to the Memorandum. If a child expresses the belief that they must have done something wrong to be interviewed in the first place (Rich, 1968) - as indeed one girl has commented in this study - it is permitted to reassure her that this is not the case (MOGP p16: para 3.8). However, 'so far as possible the interview should be conducted in a 'neutral' atmosphere' (MOGP, p16) which, whilst being evidentially sound, is unlikely to provide the emotional support young people expressly desired in this study. This has implications beyond making the child 'feel better'; research has shown that a supportive atmosphere can have a positive effect on children's testimony. Goodman, Bottoms, Schwartz-Kenney and Rudy (1991) have found that young children make fewer commission errors and are less suggestible to leading questions when interviewed in a reinforcing and supportive manner. Moston (1992) has also found the presence of a supportive peer to lead to more accurate testimony.

Interviewer gender was an issue for the majority of young people in this study, and support was obtained for the earlier findings of Kaplan et al (1991). All of those who expressed a preference wanted female interviewers - because they are seen as more understanding, easier to talk to, and because a man would remind children of the perpetrator and their abuse. These findings should not discount the possibility that a young person will prefer a male interviewer. In a recent project, a man who had been sexually abused by his step father as a child wanted a male counsellor, as 'another man would understand male sexuality and things like that' (Westcott, 1993, p28). Although this man was talking about counselling, similar factors could be operating in an investigative interview.

It is difficult to interpret this discussion in the light of the new legislation. In relation to the Children Act, children's wishes should be sought and respected. Accordingly, if their wish is to have a female interviewer, then this should be acted upon as far as possible. However, it may not be possible to always provide only female interviewers. The Memorandum itself
does not offer any guidance on this issue although it would seem good practice to try and offer the child a choice of male or female interviewer where practicable.

Even more difficult to interpret are the comments of one white female interviewee who expressed a preference for white interviewers only; the presence of an Indian social worker was referred to negatively by this interviewee throughout the research interview. Had this young woman been black, or from any minority ethnic community, a recommendation similar to that regarding interviewer gender would be appropriate. That is, where possible a choice of white or black interviewer should be offered to the young person. However, in this particular case to support such an argument results in the condoning of racism. The only interviewee in this study from a minority ethnic community did not express a preference, providing the interviewer was not racist. In a similar vein, one could argue that any child who is disabled should be offered a choice of disabled or non-disabled interviewer. A previous study found a disabled woman encountered difficulties in talking about her childhood abuse with a non-disabled professional (Westcott, 1993). However logical this argument, it is unlikely to be practicable for many years; there simply are not enough disabled professionals, or professionals from minority ethnic communities, in a position to participate (this is not to say that this situation should go unchallenged).

Only by taking into account all aspects of the child’s circumstances will it be possible to make appropriate decisions about who should be the interviewer. Planning of the interview will be essential and must include interview structure, questions asked, props used, and personnel present (see Phillips, 1993). The interview must not be based on any assumptions about what is the norm. Resource implications include the recruitment and training of a suitable number of male and female black and disabled workers available to carry out investigative interviews.

Another issue relating to the interviewer concerned whether he or she was seen to believe the young person. Generally, interviewees felt that they were believed; belief was conveyed through the way the interviewer spoke to them, and encouraged or cared for the young person (Prior et al, 1994; Sharland et al, 1993; Westcott, 1995a). Disbelief resulted from a lack of feedback from the interviewer - for example, no facial expression or emotion - and from the use of ‘bullying tactics’. It is rather alarming that one young woman had been
told, in essence, it was necessary to ‘bully’ information out of a child witness, to ascertain its truthfulness, even if there was a ‘nice’ police officer to say ‘alright we do believe you’. Direct support for Blagg (1989) was obtained from this and other young women. Blagg argued that the process of ‘legal verification’ essentially undermines the child’s feeling that she is believed. This may happen, as in the above example, by direct confrontation, or it may result from the constant repetition and clarification of questions and answers. One young woman in this study had initially felt that her interviewer believed her, but later lost confidence in this as the police officer ‘went over and over everything’. This situation could be especially acute for disabled children, and children who are black or from a minority ethnic community, as a result of their experiences of discrimination. They may view themselves as particularly discredible in the eyes of largely non-disabled, white professionals.

The Memorandum’s guidance on this issue has already been referred to in the context of supporting the child. As previously noted, the interview should be conducted in a ‘neutral’ atmosphere, and, further, the interviewer should take care ‘not to assume, or appear to assume, the guilt of an individual whose alleged conduct may be the subject of the interview’ (MOGP p16: para 3.8). So it seems that the interviewer should not convey belief in what the child says - at least directly. However, the MOGP does note the deleterious effect (ie child feels disbelieved) that can result from insensitive recapping or summarising during the interview closure. Again this is an area where tensions arise between evidential requirements and child welfare concerns of investigative interviews under the Memorandum.

Interviewee Issues

To a large extent many ‘interviewee’ issues have already been discussed, in that the current discussion framework tends to minimise the inter-relations amongst variables. For example, interviewees’ expressed difficulties in talking about abuse, problems with interviewer language, and their feelings of being in the ‘wrong’ to have been interviewed at all. It is perhaps worth noting here that one young woman was concerned she would be prosecuted if she got any details in her statement wrong.
The Memorandum advises interviewers to 'gently probe' any inconsistencies in the child's account (MOGP p19: para 3.28). However, it fails to acknowledge that these inconsistencies may only be seen by the adult - the recall of events may seem consistent to the young person (Jones, 1992). This adult centrisation arises from an inevitable clash of perspectives between adult and child. Questions adults perceive as similar may be different to the child, or answers adults perceive as different may be similar to the child. Bruner (1984) distinguished between a life as lived, experienced and told:

A life lived is what actually happens. A life experienced consists of the images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts and meanings known to the person whose life it is ... A life as told, a life history, is a narrative, influenced by the cultural conventions of telling, by the evidence, and by the social context. (p7)

Thus there are inevitable gaps between reality, experience and expression which are bound to occur in the investigative interview. This study has particularly focused on a 'life as told', which inevitably is what is available. On the other hand, the guidance in the Memorandum gives the impression that a 'life as lived' is available to the interviewers if only they 'get it right'.

Other factors which will affect how the young person tells what has happened may include concern for others (including the perpetrator) who will be affected by their disclosure (Roberts & Taylor, 1993; Sharland et al, 1993; Westcott, 1993). This was certainly found in the current study, with a number of references to the young people's fears of upsetting other adults, such as the non-offending parent or grand-parent. In some cases they took action to try and minimise the upset; for example, by asking parents to leave the room during their interview. However, such concerns may - consciously or unconsciously - affect the young person's motivation to participate in the interview (Rich, 1968).

One of the major interviewee issues to emerge related to the anxiety experienced by young people during and after the investigative interview. There can be no doubt the interview was perceived as emotionally charged. The Memorandum does at least acknowledge that this may be the case (for example, p10: para 2.8, p21: para 3.36) but it does not offer any specific strategies for alleviating this distress (except by offering a toilet break: see page 12;
para 2.19). Interviewers should be aware that they can themselves contribute to the child’s discomfort. For example, by inappropriate questioning, bullying tactics, rushing or being too ‘blunt’. The most common feelings mentioned by these young people were ‘nervous’ and ‘scared’, again supporting earlier studies (eg Roberts & Taylor, 1993; Wattam, 1992). There is experimental evidence that stress experienced at interview can affect children’s testimony (Peters, 1991). Interviewers would be advised to minimise stress as much as possible in the interview, for the benefit of both the child and her evidence.

Despite the associated emotional difficulties, and their concerns regarding the ramifications of disclosure, the young people were generally positive about talking openly of their abuse, and would advise a hypothetical friend in the same situation to do likewise. This linked to issues around the ‘aftermath’ of disclosure, however, and their position was very complex. Over half the interviewees reported mixed feelings post interview: better because they had ‘got it off their chest’ and had spoken out publicly, but worse because they felt guilty, bad or worried about the reaction of others. Similar findings have been reported by Berliner and Conte (1995), Sharland et al (1993) and Roberts and Taylor (1993). Again children’s anticipation of these types of consequences could affect their participation in the investigative interview. Indeed, two young women said they would not have gone through with the interview if they had known what its results (or lack of results) would be. Adequate discussion of possible outcomes at the start or close of the interview - as suggested by one interviewee - might help to meet the child’s needs, although it is unlikely this could form part of the videotaped evidence under the Memorandum.

Conclusions

This study has obtained children’s perspectives on being interviewed, and has raised a variety of issues regarding investigative interviews. Although the number of young people included was relatively small, their experiences do provide a number of pointers for current practice and policy relating to suspected sexual abuse victims. It would be too simplistic to divide the young people into ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ about investigative interviews; although some certainly held definite views about the whole interview, most could describe both positive and negative aspects.
Things that helped, or would help, in the interview included an explanation of what would happen, choice about who was present, and choice about the interviewer (for example, their gender). Certain interviewer behaviours could also help the young person: provision of emotional support, a believing stance, and minimising stress. Factors that did not help the young person included a lack of preparation, and evidential requirements dictating the manner in which the interviewee describe their abuse. Interviewer responses that were unhelpful included the use of age inappropriate language, a disbelieving stance, and repeated questioning.

A number of concerns have emerged regarding the tension between evidential versus children's needs in the investigative interview. On the whole, evidential requirements were prioritised over concerns for the child’s welfare when these tensions arose. The Memorandum has appeared to be too heavily focused towards the evidential, with a lack of understanding of the child’s position in several areas. It could do more to support the child and more to ease the task facing interviewers (such as better guidance on pre- interview contact with the child).

One of the most pertinent issues concerns the child’s disclosure. Talking openly about their abuse was generally felt to be positive by the majority of young people in this study. This research raises questions, however, as to whether an investigative interview conducted according to the current guidelines will be the best forum for them to do so - an opinion voiced by many social workers and police officers at a recent Memorandum conference (Westcott, 1994a). Although steps taken to protect the child may inevitably be stressful at times for her, greater attention is required to identify the best manner in which such protection may be achieved (Butler & Williamson, 1994). The majority of children’s expressed willingness to proceed with the interview, even if they had known what it was going to be like beforehand, must be a vote of support for those in the difficult position of conducting investigative interviews. However, this could be influenced by the atypical number of prosecutions and convictions obtained in this group of children. Greater discussion of these issues is required, and this study - along with others reported here - has shown that children and young people themselves can contribute meaningfully to the debate.
Chapter Two explored the microsystem from the perspective of children as interviewees. Within the interview-as-microsystem, however, there is another important participant - the interviewer. In this study, therefore, it was decided to explore the microsystem from the point of view of the interviewer. The ecological approach's emphasis on the child's perspective suggested a novel exploration - to study children as interviewers. Is there anything to be learned from observing how children seek information from their peers?

Traditionally, the psychological literature on child witnesses has concerned itself with situations where adults are interviewing children. There has been little attention to the possible role children may themselves play as interviewers, with the exception of the oft-cited study by Ceci, Ross and Toglia (1987). In this experiment, four year old children's susceptibility to misleading information was reduced when another child, rather than an adult, provided the misleading information. Ceci et al attributed this finding to the lower authority demands associated with the child confederate. In a series of studies with a different emphasis, Moston (1992; Moston & Engelberg, 1992) showed that the presence of a second child, who had discussed a witnessed event with her peer, was able to offer support to that peer when the peer was later interviewed - with beneficial effects on the peer's testimony. Further evidence for the value of peer support is found in the educational field, where children have successfully acted as tutors to other children (Foot, Morgan & Shute, 1990), and as 'listening ears' for children experiencing difficulties following personal or social crises (eg bereavement; Stevenson, 1994).

An experimental study of children as interviewers also offers the possibility of empirical insights into successful or non successful interviewing techniques. As Boggs and Eyberg commented in 1990,
Unfortunately, empirical evidence has not emerged from the literature that defines what interviewer behaviors and strategies most readily elicit information from the child. (p87)

Whilst there is undoubtedly a wealth of clinical experience about the ‘best way’ to conduct interviews with children (eg Jones, 1992; La Greca, 1990), much of this is ‘received wisdom’, rather than empirically based. An exception is the area of leading questions, where cognitive psychologists have increased understanding of the effects such questions can have on testimony (eg Doris, 1991)

**Differences between Peer and Adult Interviewers**

Child interviewers may differ from adult interviewers on a number of dimensions. Firstly, children have more limited cognitive abilities, secondly they have less experience, and thirdly they have less social power. Differences on these dimensions may serve to either facilitate or hinder the interviewing process, and in themselves are neither good nor bad. As children near adulthood (later teens), then there will be less discrepancy between themselves and adults in these areas.

**Cognitive abilities**

As children themselves, peer interviewers will not yet have the sophisticated cognitive skills or knowledge of adults. As far as the use of age-inappropriate language goes (see Chapter Two), this will probably be advantageous, since children will naturally use the language of their peers. A less helpful consequence of children’s cognitive immaturity might be that they lack the necessary understanding of the interview requirements, and how best to approach the task. Children will probably not have learned the purpose of an interview, and the role of witnesses as a unique source of information about what has transpired: that is, they may be deficient in theory of mind (Astington, Harris & Olson, 1988).
Experience

Children’s realm of experience in all aspects of their lives is more limited than that of adults. This could benefit them as interviewers if, for example, they have not yet acquired the unintentional ‘bad habits’ possessed by some adult interviewers. Alternatively, their relative lack of experience could hinder children’s efforts to elicit information from others in an interview setting, as they will have little prior experience of similar tasks to draw upon. Children may not yet have developed the memory ‘scripts’ (Nelson, 1986) associated with interviewing on which to draw when faced with the interview situation. This could be positive, if it prevents them from erroneously relying on script generalizations when formulating questions, but could also be negative, if it leaves them with no relevant cues as to how to approach the interviewing task. It may, therefore, be necessary to provide children-as-interviewers with some additional cues to compensate for this lack of experience. For example, prompt cards depicting the main areas of interest in an interview could be provided (Saywitz & Snyder, 1993).

Social power

As a result of their status as minors, and associated beliefs about what children should be allowed to do, children have less power than adults. As interviewers this could be positive, since they will present as less authoritative and intimidating than adults (see discussion of Ceci et al, 1987, above). They will therefore exert less of a negative influence over their peers’ testimony. There may be direct indicators of reduced interviewer power; for example, a reduction in the number of ‘command statements’ made by child interviewers (Boggs & Eyberg, 1990).

The Current Research

A simple, exploratory study was designed to examine children as interviewers, and to compare children and adults when asked to interview a child witness about an event viewed on a videotape. Although the focus was on children and young people as interviewers, it was felt the adults could serve as an helpful comparison group. A one-
way, between subjects Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was planned, with interviewer age (peer versus adult) as the independent variable. Had more resources been available, and the logistics not so prohibitive, a full factorial design using actual age of child (i.e. 8/9 years, 12/13 years, 16/17 years) rather than peer versus adult would have been preferable. However, the design adopted (see Figure 3.1) still permitted an adequate analysis of children’s and young people’s behaviour as interviewers.

**Figure 3.1: Study Design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer Age</th>
<th>8/9 years</th>
<th>12/13 years</th>
<th>16/17 years</th>
<th>Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/9 years</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/17 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

x = interview (n=5)

Thus it was anticipated that ten interviews would be conducted with children at each of the three age groups, five by peer interviewers and five by adult interviewers. In fact, at two schools, only four adult interviews were conducted (for reasons beyond the author’s control). Each interviewer conducted only one interview, and each interviewee was interviewed only once.

The exploratory nature of the research necessitated some practical considerations and compromises. For example, a relatively small number of interviews was opted for, preserving the minimum sufficient for meaningful analysis. Further, a videotaped rather than live event was used as the stimulus for interviews, and a time delay between viewing the videotape and being interviewed (which would have been ecologically desirable) was not built in - beyond the passage of time between completion of first and final interviews in schools. Most of these decisions serve to limit the realism of the research, yet were felt to be justified in the light of the study’s novelty.

Given the nature of the findings (see below), a follow-on study was also conducted, whereby social workers specialising in child protection were asked to rate ‘blindly’ a selection of the interview transcripts, decide whether the interviewer was a peer or
adult, and give their reasons why. The purpose of this part of the research was to explore in a more qualitative fashion the differences between peer and adult interviewers. Particularly, issues of interviewing style, rather than accuracy, were of interest.

The method and findings for the two parts of this study will be presented separately (labelled Study One and Study Two), followed by a combined discussion of the research and its implications.

Study One

Method

Participants

Children, young people and adults were recruited from three schools in one English county. This was necessary to obtain the three age-groups (8/9 years, 12/13 years, 16/17 years) as desired. The schools were located in neighbouring areas serving predominantly white middle-class families, but included a number of Asian families, as well as families from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This was particularly true for the primary school. Fieldwork was undertaken in June and September 1994.

Participation was voluntary, NSPCC pens or badges were given to participants as a small gift in appreciation for their help with the research. Parental consent was obtained for the two youngest age-groups, and the child’s assent was sought on every occasion. In total, 43 children and young people (26 girls, 17 boys) and 13 adults (3 male, 10 female) took part. Twenty-eight interviews were successfully conducted and recorded; 15 child-child dyads and 13 adult-child dyads. For peer interviews, there were five 8/9 year old dyads, five 12/13 year old dyads and five 16/17 year old dyads. For adult interviews, there were four interviews with 8/9 year olds, four interviews with 12/13 year olds, and five interviews with 16/17 year olds. That is to say, there were 15 peer interviewers and 13 adult interviewers.
The adults’ ages ranged from 28-59 years, and their occupations were varied (secretary, dinner lady, ancillary helper, technician, librarian). The criteria for adults’ participation were that they were associated with the school in some way, but that they were not teaching staff. (Since teachers are trained to communicate with children they would not have comprised a fair comparison group). All adults, and all but four children were white.

**Equipment**

*The videotaped stimulus event*

A 5m 41s video portraying a potential child abduction was used, as it was rich in detail about people, actions and conversations, although the soundtrack was at times unclear. It also portrayed an event that could be relatively meaningful to the three different age-groups - not an easy requirement given the wide age-range. In the video, an eight year old child is seen dropped off early at school by her mother, where she plays a game of hopscotch. A couple drive up and ask the child for directions, whereupon the woman takes the girl’s hand and asks her to get in the car and show them the way. At this point a policeman walks into view, the woman gets back in the car and the couple drive off. The policeman asks the girl what the woman wanted, and checks that she is okay. The video was produced by Leicester University Psychology Department and used successfully by them in other research projects.

*Facilitating the interviews*

In order to allow for the children’s lack of experience in interviewing (see introduction), and to give the children and young people some support, small cards were created to aid all interviewers. These are included in the pocket at the back of this thesis, and were produced by the author to remind interviewers to ask about people, actions/events, and conversations which appeared in the videotape. Similar cards have been used successfully to facilitate child witnesses’ recall of events (Saywitz & Snyder, 1993).
Each interview was tape-recorded for later analysis.

**Procedure**

Each age-group (school) was run independently of the others. For each, the group of children acting as interviewees \((n=10)\) were shown the videotape. Afterwards, the author briefly checked comprehension of key events, people and conversations; this appeared to be satisfactory for all age-groups. For the youngest children only, this was followed by a very brief discussion of 'stranger-danger' and what children should do if they were approached by a stranger. After viewing the tape children returned to their classes until they were called for interview. The children and adults acting as interviewers did not see the videotape.

Both interviewer and interviewee were individually briefed immediately prior to the interview in which they were involved (full briefing instructions are found in Appendix Two). The interviewer and interviewee were then introduced to each other, and the author checked whether both understood what they were about to do. Subsequently, the interview took place with no further communication between the author and participants until it was over. A maximum time limit of 10 minutes per interview was imposed, but was rarely reached. Once the interview had finished the interviewee was taken from the room, debriefed, thanked and given a small gift. The interviewer was asked five questions by the author concerning the interview, then debriefed, thanked and given a small gift. The five questions probed the interviewer’s understanding of the video and a self-evaluation of their own performance as follows:

1. What do you think happened on the video? Please give me as much detail as you can. *(Allow two prompts 'Anything else?')*
2. How much did you find out about the video? *(Prompt with 'a little, a lot, everything, nothing' if not forthcoming)*
3. When I asked you to talk to (child) did you make a plan about talking to him/her? What was your plan? *(If 'yes')*
4. Now that you’ve finished, is there anything you wish you had done differently? What? *(If 'yes')*
5. Did you use the prompt cards? How much did they help you? (If "yes")

The author's preference was not to be in the room whilst the interview was in progress, relying instead on the tape-recording, and so minimising any possible influence. Unfortunately, for the youngest children, the location of the interviews as afforded by the school meant that only one room was available, so the author and research assistant located themselves at the furthest point away from the children and pretended to be involved in (quiet) work together.

Analysis of Interviews

Measures were grouped depending upon whether they related to the accuracy of the recall elicited from the interviewee, or to the interviewer's style. Even if a child interviewer uses all sorts of innovative and unusual techniques to interview (deliberately or accidentally), in the context of investigative interviewing these will be little more than eye-catching if only poor quality information is elicited from the interviewee. Nevertheless, style is also relevant, since the relationship between process and outcome is important.

Accuracy

Accuracy measures were applied to the interviewees' recall, according to the categories of

- people (descriptions of appearance, accessories etc)
- actions (what events took place)
- conversations (what was said)
- context (descriptions of location, cars involved, video duration etc).

For each category, the measures were calculated such that:

Correct = number of items correctly recalled

% Correct = number of items correctly recalled divided by total number of correct items available, multiplied by 100
Incorrect = number of items present in the video, but incorrectly recalled. For example, the eight year old girl described as ten years old
False = number of items recalled which were not present in the video. For example, description of a conversation, or action, which did not take place.
% Accuracy = total number correct, divided by total number correct, incorrect and false, multiplied by 100.

For the first three categories only, the interviewer’s briefing contained a reminder to seek information about these aspects of the video (the prompt cards). A strict criterion was adopted in applying the scoring system. For example, only the exact age of the child in the video (eight years) was accepted for a correct response.

The total number of items available for each category was calculated by the author and supervisor viewing the videotape and agreeing on a coding scheme which scored items separately under the different categories. For example, a ‘person’ description included details of that individual’s age, gender, hair, build, clothing and accessories. In total, 135 items were judged to be available for recall, 67 relating to people, 33 to actions, 18 to conversations and 17 to context.

Additionally, accuracy measures for interviewers were also calculated, pertaining only to the number of incorrect and false items they included in the post-interview recall to the author. In the context of the research, these two areas were of most interest.

**Style**

Style measures were much more difficult to anticipate, and related mostly to the interviewers’ questioning style and the types of responses given by the interviewee. Thus, the following were recorded:

- total number of questions
- total number of open-ended questions (and %)
- total number of closed questions (and %)
- total number of leading questions (and %)
The Home Office *Memorandum of Good Practice* (1992) definitions of open, closed and leading questions were applied. An irrelevant question was defined as one which did not directly relate to finding out what happened in the video, e.g. 'how did you feel watching the video?'. It was noted that closed, leading, repeated and irrelevant questions were not mutually exclusive, nor necessarily were open, repeated and irrelevant questions. Where more than one question was contained within an utterance, they were counted separately. Thus there could be more questions than responses in an interview. Response measures included:

- total number of responses
- total number of yes/no responses (and %)
- total number of detailed responses (and %)
- total number of 'don’t know’ responses
- total number of silences/no answer responses
- total number of irrelevant responses.

'Yes/no’ responses were strictly defined as those consisting only of 'yes/yeah' or 'no'. A detailed response was considered to be one which offered more than one bit of information, and which did not simply reaffirm or confirm information contained in the interviewer’s question. Irrelevant responses were those which did not directly relate to describing what happened on the video. They were almost exclusively found in response to irrelevant questions.

Praise, command and summary statements were noted. The presence or absence of the four phases of interview advocated by the *Memorandum of Good Practice* (rapport, free narrative, questioning, closure) was also recorded. In the artificial context of the current study, and especially within time constraints, rapport was judged to have occurred if the interviewer made any brief introductory gesture, e.g. asked the child her name, introduced himself, 'set the scene' etc, instead of asking straight away what happened on the video. Similarly, brief thanks or comments like ‘that’s about it then’
were taken as closure. Finally, the interview's length, and time spent in questioning, responding and pauses, were also measured (in seconds).

All interviews were transcribed in full. Inter-rater agreement in applying the above measures to interview transcripts was measured by the author and an assistant independently coding one interview from each age-group (representing 10% of interviews); this was satisfactory at 85%. Differences were resolved and the author coded all remaining transcripts alone.

Results

It was anticipated that child and adult interviewers would be differentiated on a variety of measures, but in fact across both accuracy and style, the findings revealed very few differences between them. Only significant findings will be discussed here.

Table 3.1: Accuracy Measures across Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>correct</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incorrect</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>false</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accuracy (%)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>correct</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incorrect</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>false</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accuracy (%)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations</td>
<td>correct</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incorrect</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>false</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accuracy (%)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>correct</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incorrect</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>false</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accuracy (%)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accuracy and Completeness of Interviewees' Recall

Overall, across categories and interviewer status, children and young people recalled an average of 21.39 correct items (SD=6.72); a mean percentage correct of 16% (SD=4.93). The number of incorrectly recalled and false items was very small indeed, with means of 2.11 (SD=1.62) and 0.18 (SD=.61) respectively. Overall, the interviewees' recall was highly accurate, with a mean percentage accuracy of 91% (SD=6.38). The mean total number of items recalled (correct and incorrect) was 23.50 (SD=7.31), representing a mean total percentage recall of 17% of the items available. Table 3.1 presents the major accuracy measures (mean and standard deviation) across the different recall categories.

Only two measures significantly distinguished between peer and adult interviewers, both relating to contextual information. Adult interviewers elicited significantly more details in total (F=6.33, df=1,26, p<.05; adult M=2.92, peer M=1.46), and significantly more correct details (F=9.89, df=1,26, p<.01; adult M=2.69, peer M=1.13). For all other categories - people, actions and conversations - there were no differences between adult and peer interviewers. Insignificant ANOVA results are listed in Table 3.2.

Interestingly, there were no significant effects of interviewer status on the number of incorrect or false details recalled by the interviewer to the author post-interview (F=1.10, F=.86, respectively; both df=1,26, p>.05). Very few errors were made at all; M=1.25 (SD 1.75) for incorrect details, and M=.04 (SD .19) for false details.

Age Effects in Interviewees' Recall

Again, there were no effects of interviewer status, so data were collapsed across this factor. Given the very low frequency of incorrect and false details, only the correct detail scores were entered into the ANOVA. A mixed ANOVA (age x recall categories) was calculated, which resulted in significant main effects for age and recall categories, as well as a significant interaction. Older children recalled more than younger children (F=7.65, df=2,24, p<.005), and actions were best recalled, followed by details of people, conversations and context (F=87.79, df=3,72, p<.001). The interaction related
only to the recall of conversation details. Here the otherwise typical age-related increase in recall was absent for the two elder age-groups. For conversation details, 12/13 year olds had a higher mean recall than 16/17 year olds.

Table 3.2: Insignificant ANOVAs (Peer vs Adult Interviewers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Peer M</th>
<th>Adult M</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall recall</td>
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<td></td>
<td>overall false</td>
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<td>.31</td>
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<td></td>
<td>overall no. items</td>
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<td>false</td>
<td>1,26</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no. items</td>
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<td>Conversations</td>
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<td>false</td>
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*Table continued*
### Table 3.2: (continued)

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<th>Category</th>
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<th>F</th>
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<th>Adult M</th>
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<tr>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Responses</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.48</td>
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<td>1,26</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interviewer Style**

As for accuracy, the most notable result was the lack of variables which distinguished between adult and peer interviewers. For example, so few praise, command and summary statements were made in interviews by peers or adults that formal analyses were not possible. However, adults were more likely to ask more questions overall \((F=5.54, \text{df}=1.26, p<.05; \text{adult } M=29.54, \text{peer } M=16.93)\), to ask more closed questions \((F=5.15, \text{df}=1.26, p<.05; \text{adult } M=20.77, \text{peer } M=11.27)\), and to ask more repeated questions \((F=6.85, \text{df}=1.26, p<.05; \text{adult } M=8.5, \text{peer } M=1.3)\). It should be stressed, though, that the number of repeated, leading and irrelevant questions asked by interviewers of all ages was very small \((M=.46, M=2.21, M=1.68, \text{respectively})\).

The relationship between questioning and responding was explored through a series of Pearson product-moment correlations. Not surprisingly, the total number of questions
asked correlated with the total number of responses \((r=.96, p<.001)\), the total length of the interview \((r=.60, p<.001)\), and the total time spent questioning \((r=.73, p<.001)\).

Greater use of leading questions led to more ‘yes/no’ responses \((r=.79, p<.001)\), and more irrelevant questions invariably lead to more irrelevant responses \((r=.99, p<.001)\).

Greater use of closed questions led to a greater number of ‘yes/no’ responses \((r=.77, p<.001)\), but also, surprisingly, to a greater number of detailed responses \((r=.60, p<.001)\). This unexpected result was reflected in a mirror finding that the more open-ended questions asked, the more ‘yes/no’ responses were obtained \((r=.46, p<.01)\). Surprisingly, there was not a significant relationship between the use of open-ended questions and the number of detailed responses elicited. Across interviews, the mean percentage of open and closed questions asked were 36% and 62%, respectively. The mean percentages of ‘yes/no’ and detailed responses were 16% and 54%, respectively.

The average length of interviews in this study was 282s (SD=131s). There were no significant differences between adults and peers in terms of interview length, questioning time, responding time, or pauses.

Each of the Memorandum phases was identified as present in over 45% of all interviews, and specific questions were used in almost all (96%). The free narrative phase was present in 50% of the interviews, introductions (rapport) in 64%, and closure in 46%. Adult interviewers were significantly more likely to have an introductory phase than peers \((\text{Chi square}=8.30, df=1, \text{Fisher Exact Test } p<.01)\), and to have a closure phase \((\text{Chi square}=14.23, df=1, p<.001)\).

Post-Interview Questions

As mentioned above, a small number of questions were put to each interviewer after the interview. Again, there were no differences between adult and peer interviewers in this respect. Less than half of interviewers reported making a plan about how to interview (43%), and even fewer would do it differently next time (29%). Very few interviewers admitted to any doubts about their ability to interview when asked how much information they had found out about the video, with only four admitting they had not...
found out ‘a lot’. By far the most common response to this question was ‘quite a bit’, or ‘quite a lot’ (n=14, 50%), and several felt their interviewee’s recall had been comprehensive.

Generally, interviewers’ feedback about the prompt cards was positive. They were reportedly used by 23/28 interviewers (82%), of whom 22/23 (96%, one missing) deemed them helpful. The precise role of these cards probably merits further attention, however, given that the overall number of items recalled by interviewees was so low (less than one quarter of the available items).

These findings will be discussed after presentation of the results from Study Two.

**Study Two**

Given that few of the objective measures in Study One distinguished between peer and adult interviewers, and that style measures had been particularly hard to elucidate, a more qualitative approach was adopted. A number of the 28 interviews were selected, and shown ‘blind’ to social workers specialising in child protection. The social workers had to determine whether the interviewer was a peer or an adult, and give the reasons for their decision.

**Method**

**Participants**

Twenty social workers specialising in child protection were approached through the NSPCC, of whom 16 finally participated; 10 women and 6 men with a mean age of 39.6 years. They had held their social work qualification for a mean of 10.8 years, and had specialised in direct work with children for an average of 11.8 years. Participation in the study was voluntary.
Twelve of the 28 interviews were selected, allowing for two peer and two adult interviewers across the three age groups. Within each age group, those transcripts of median length were chosen (n=2,3,2 pages for the 8/9, 12/13 and 16/17 year olds respectively), with all identifying information removed except the age of the child/young person being interviewed. This was retained in order to facilitate the participants' reasoning, and judgements of the age-appropriateness of interviewers' language.

A brief cover sheet giving instructions for participants was included, as was a sheet requiring personal information (eg age, sex). A short rating sheet (see Appendix Three) was attached to each transcript on which the participants marked their decision about interviewer status (peer or adult) and reasoning. They also selected an estimate of the proportion of age-appropriate questions from one of four possible categories: 0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75% or 76-100%.

Procedure

The 12 interview transcripts were arranged in a random sequence relative to interviewee age and interviewer status. Two orders of interviews were produced, the second in reverse of the first, to eliminate any order-effects. The sets of interviews were then simply mailed to participants after they had agreed to take part.

Results

There were no order effects for the two sets of ratings, so data were collapsed across this factor. There were therefore 192 ratings available for analysis (16 participants x 12 interviews).
Accuracy in Distinguishing Peer and Adult Interviewers

Overall, the social workers had a mean percentage accuracy of 64% in correctly identifying whether interviewers were adults or peers (range 33-83%). This was significantly better than chance ($t=4.21$, df=15, p<.001). It was apparent, however, that some of the participants had disregarded the information given to them on the cover sheet. Although this stated that half of the interviewers were peers and half adults, six social workers’ responses indicated a bias towards the former or latter (in addition, one subject failed to indicated status for one interview, giving a 6:5 bias). For four of these social workers, the bias was towards identifying peers (8:4, 8:4, 7:5, 8:4). The remaining two were biased towards identifying adults (7:5, 10:2). Overall, this resulted in a slight bias towards perceived peer interviews (98:93, one missing), when in reality there was an equal number of each (96:96).

Figure 3.2 shows the percentage correct identification of interviewer status for each of the 12 interviews selected ($P$=peer interviewer, $A$=adult interviewer).

Only one interviewer was correctly identified by all social workers (an adult), with the seemingly most difficult interviewer (also an adult) being correctly identified by only 13% of subjects. Overall, peers were correctly identified 66% of the time, and adults 63% of the time.

Age-Appropriateness of Interviewers’ Language

The social workers generally rated the interviewers’ language to be age-appropriate. In total, 46% of the interviews were judged to be 76-100% age-appropriate, 27% were judged to be 51-75% age-appropriate, 15% were judged to be 26-50% age appropriate, and 9% were judged to be 0-25% age appropriate ($n=5$ missing). Figure 3.3 presents these ratings by interview, across all participants.

The relationship between perceived and actual status, and age-appropriateness, was explored, but no particular patterns were discernible.
Figure 3.2: Percentage Correct Identification of Interviewer Status by Social Workers
Figure 3.3: Age-Appropriateness Ratings of Interviews by Social Workers

[Graph showing age-appropriateness ratings for interviews conducted by different social workers. Each bar represents a different social worker, and the segments within each bar indicate the percentage of ratings in different categories: 76-100%, 51-75%, 26-50%, and 0-25%.]
Content Analyses of Social Workers' Reasoning

The reasons participants gave for deciding whether interviewers were peers or adults were explored. The social workers' reasoning was very idiosyncratic, and there were only a limited number of common themes. These are described in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. In the Tables, the figures given (x-y) relate to the number of different social workers mentioning the characteristic, followed by the number of different interviews in which it was identified.

Table 3.3 identifies themes - 'characteristics' - which were commonly said to characterise the interviewers' general approach. For each, there were discernible qualities thought to represent either peers or adults, and which were generally in opposition. For example, the characteristic 'interview structure' had the peer-like quality of 'unstructured/unfocused' (ie structure absent), as opposed to the adult-like quality of 'structured/focused' (ie structure present). This particular characteristic is fairly neutral, whereas for other characteristics either the peer or adult expression of it is more desirable than the other. For example, 'patronising attitude' - the adult expression is negative 'present', whereas the peer is positive 'absent'. As shown in Table 3.3, for some characteristics either the peer or adult expression was identified by the social workers much more in the transcripts than the other.

From Table 3.3 it can be seen that peer interviews (actual peers and adults perceived to be peers) were judged to be shorter in length, and characterised by a lack of structure, lack of sophistication and lack of focus on morality in questions concerning the video. Power in the interview was shared between peers and there was good rapport. Further, peer interviewers were viewed as having a limited understanding of the task of interviewing, and an unpatronising style.

By contrast, adult interviewers (actual adults and peers perceived to be adults) were thought to have a good understanding of the task, a sophisticated interviewing style, and a focus on morality in their questions. They were judged to exert more control (power), be more patronising and have less rapport. Their interviews were seen to be longer and more structured.
Table 3.3: General Approach to Interviewing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Attributed to Peers</th>
<th>Attributed to Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual Peers</td>
<td>Perceived Peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure/</td>
<td>Peers: Absent</td>
<td>Adults: Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus of Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapport</td>
<td>Peers: Present</td>
<td>Adults: Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Interview</td>
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<td>Adults: Longer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power in Interview</td>
<td>Peers: Shared</td>
<td>Adults: Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophisticated Style</td>
<td>Peers: Absent</td>
<td>Adults: Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Morality</td>
<td>Peers: Absent</td>
<td>Adults: Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Task</td>
<td>Peers: Absent</td>
<td>Adults: Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patronising</td>
<td>Peers: Absent</td>
<td>Adults: Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note

1. '8-5' shows that 8 different social workers identified this quality in five different interviews, for example.

Table 3.4 presents a second analysis of characteristics, this time specifically looking at questioning style. The same format of presentation has been used as for Table 3.3. Accordingly, peer interviewers (actual and perceived) were judged to use shorter questions, more closed, concrete/direct and inappropriate/bizarre questions, and fewer open or probing questions. Their questions were judged to have a less sophisticated structure and to lack clarity.

Adult interviewers (actual and perceived) were thought to ask more open and probing questions, and to ask fewer closed, inappropriate or concrete/direct questions. Their questions were seen to be longer, more sophisticated in structure and to have greater clarity.
The analyses presented in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 raise an interesting observation. Since the social workers were able to distinguish between peers and adults at a rate statistically greater than chance, there would appear to be some degree of accuracy in the way in which they used such characteristics. However, these characteristics do not match well the objective measures employed in Study One: either they are different in nature to the objective measures (e.g., 'sophisticated style', 'power in interview'), or they do not receive empirical support (e.g., peers were perceived to use more closed questions than adults, when in fact the opposite was true). The implications of this observation are discussed further below.

### Table 3.4: Questioning Style

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Actual Peers</td>
<td>Perceived Peers</td>
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<td>0-0</td>
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<td>Concrete/direct Questions</td>
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<td>Clarity of Questions</td>
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<td>Inappropriate/bizarre Questions</td>
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<td>Probing/facilitating Questions</td>
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<td>Question Length</td>
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</table>

Character Attributed to Peers Attributed to Adults
Discussion

The most notable result in this research was the failure to find many objective differences between peer and adult interviewers in Study One. That children could act as interviewers is reflected both in their ability to elicit highly accurate information from peers, and also in the difficulty which social workers in Study Two encountered when trying to distinguish between them and adults. However, the social workers were able to differentiate the peers and adults at a rate significantly greater than chance (if modest in real terms). There must, therefore, be differences between peer and adult interviewers, even if these differences were not picked up by the measures employed in Study One. These differences apparently emerge from the more subjective analyses by the social workers, yet qualitative characteristics such as 'sophistication', 'patronising' or 'morality focused' do not typically feature in psychological studies of interviewing. Perhaps we need to revise analyses to allow for these qualitative factors, which require a more holistic approach to analysis than the traditional focus has allowed.

Differences between Peer and Adult Interviewers

Earlier, speculative differences in cognition, experience and social power were outlined. These do receive a measure of support from the findings, especially of Study Two. Cognitive differences were revealed, for example, in the use of language which was seen to be more or less appropriate to the age of the child being interviewed. The social workers judged adult interviewers to be more 'sophisticated' and 'patronising', and commented upon a 'rapport' present in peer interviews. This rapport was not a discrete stage, as labelled in the Memorandum of Good Practice, but rather a relationship. Thus social workers commented that there was 'a congruence in the language of the interviewer and interviewee', or that it seemed to be a 'conversation between peers'. It should be noted, however, that both peers and adults were generally thought to be using age-appropriate language: 73% of social workers rated the interviewers' language to be at least 50% age-appropriate.

A further cognitive difference appeared to be the peer interviewers' lack of understanding of the task. In Study One, peer interviewers were found to elicit less
contextual information than adults, this being the only category for which they were not specifically briefed to find out details. The adults knew (from their better understanding of the task and/or greater experience) that they should also make enquiries about this type of information. Further, the adults' greater use of introductions and closing statements may reflect a better understanding of task demands. The social workers also judged peer interviewers to be less certain about what they were required to do.

Differences in experience were also evident to the participants in Study Two. They felt, for example, that the adult interviewers were focusing more on the morality of the video than the peers, something which was not actually required by the task - an erroneous script? Perhaps this represented their experience of warning children of the dangers of going with strangers, or a desire to help children learn from events. The focus on morality is reflected in the excerpt below from a transcript where an adult interviewer is questioning an eight-year-old child. She concentrated almost exclusively on 'stranger danger', despite having found out very little about what happened on the video.

Q6. And what was the little girl doing while the lady was saying that?
A6. She said ‘no’.

Q7. She said no. And do you think that’s what she should have said, should she have said ‘no’?
A7. Yeah.

(Questions are task focused until)

Q11. And what did he (policeman) say?
A11. You couldn’t hear it.

Q12. You couldn’t hear what the policeman was saying. What do you think the policeman was saying to the little girl?
A12. ‘Don’t go in the car’.

Q13. ‘Don’t go in the car’, yeah, that’s very good.
A13. Or ‘don’t talk to strangers’.

Q14. And what do you say to strangers? You say what?

Q15. No, what do you say, if somebody said ‘Come and get in my car’, what do
you say?
A15. No.
Q16. What's the word you say?
Q17. And how do you say it?
A17. You shout.
Q18. You shout it and then what do you do after that, after you've shouted it?
A18. You go and tell somebody.
Q19. Somebody you know, yeah?

Obviously, 'stranger danger' is a pertinent concern for children in this age group - perhaps highlighted for interviewees after exposure to the video and post-video discussion. However, it was the interviewers who were using the fact they found out the video concerned strangers to construct this style of questioning.

In Study One, adults were found to ask more leading questions than peer interviewers, something which could also be viewed as an experiential factor, albeit a 'bad habit' (Home Office, 1992). It should be stressed, though, that the number of leading questions asked by all interviewers was very small.

Finally, the social workers noted differences in social power. Adult interviewers were judged to be more powerful or controlling, and peer interviewers to be less authoritative and intimidating. The style measures employed in Study One were not, however, sensitive enough to capture this difference.

Peer versus Adult Interviewers

In general, there was little to choose between outcomes for peers or adults, except for the differences in contextual information already noted. The children interviewed by both gave accounts that were highly accurate, but low in quantity. The age of the interviewer did not otherwise affect the interviewees' recall, and reliable effects of interviewee age on recall were found, typical of psychological research on child witnesses.
It may be questioned as to whether aspects of the study design contributed to the failure to distinguish between peer and adult interviewers. For example, could the brief ‘comprehension check’ carried out with interviewees after viewing the video have eliminated these differences? The purpose of the comprehension check was to ensure that indeed there was sufficient recall by interviewees to enable any sort of analysis of their testimony. Children are notorious for the paucity of their free recall (see Ceci & Bruck, 1993, for a review) and it was feared that there might otherwise be insufficient detail to test for peer-adult differences. It is possible that the comprehension check elevated the interviewees’ recall to such a degree that any differences resulting from interviewer status were eliminated. Although this can not be ruled out, it seems unlikely given the interviewees’ overall low level of detail (mean total percentage recall of 17%), and the fact that typical interviewee age differences in recall were apparent.

Another possible influence may have been the reminder to interviewers to ask the interviewee about people, actions and conversations in the video (the prompt cards). Although this may have inflated the interviewees’ recall in these categories, as compared to recall of contextual information which was notably poorer, there remained sensitivity to the differential nature of the information on the part of interviewees. This was reflected in the significant ANOVA results such that actions were best recalled followed by the other categories. It is therefore difficult to tell whether the briefing to interviewers did indeed eliminate potential peer-adult differences. Both these possible influences could be controlled for in a larger study which had the presence or absence of a ‘comprehension check’ and ‘interviewer reminder’ as independent variables.

Finally, the inclusion of young people aged 16/17 years in the peer interviewers group may have masked any differences existing between the younger children and adult interviewers. The small sample sizes in this study did not enable an appropriate test of this possibility, but it too could be explored in a larger study.

Both peers and adults were poor at monitoring their own performance, as measured by the post-interview questions to interviewers.
Interviewer Questioning: Questionable Findings or Finding Questions?

As already noted, the social workers' reasons for distinguishing between peers and adults in Study Two did not, in fact, tally well with the objective measures in Study One. For example, their beliefs that adults would ask fewer closed and more open questions were not substantiated. Perhaps more importantly, however, the data from this research do not support clinical beliefs about questioning. With the exception of the study of suggestibility (Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Doris, 1991), it is easy to overlook how little empirical research exists on the psychology of questioning and responding. In Study One, a lack of relationship between open questions and detailed answers was noted, as was the presence of a relationship between closed questions and detailed responses, and open questions and yes/no answers.

Perhaps the fact that few of the closed questions were leading is important - that is, they did not unnecessarily narrow the type of answer to be given. Further, it may be that children’s greater experience of closed questions in daily life results in them responding as if the questions were in fact open-ended. The very openess of open-ended questions in itself may not provide sufficient context or cues for children to know how to respond, hence the failure to find a significant relationship between open-ended questions and detailed answers. Hutcheson, Baxter, Teller and Warden (1995), in a study of professional interviewers questioning children, also found a complex relationship between question type and accuracy and completeness of recall. Most significantly in this context, for 8-9 year old children they found that the use of more specific questions lead to significantly more complete statements, whilst not affecting statement accuracy. As noted in Chapter Two, Hutcheson et al further speculate that very general (open) questions may not provide sufficient support for children who are attempting to retrieve information.

This result does, therefore, challenge existing guidelines which strive to limit the use of closed questions in investigative interviews with children (eg Home Office, 1992), and is worthy of further exploration in a larger study. Indeed, the result serves to emphasise, as noted above, how little empirical knowledge exists around the practice of questioning.
Practical Implications

One of the male social workers in Study Two commented that the task was very difficult, since ‘some could be peers or adults. I suspect some pretty poor adult interviewing went on’. Study One’s findings argue for the importance of training interviewers; untrained adult interviewers fared only marginally better than untrained peers. This is reflected in their lack of real planning - however brief - as well as their inability to accurately monitor how little they had actually found out. They further did not express any desire to ‘do things differently’ should there be a next time. There is a genuine need, then, for those who will formally interview children, particularly in an investigative context, to receive training on how to develop this skill fully.

Conclusions

This research was necessarily small in ambition and constrained by methodological considerations such as the artificial context (eg videotaped event) and limited forensic realism. The sample in Study One was small and not properly balanced for a mix of genders and cultures. A combination of other methods, including more naturalistic observation and a larger sample, would enable some of these shortcomings to be remedied however, and the intriguing results warrant further investigation.

Study One has shown that children do possess rudimentary interviewing skills such as questioning, even as young as 8/9 years. Perhaps these skills could be acknowledged or referred to in genuine investigations to try and provide a clearer understanding (or context) for the child of what is about to occur. In an interesting experimental study, Mulder and Vrij (1996) did exactly this to facilitate children’s testimony. They explicitly discussed ‘conversational rules’ and how they were broken in investigative interviews (eg the adult interviewer would not be able to help children as they might usually do) in order to provide children with better cues as to what was expected of them as witnesses. The children’s testimony was improved as a result.

The findings from Study Two indicate the benefits of widening out the approach to the study of interviewing. Although the social workers’ reasoning was very idiosyncratic, identifiable themes did emerge which could be further explored. Certainly, greater
empirical study of interviewing seems warranted. It may be preferable, however, to incorporate some more holistic and qualitative approaches in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the processes involved.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE MESOSYSTEM
CHILDREN'S HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

The two earlier studies focused on the child and interviewer in the microsystem. The third study moved on to consider the next system in Bronfenbrenner's model - the mesosystem - in relation to children's help-seeking. The reason for this was that children's participation in investigative interviews is only one aspect of their help-seeking behaviour and contact with professionals. However, a broader view of the social context in which investigative interviews take place is seldom discussed in practice (cf Butler & Williamson, 1994). In Chapter One, a speculative example was given concerning family stereotypes of police officers, and how they may impinge on a child's later willingness to talk to a police interviewer. In fact, two children interviewed for the research in Chapter Two raised similar issues:

They don't make you feel natural. Don't seem natural because I know police people. (Boy aged 17 years)

Police uniforms just psych me out! I'm not used to the police being good. I felt like I'd done something wrong with them sitting there and all the uniforms, with the walkie talkies and that on. (Girl aged 16 years)

Such issues must be addressed in the planning stage of the investigative interview, yet the Memorandum (Home Office, 1992) omits to include them. If the ecological approach's emphasis on the child's own perspective is acknowledged, then the impact of such an oversight on the interview's potential to help the child becomes obvious. This study was therefore focused on two related areas: who do children go to to talk about their problems, and who makes a good helper from the child's point of view?

Studies in the fields of children's social support networks and children's help-seeking behaviour have begun to address such issues, and this research aimed to build on their findings with a particular focus on two interpersonal problems: being bullied, and parents arguing. It is possible that children might be investigatively interviewed in relation to both these problems. For example, if parental arguing escalated to a marriage breakdown, and
the child became caught up in a divorce and custody dispute, or if bullying increased and lead to welfare concerns for the victim. By asking children who they would choose as helpers in these situations it was hoped to gain insight into the identity of helpers in children's social networks, as well as the qualities children appreciate in those who help them, and to consider the implications for professional helpers. It was also hoped to discover how many of the children had actually experienced bullying or their parents arguing, and to contrast their reported actual help-seeking behaviour with their hypothetical responses to the problems.

Bullying

Bullying seemed particularly pertinent, given an increasing number of studies across countries documenting the scale of the problem (see Skinner, 1992, for a review), and recent attempts to present children's perspectives (Butler & Williamson, 1994; La Fontaine, 1991). Olweus (1993) has recently concluded that 9% of Norwegian students aged 8-16 years are victims of bullying at least 'now and then'.

In the United Kingdom, percentages of children reporting bullying have varied between 4% (Whitney & Smith, 1993) and 65% (Elliott, 1989) depending on age of victims and frequency of reported bullying. Using the broad criterion of 'sometimes or more', most reported figures are above 10%. While many children find talking about their experiences of bullying helpful (eg Aston, 1992), only about 50% of children report having talked to someone about the problem (Aston, 1992; La Fontaine, 1991; Mellor, 1990; Yates & Smith, 1989).

Parental Arguing

Children's experiences of parental arguing have received less attention in the published literature, although research awareness of domestic violence is growing (see, for example, Mullender & Morley, 1994). Given the relationship between marital discord, domestic violence and child abuse (eg Creighton, 1992) this is an obvious area of concern. Silverman, La Greca and Wasserstein (1995) found that 19% of their sample of American boys and girls aged 7-12 years reported parental arguing as a 'worry', and Butler and
Williamson (1994) report that 9% of children and young people aged 6-17 years in their study identified family arguments as their ‘worst experience’ (even more identified family violence as such). Data is also available from Yamamoto’s cross-cultural studies (see Yamamoto, Solman, Parsons & Davies, 1987). Incidence figures for parental fights ranging from 38% to 80% were given in response to Yamamoto et al’s stressful life-events scale, which was completed by children aged 8-14 years; six out of seven studies reported rates of over 50%.

Yamamoto et al’s figures are only pointers, and, for example, the frequency or severity of the parental fights are not known. However, on a scale where 7 represented ‘most upsetting experience’ the lowest median rating given for parental fights was 5.57 (Canada), and in all other countries ratings were greater than 6.0. This puts parental fights as one of the most stressful life experiences for children in all countries.

Children’s Social Support

The term ‘social support’ may be used to describe help that is offered from one person to another, be it material or practical help and resources, or the opportunity to talk through one’s feelings about a situation, and have one’s sense of worth or self-esteem supported. Alternatively, social support may be the opportunity to solve problems by talking through the various options open to someone in a given situation, or the chance to simply share activities with another person. Berndt (1989) has labelled these different types of social support ‘instrumental/tangible’, ‘esteem’, ‘informational’ and ‘companionship’ support, respectively (see also Belle, Burr & Cooney, 1987). The degree to which social support is beneficial will depend on matching the type of help that is required and the type of help that is offered, as well as the ability of the child to take up the support that is available to them (Berndt, 1989; Costanza, Derlega & Winstead, 1988).

Furman has developed the ‘Network of Relationships Inventory’ to measure children’s social support networks as they develop (Furman, 1989; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985, 1992). Most recently, Furman and Buhrmester (1992) reported age differences in network members such that pre-adolescent children depended most on parents, early/middle
adolescents relied most on other friends, and late adolescents depended most on romantic partners.

Belle (1989) reviewed the literature on children's social support networks, and found some gender differences for girls and boys. For example, girls have smaller networks that are intimate and self-disclosing, whilst boys prefer larger peer groups and friendships focused on shared activities. Girls were found to seek out more social support than boys, and also to provide more social support to others. Boys and girls both showed a tendency to prefer same-sex companions.

Children's Help-Seeking

A number of studies have investigated children's help-seeking behaviour, both in social (eg Snell, 1991) and educational contexts (eg Townsend, Manley & Tuck, 1991). Most authors have presented children with hypothetical situations or problems and asked them how they would respond. The nature of the 'problem' has varied from very vague descriptions (eg 'a problem you wanted to discuss', Bachman, 1975) to very specific tasks, such as opening a jar, or bandaging a knee (Barnett, Sinisi, Jaet, Bealer, Rodell & Saunders, 1990). In their 1984 study, Nelson-Le Gall and Gumerman examined the perceptions of children aged four to ten years of helpers relating to an academic (measuring task) or social (bullying) problem.

For both problems, girls nominated more helpers than boys, and older children (eight-ten years) nominated more helpers than younger children (four-six years). The younger children nominated parents more for both types of problem, though this trend failed to reach statistical significance. With increasing age the children's reasons for choosing helpers focused less on their own needs and global characteristics of the helper, and focused more on specific attributes of the helper and their relationship with them.

Balding (1995) investigated the help-seeking behaviour of over 48,000 school children aged 11-16 years as part of the University of Exeter's rolling research programme on child health. Of particular relevance here, three questions asked children with whom they would share problems concerning school, friends and family. Parents were chosen for school
problems, especially mothers. Parents were also important for friend and family problems, but friends were an important source of support, particularly for young people aged over 13 years. A minority of children stated that they would tell no-one about their problems, ranging from 2% of 11-12 year olds for problems about school, to over 15% of boys aged 14-15 years concerning friends. Other relatives, teachers and school nurses also received some nominations as helpers for the various problems.

Hypotheses

Studies into children's help-seeking and social support networks were reviewed. The variety of presented problems - none exactly matched the current areas of interest - and different age-groups included (as well as methodological variations) inevitably led to a number of different findings. However, a number of hypotheses were derived from an integration of previous research, in response to the two questions posed earlier - 'who do children go to to talk about their problems' and 'who makes a good listener from the child's point of view'? The hypotheses, pertaining to age and gender differences which might be anticipated, were as follows:

1) Boys more than girls are likely to choose to tell no one about the problem (eg Balding, 1995; Belle et al, 1987).

2) Girls are more likely to select female helpers, and boys are more likely to select male helpers (eg Blyth, Hill & Thiel, 1982; Burke & Weir, 1978; Feiring & Lewis, 1989).

3) Overall, more female helpers will be selected than male helpers (Belle, 1989; DePaulo, 1978; Northman, 1978).

4) Older children rather than younger children will elect to tell no one (eg Bachman, 1975; Balding, 1995).

5) Younger children will select more family helpers than older children (eg Bachman, 1975; De Paulo, 1978; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992).
6) Older children will select more peer helpers and romantic partners than younger children (e.g., Furman & Buhrmester, 1992).

7) Younger children will be more likely to cite their own needs as the reason for selecting helpers, while older children will lay more emphasis on helper qualities (e.g., Nelson-Le Gall & Gumerman, 1984).

In order to explore in more detail the kinds of helper qualities preferred by children, some open-ended questions were put to them, e.g., 'Why would you tell that person?'. Hypotheses were not appropriate in this respect, and responses were subjected instead to content analyses.

**Method**

**Recruitment of Children**

Three schools participated in the research, with the consent of the Local Education Authority, in order to provide children in the desired age range. They were located in neighbouring areas of the same city, with catchment areas predominantly for white families, although a small number of Asian families were also included. The different schools taught children from mixed socio-economic backgrounds, although the primary school had a greater proportion of children from families with lower socio-economic status.

Children and young people participated if their parents had given consent (for the primary and middle schools) and if they themselves gave verbal assent (all schools). Parental consent was not deemed necessary for the oldest children (aged 14 years and over). Questionnaires were administered to children in schools during June 1993.

A total of 98 children were included, of whom 98% were white. There were 45 boys and 53 girls with an age range of 8-17 years. Attempts were made to recruit approximately 20 children from five age-groups 8/9 years, 10/11 years, 12/13 years, 14/15 years and 16/17 years. This was achieved for all but the oldest children, where 14 young people aged 16/17
years were included. The exact number of children participating from each age-group is shown in Table 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Age-Group</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total (Age)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Gender)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were differences in the ways in which the schools approached recruitment. School One invited all children in the desired age-range to participate ($N=167$), with the first 40 to respond included. Schools Two and Three asked only the number of classes needed to provide the desired number of young people. There were participation rates of 76% for School Two and 95% for School Three. Young people did not participate if parental consent was not obtained (School Two), if they were absent when the questionnaire was administered, or if they did not turn up at the appointed time (School Three).

Development of the Questionnaire

Initial drafts and pilot study

Three drafts of the questionnaire were compiled, during a process which included feedback from school teachers and children in a small pilot study. Following earlier studies, problems were presented in the form of a brief story (or scenario), about which a number of questions were subsequently asked. Original scenarios were developed from the literature on children’s fears, children’s help-seeking and children’s social support. In the initial drafts, respondents were presented with a range of possible helpers, and they ticked the box of the preferred helpers. After feedback from teachers about the initial drafts, the questionnaires were redeveloped and piloted with small groups of children ($n=4$ in Schools One and Three, and $n=6$ in School Two). These children and young people firstly completed the questionnaires for later review by the author, and then discussed the questionnaires and their perceived relevance and ease of completion for themselves and
their peers. Following the pilot, more appropriate scenarios were written, and changes made to the layout and appearance of the questionnaire.

Several other issues were also resolved as a result of the pilot. Firstly, administration would differ depending on the age of the children completing the questionnaires (see below). Secondly, the tick box list of helpers was eliminated, as it proved very cumbersome, especially as in this case care was taken to specify the gender of every helper (eg brother/sister, friend-boy/friend-girl, teacher-man/teacher-woman). A sheet listing possible helpers was instead developed (see Appendix Five) and made available to all children completing the questionnaire. Thirdly, children were asked to nominate first- and second-choice helpers for each scenario. By subsequently analysing the data for first choice helpers only it was possible to avoid the problem of comparing answers containing multiple or single helpers, and to have a degree of certainty that ‘first-choice’ helpers would really be those favoured by the children and young people (even if ‘nobody’ was selected).

**Final drafts**

Appendix Four presents the questionnaires used in this research. The three versions were administered separately to each of the three schools (see below). Apart from the two key scenarios concerning bullying and parental arguing, two additional stories in the questionnaires were devised specific to children in the different schools (eg doing poorly in maths, problems with teachers, a grandparent dying). However, these were not the main focus of the research, and are not reported here. A number of open-ended questions were asked about each story, and a series of questions about listening skills and good listeners at the end of the questionnaire remained common to all three versions.

The bullying and parental arguing stories were presented thus; for the bullying scenario, two versions were available - one for older and one for younger children. Care was taken to use the correct story-grammar as far as possible, to make the stories accessible and meaningful to the children (Buss, Yussen, Matthews, Miller & Rumbold, 1983).
Bullying (Younger children)
Sarah was playing with her skipping rope in the playground. Suddenly some girls came and stood around her, laughing. They were bigger than Sarah and they pulled her skipping rope off her, and ran away with it. Sarah ran after the other girls but she couldn’t catch up with them.

Bullying (Older children)
Sarah had been bullied on the way home. A group of girls from her class had kicked and punched her, and she was pretty shaken up. She was frightened of them doing it again, but worried about what would happen if she told on them. She didn’t know what to do.

Parental Arguing
Robert was sitting by himself on his bed upstairs. Downstairs he could hear his mum and dad really shouting at each other. Robert began to cry, he was frightened they might break up.

Subsequent questions asked the children how they would be feeling if they were the child in the story (to increase empathy with the task, not included in analyses), who they would go to if they were Sarah or Robert, and why, as well as probing to see whether the responding child had experienced a similar situation - and if they did, whether they had told anyone about it.

Administration of the Questionnaire
For the youngest children (aged 8-11 years) administration was in small groups and was geared towards greater support with understanding and completing the questionnaire. This followed experience of the pilot, and was requested by the school, who felt that it would be inappropriate and often impossible for the youngest children to complete the questionnaire on their own. The author and a female research assistant took groups of between four and six children step-by-step through the questionnaire, monitoring their understanding and assisting if children needed help with writing or spelling. Groups took between 40 and 75 minutes to complete.
The older children and young people completed the questionnaires individually in small
groups of about ten. The author and assistant were available to answer any queries that
arose. Completion in this manner took between 14 and 30 minutes.

Coding Children’s Responses

The hypotheses were tested using a two-way between subject Analysis of Variance
(ANOVA) design: 2 (gender) x 5 (age-group). Multiple responses were not permitted, and
where more than one response was given, only the first response was entered into the
analysis. Pets and toys were excluded from the helper-gender analyses. Responses to the
other questions of interest (eg how children would show someone else they were listening)
were subjected to descriptive analyses only.

Derivation of all coding categories was carried out by the author and two research
assistants. Reliability was checked by one assistant coding 10 (10%) of the questionnaires;
the first boy and first girl from each of the five age-groups. Overall percentage agreement
between the assistant and author was 89%. Hypothesis 7 required additional coding, to
allocate children’s responses as either ‘own needs’ or ‘helper qualities’; percentage
agreement in coding for this was 85%. Differences in coding were resolved by discussion
and the author coded all remaining questionnaires alone.

Results

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 received no support. Boys were as likely as girls to tell someone \(F=0.41,\)
df=1.88, p>.05; boy \(M=1.89,\) girl \(M=1.92\).

Hypothesis 2 was supported such that girls were more likely to select female helpers
\(F=7.74,\) df=1.86, p<.01; girl \(M=1.13,\) boy \(M=0.77\), and boys were more likely to select
male helpers \(F=12.23,\) df=1.86, p<.001; boy \(M=61,\) girl \(M=21\). An unanticipated age
effect was also obtained for female helpers, with younger children selecting more female
helpers than older children ($F=7.07$, $df=4, 86$, $p<.001$). The mean scores and standard deviations for this and all subsequent age-related hypotheses are shown in Table 4.2.

Hypothesis 3 was supported, more female helpers were chosen than male helpers ($Chi^2=11.27$, $df=1$, $p<.001$).

### Table 4.2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Age-Related Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>8/9 Yrs Mean</th>
<th>10/11 Yrs Mean</th>
<th>12/13 Yrs Mean</th>
<th>14/15 Yrs Mean</th>
<th>16/17 Yrs Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.75, .72</td>
<td>.86, 1.52</td>
<td>.51, .95</td>
<td>.69, .36</td>
<td>.62, .65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.85, 37</td>
<td>1.85, 49</td>
<td>2.00, .80</td>
<td>1.86, .36</td>
<td>2.00, .00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.05, .76</td>
<td>.90, .72</td>
<td>1.43, .66</td>
<td>.81, .75</td>
<td>.71, .73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6(a)</td>
<td>.70, .66</td>
<td>.75, .79</td>
<td>.65, .65</td>
<td>.67, .80</td>
<td>1.36, .74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6(b)</td>
<td>.00, .00</td>
<td>.00, .00</td>
<td>.00, .00</td>
<td>.00, .00</td>
<td>.07, .27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7(a)</td>
<td>.20, .41</td>
<td>.26, .56</td>
<td>.35, .49</td>
<td>.33, .58</td>
<td>.29, .47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7(b)</td>
<td>1.70, .47</td>
<td>1.63, .60</td>
<td>.60, .49</td>
<td>.143, .60</td>
<td>.171, .47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes
1. Hypothesis 6 (a) peer helpers.
2. Hypothesis 6 (b) romantic helpers.
3. Hypothesis 7 (a) own needs.
4. Hypothesis 7 (b) helper qualities.

Hypothesis 4 was not supported; older children were no less likely to seek help than younger children ($F=1.17$, $df=4, 87$, $p>.05$).

Hypothesis 5 was supported, such that younger children selected more family helpers than older children ($F=3.23$, $df=4, 87$, $p<.05$).

Hypothesis 6 received a degree of support. Older children did choose more peer helpers than younger children ($F=2.52$, $df=4, 87$, $p<.05$), however this main effect for age was qualified by a significant interaction between child age and gender ($F=4.62$, $df=4, 87$, $p<.005$). This is illustrated in Figure 4.1.
Figure 4.1: Peer Helpers Age x Sex Interaction
Analysis of the interaction by simple main effects showed that the age trend for both boys and girls was significant ($F=2.93$, $df=4.87$, $p<.05$; $F=4.93$, $df=4.87$, $p<.001$ respectively). Thus older children select more peer helpers than younger children. Only the difference between the sexes at age 14/15 years was significant ($F=5.43$, $df=1.87$, $p<.01$), where girls of this age chose significantly more peer helpers than boys (girl $M=1.20$, boy $M=.18$).

The second part of this hypothesis - that older children will select more romantic partners as helpers than younger children - was not supported ($F=1.82$, $df=4.87$ $p>.05$). A floor effect existed, with only two children overall nominating romantic partners as helpers in response to the stories.

Hypothesis 7 was not supported; younger children were no more likely than older children to cite their own needs as their reason for choosing helpers, and older children were no more likely than younger children to cite helper qualities more as the reason for their choice ($F=.25$, $df=4.86$, $p>.05$, and $F=.78$, $df=4.86$, $p>.05$, respectively).

Good Helpers

Children and young people chose a wide variety of helpers. For the bullying story, the top three helpers for children of all ages and both sexes were as follows:

Mother ($n=24$, 24%)
Teacher-unspecified gender ($n=12$, 12%)
Best friend-girl/unspecified gender (both $n=9$, 9%)

Mothers were clearly favourite, with almost one-quarter of the nominations. Preferred helpers were then categorised by participant age and gender, and revealed a very heterogenous pattern: for some age groups, the most preferred helper was selected by no more than two children. No obvious trends emerged as parents, teachers, siblings and friends all received some nominations.

For the story portraying parents arguing, the overall top three helpers (across all children) were:
Sister (n=16, 16\%)  
Brother (n=15, 15\%)  
Grandmother (n=10, 10\%)

Here, no single helper was identified as receiving a more substantial share of the nominations. The data on preferred helpers were again broken down by participant age and gender, and a similarly heterogeneous pattern emerged as for the bullying story. For this scenario, though, relatives figured more frequently as preferred helpers, whether from the immediate or extended family. The number of children electing to speak to their parents - the 'cause' of the problem - was small.

Reasons for Choosing Helpers

A wide variety of answers again resulted in small scores, and atypically large 'other' categories, with no apparent age or gender trends. Results are therefore presented collapsed across these factors; children could give more than one response, yielding totals greater than 100%.

The top three reasons for choosing helpers in connection with the bullying scenario were as follows:

'\textit{they could help}' (n=46, 47\%)  
'other' (n=34, 35\%)  
'\textit{they can take action}' (n=25, 26\%)

Some examples of responses from different children for each of these reasons are given below (retaining the children’s own spellings):

He will probably do something about it...could talk to them and get it back. (Boy aged 8 years)  
I’d tell my dad because he’d encouraged me to not be scared of them. (Boy aged 10 years)
Because they would probably be older than they (bullies) are and make us feel not so worried. (Girl aged 10 years)

Because he could sort things out for me and not get me into it. (Boy aged 12 years)

Because my mum could ring up school and tell the headmaster and my sister could have a little word to leave them alone. (Girl aged 13 years)

For moral support, and so that someone else would know what was happening. Also for advice on what to do about it. (Girl aged 13 years)

They may be able to help in making a decision about what I should do. (Girl aged 15 years)

It is always best to let your parents know of the situation they can help and a teacher can prevent it. (Boy aged 15 years)

I would tell them because they would hopefully sort it out confidentially. (Boy aged 15 years)

So they could help, and stick up for me if I was on my own. (Boy aged 16 years)

So they can help me to know what to do and so I don’t bottle it all up inside. (Girl aged 17 years)

Similarly, reasons for choosing helpers in relation to the story of parents arguing were very idiosyncratic, again resulting in a large number of responses coded as ‘other’. The top three reasons were:

‘other’ (n=41, 42%)
‘they are experiencing the same thing’ (n=22, 22%)
‘to make me feel better’ (n=17, 17%)

Examples from children (retaining their spellings) included:

Because I could go round there house until they stopped. (Boy aged 8 years)

I would tell my teddy bear because he would not tell anyone. (Girl aged 9 years)

Because they might be in the same such aceshen. (Girl aged 8 years)

Because you can just tell them to make yourself feel better. (Girl aged 10 years)

My granparents can have words. (Boy aged 10 years)

Because they would try to get them bak together. (Girl aged 10 years)
They may help to calm you down, Release you from the subject. (Boy aged 13 years)
Because (ChildLine) have experience in how to deal with that sort of thing and they
may send a Marriage Guidance person around. (Boy aged 13 years)
As she feels the same as I would be so we could comfort each other and handle it
together. (Girl aged 15 years)
She'd sympathise with me and make me feel a lot better. Take my mind off things.
(Girl aged 15 years)
It is his son or daughter and they have respect for him and will listen to him. It is
easier to talk to people of the same sex. (Boy aged 15 years)
To try and get things into perspective. (Boy aged 15 years)
Because he's there for me, we can talk about most things and he may help me come
to terms with the consequences. (Girl aged 17 years)
He is a part of the family who has heard the trouble and together we could discuss the
situation. (Boy aged 17 years)

Table 4.3: Good Listeners for all Problems Combined (n=294)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Listener</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best friend/Friend - unspecified gender</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best friend - girl</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher - unspecified gender</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-one</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends - girls</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best friend - boy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends - boys</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic partner</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher - woman</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, eg neighbour</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher - man</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In sum then, children's reasons for choosing helpers were highly variable, and depended
upon the individual child's perception of either situation.
Good Listeners

Three questions asked children to nominate good listeners for problems with peers, parents and teachers. These are presented in Table 4.3, collapsed across problem type, child age and gender, as the small numbers involved when findings were broken down by these factors did not allow meaningful analysis.

These findings support the results regarding good helpers, with family members, peers and teachers all chosen. Again, mothers are the most popular helper overall, and were judged the best listener for problems with friends (n=33, 34%) and teachers (n=27, 28%), with Grandmother the best listener for problems with parents (n=16, 16%).

Table 4.4: Qualities of a Good Listener - All Problems Combined (n=294)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They could/would help</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They understand</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have the same experience</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They listen</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are caring/care about me</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They know the problem</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They could talk to them (people causing problem)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They talk to you</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows my family</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to them</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stick up for me</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Won’t laugh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Won’t tell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes
1. Respondents could nominate more than one quality (total >100%)
2. Large ‘other’ category reflects variety of responses offered

Similarly, support for the qualities appreciated in good helpers were found when the reasons for choosing good listeners were analysed. These are presented in Table 4.4, collapsed across problem type, child age and gender as before.
The listener’s ability (or willingness) to help and their experience of similar situations are again strongly valued by children, as found for good helpers in response to the bullying and parental arguing scenarios. The listener’s understanding is also important.

**How can Children tell Someone is Listening to Them?**

All children were given four choices and asked to tick the responses they wished. The most frequently selected item was ‘the things they do to help you’ (n=84, 86%), followed by ‘the things they say to you’ (n=60, 61%), ‘the way they look at you’ (n=55, 56%) and ‘the way they say things’ (n=47, 48%). There were no apparent age or gender trends, except for the very eldest children. For all other age-groups, ‘the things they do’ was selected much more frequently than any of the other choices, whilst this group (16/17 years) selected all four choices equally.

**How do Children Show Someone They are Listening to Them?**

This question required children to put themselves in the role of listener, and explain how they would demonstrate that they were listening to what the other person said. Results are presented in Table 4.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.5: How Children Would Show Someone They were Listening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at them (n=44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to help (n=38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share your feelings (n=28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen (n=24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit still (n=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort them (n=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be sympathetic (n=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nod (n=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (n=10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top three listening behaviours described by children (across ages and gender) were ‘look at them’ (n=44, 45%), ‘try to help’ (n=38, 39%) and ‘share your feelings’ (n=28,
29%). 'Look at them' was the top behaviour for children aged 8/9 and 10/11 years, whilst 'try to help' was top for children in the eldest age groups (12-17 years). Some examples are given below (using children's spellings):

I would show them by the way I was looking at them and not going of in a day dream. (Girl aged 9 years)

Ask them to sit near you so you can talk about the problem. (Boy aged 10 years)

By trying to understand, help, say encouraging things to them. (Girl aged 12 years)

Fully explain yourself - share your thoughts. (Boy aged 15 years)

I find it difficult. But I'd not patronise them, try and support. Ask questions, not prying, but so as to understand more. (Girl aged 17 years)

If They Tell Someone Their Problem, What do Children Want Them to do?

Children were given six choices, and ticked as many as they wished. Their responses were as follows: 'do something to help you' (n=80, 82%); 'keep it secret' (n=63, 64%); 'just listen to what you say' (n=57, 58%), 'tell me what to do' (n=55, 56%), 'tell someone else, but only if they have asked me first' (n=34, 35%), and 'tell someone else' (n=20, 20%). There were no gender or age differences. Children were also asked to ring the most important choice from the six, and again 'do something' was most frequently chosen (n=32, 33%).

Children's Experiences of Events and Telling

Several questions asked after each story related to the child's own experiences of the type of event portrayed in the scenario, as well as their subsequent behaviour - did or didn't they tell about what happened?

Overall, 41% children (n=40) had experienced some kind of bullying (14 boys, 26 girls). Of these, 80% (n=32) had told someone about it (11 boys, 21 girls). Over 20% of children in each age group had been bullied (a maximum of 60% for 10/11 year olds), and over 60% of children in each age group who had been bullied told someone.
Overall, 40% children (n=39) reported parents arguing (15 boys, 24 girls). Of these, 46% (n=18, 6 boys and 12 girls) had told someone. Over 15% of children in each age-group had experienced their parents arguing (maximum of 55% for 8/9 year olds), and at least 10% of children in each age group had told someone.

Why Children Did Not Tell

When children reported experiencing the problem, but also reported not telling anyone about it, they were asked to explain why. This data was from 39 children in total (19 boys, 20 girls) across the five age-groups. Again numbers were small, reflecting the variety of responses.

The two main reasons for not telling about bullying were ‘in case they did it again’ (n=3) and ‘because it wasn’t important’ (n=2). For parents arguing, responses were almost completely idiosyncratic, although three children replied that they ‘didn’t want to tell’.

Among the 14 ‘other’ responses, were the following (children’s own spellings):

- Because I was scared of my mum and dad finding out of me telling someone. (Boy aged 9 years)
- The door was locked and the key went in the door. (Girl aged 8 years)
- Because its not there problem. (Boy aged 10 years)
- Because I was frighted. (Girl aged 10 years)
- Kept it to myself to work out. (Boy aged 15 years)
- Because I knew it was only a minor argement so not to worry to much. (Girl aged 17 years)
- No one to tell couldn’t approach parents didn’t know how to contact a counsellor. (Boy aged 17 years)
Discussion

Hypotheses That Were Supported

Younger children chose more family helpers than older children (Bachman, 1975; DePaulo, 1978; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). However, the most robust effects pertained to helper gender, with 50% helpers chosen being female and 18% male (where gender was specified). Girls chose more female helpers whilst boys chose more male helpers (Blyth et al., 1982; Burke & Weir, 1978; Feiring & Lewis, 1989).

It is possible that such results simply reflect sex-role stereotypes (for example, that women are more empathic), and that same sex relationships are encouraged to a greater degree than opposite-sex relationships. The unanticipated age effect obtained, such that younger children selected more female helpers than older children, may support this view. However, the two problems focused on here did not portray stories that are easily linked to predicted sex of helper. This finding is interesting in the light of sexually abused children’s views on investigative interviews (see Chapter Two), where children of both sexes expressed a preference for female interviewers. Amongst reasons given were that women were more understanding and easier to talk to than men. It would be interesting to explore this gender issue further and to examine whether it reflects anything more than the aforementioned sex-role stereotypes.

It appears from the current study that parents and peers are complementary rather than competitive sources of help for children and young people (Sebald, 1986). It may be worth examining the difference between helpers nominated in response to the hypothetical stories, and those reported as helping in real life experiences, further. If peers are indeed important sources of help, as suggested here and by earlier research (e.g. Balding, 1995), the implications for peers who help victims of child abuse must be properly considered. Do such children play a role in facilitating disclosures that has not been fully appreciated to date?
Hypotheses That Were Not Supported

The anticipated preference for talking to 'nobody' on the part of older children and boys was not found. Overall, only 4% of the children elected to tell noone, a figure considerably lower than that reported by other authors (e.g. Aston, 1992; Balding, 1995; Belle et al., 1987; Bachman, 1975; Mellor, 1990; Whitney & Smith, 1993; Yates & Smith, 1989). It is possible that the emphasis of the current research on seeking help inhibited this choice by children, though the presence of 'no-one' on the helper sheet would hopefully have countered any such pressure. Comparing the percentages of 'hypothetical' versus real helpers for the problems suggests that the 4% figure is artificially low, however. Victims of bullying did not tell in 20% cases, and 54% of children whose parents had argued did not tell anyone. In their study of children's traumatic experiences, including bullying and parental arguing, Butler and Williamson (1994) found that over one-quarter of children reported that they would tell noone.

In comparison with earlier research, then, it is encouraging that 80% of children had told someone about being bullied - previous authors report a typical 'telling' rate of less than 50%. The parental arguing figure is less satisfactory; it may be worth exploring this in more detail in further research, with a particular emphasis on the difficulties facing children from unhappy homes who wish to talk about their experiences, or to report abusive incidents. In their 1980 study of divorce, Wallerstein and Kelly found that children had many unmet needs for support, and that parents, teachers and peers played only a limited role in helping children during the divorcing period. Although not chosen by many children in this research (only 2% overall) services like ChildLine may have a role. Butler and Williamson (1994) explored in detail the reasons why children in their study would elect to tell noone, concluding that essentially children did not trust adults sufficiently, as well as believing that ultimately only they could resolve their predicament.

A second hypothesis which failed to receive support concerned the distinction between children choosing helpers to satisfy their own needs versus choosing helpers because of the helpers' own qualities (Nelson-Le Gall & Gumerman, 1984). The children's preference was clearly based on helpers' qualities - 34% of their responses were classified as this compared to only 6% classified for 'own needs' (remaining responses were either missing
or did not easily fit this distinction). The participation of younger children from lower socio-economic backgrounds in the current research may be a factor: it is possible that these children by virtue of their family situation were more independent or mature than those younger children in earlier studies. Alternatively, it may be that Nelson-Le Gall and Gumerman's distinction is a false one, as suggested by the fact that only 40% of the children's responses were coded into the dichotomy. This emphasis on helper qualities suggests that it is important to consider how children perceive the qualities of the helpers they encounter in professional contexts, eg counsellors, social workers, police officers. As noted in Chapter Two, this area is only just beginning to receive attention (see, for example, Butler & Williamson, 1994; Cloke & Davies, 1995).

The final hypothesis which did not receive support related to romantic partners as helpers, which is difficult to explain, especially as children from older age-groups were specifically included in the sample. The small sample size for the eldest children may be a factor, as well as the fact that all these young people were recruited through a school setting.

**Children's Experiences of Bullying and Parental Arguing**

Overall, 41% of children in this study had experienced some kind of bullying. The frequency or severity of their experiences were not recorded here, so comparisons to existing research must be tentative. However, this figure is within the limits noted by earlier authors (eg Elliott, 1989; Mellor, 1990), although somewhat higher than rates suggested by the Sheffield studies (Smith & Ahmed, 1990; Whitney & Smith, 1993; Yates & Smith, 1989). Certainly the current research backs assertions made by previous authors that bullying is a serious problem facing a sizeable proportion of school children (Butler & Williamson, 1994; La Fontaine, 1991; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

As noted earlier, data regarding children's self-reports of parental arguing are more limited. Yamamoto et al report incidence figures of 38%-80%, and the current finding of 40% is at the lower end of this range. Whilst not over-generalising from these figures, they do suggest a useful avenue for further research. If an understanding of the impact of witnessing parental arguments on children can be obtained, when those arguments are perhaps on the 'less severe' end of the continuum, then maybe greater insight into
Children's perspectives on severe marital discord and domestic violence will be possible (see, for example, Butler & Williamson, 1994, and Ericksen & Henderson, 1992).

Reasons for Choosing Helpers

Although the inclusion of children from a wider age-range in the current study was beneficial in exploring the various hypotheses described above, neither developmental nor gender factors had much of a role in children's reasons for choosing helpers or good listeners. Here, the variety in responses was perhaps the most notable feature, reflected in unusually large 'other' categories. The most important factors appeared to be the helper's ability and willingness to help, their experience of similar situations to those facing the child, and their ability to make the child feel better. Children's responses to the question 'how would you show someone you were listening?' suggest that these factors linked to a desired empathy in the helper/listener from the child's point of view.

Whilst the top responses to this question - 'look at them' (45%) and 'try to help' (39%) - may be obvious, the third most popular response - 'share your feelings' (29%) - is less so. According to children in this study, the listening they would demonstrate is an active behaviour, requiring the listener to help, and to respond in kind to the help seeker's disclosure. Child victims of sexual abuse interviewed in Chapter Two also expressed a wish for professional interviewers to demonstrate understanding and empathy in the interview situation, lending weight to this interpretation. Other behaviours reported here (eg looking, comforting and being sympathetic) were also positively valued in interviews by the sexual abuse victims. Unfortunately, as discussed in Chapter Two, legal and other constraints in professional contexts may limit the degree to which helpers can behave in these ways. These behaviours may, however, be the kinds of cues used by children to evaluate the helper's response (Butler & Williamson, 1994). It would appear that this area could be usefully explored further to examine the effects of the professional-child relationship on the outcome of any 'help' offered. In this respect, the finding that 64% of children indicated that they would want their confidant to keep a shared problem secret is interesting. Butler and Williamson (1994) also found that children placed an extremely high premium on listener confidentiality, with complex implications for professional helpers such as social workers. Butler and Williamson suggest that in order for child
protection practice to progress, this issue will need to be explored in much greater depth, and that ultimately workers should be prepared and supported to accept a higher degree of confidentiality and therefore risk to the child.

Children’s reasons for selecting ‘noone’ as a helper would also be helpfully explored in a larger study. For example, does a regular decision not to tell about problems affect a child’s emotional well being? Some of the anecdotal evidence here suggests this could be the case, eg fear of consequences of telling, being prevented from telling because the child is locked in (see also Butler & Williamson, 1994). Many of the children made unsolicited comments about the importance of talking to people, suggesting that children themselves concur with this view. For example,

If you have a problem don’t bottle it up, tell someone and they might be able to help you. (Girl aged 15 years)
I am sure it can help to just talk about it and sort things through. Unfortunately because of my character I don’t tell anyone, so I can’t comment how well it works. (17 year old boy)

Balding (1995) comments, in relation to sharing problems about school,

We are always unhappy to consider the number of young people who say they would turn to no one. They may other sources of support, but our suspicion is that these individuals do not have anyone to turn to over some issues. (p134)

This suspicion is borne out by the findings of Butler and Williamson discussed earlier.

Methodological Considerations

This was a relatively small study and consequently a proper mix of children from differing economic and cultural backgrounds was not included. The position of disabled children has also not been considered, and how their help-seeking may be affected by mobility and communication constraints.
Differences in administration of the questionnaire may be a source of concern, as may the recruitment of children from different schools. However, this latter was necessary in order to include children and young people in the desired age-range, and the close proximity of the schools to each other minimises any related effects. It may be worth noting here that the broad age-range of children involved in the current study is one of the largest reported in the help-seeking literature. The failure to observe age-related trends anticipated by hypotheses may reflect the fact that earlier studies have focused on narrower age-groups, and the inclusion of a wider age-range here brings in different developmental influences which negate these trends.

It is possible the compromise between tick-box and spontaneously generated responses (the helper sheet) influenced responses, although this seems unlikely given the results. The most obvious 'candidates' for suggestive influence on the helper sheets - 'ChildLine' and 'counsellor' - each received only 2% nominations overall. The other 'suggestive' helper on the sheet (priest) was not chosen by any child. The presence of 'someone' on the helper sheet may have mitigated against coercion into choosing the helpers provided, and as children did nominate other helpers not on the sheet (eg neighbour, policeman), we can assume they were either using this cue, or spontaneously generating responses anyway.

Discrepancies between children's reactions to the hypothetical stories, and to their real experiences of bullying and parental arguing, suggest there may be a limit to the usefulness of the approach taken by studies such as this. A clearer focus on children's actual help-seeking behaviour - perhaps including observational measures as well as self reports - may be a necessary development in future research. In the 'real world', for example, to whom the child goes may depend more on availability and other situational factors, rather than whom the child would prefer. This same argument may apply also to child abuse 'prevention' programmes like 'Kidscape' (see Gough, 1993, for a review). Although children may display the correct knowledge of how they should behave when presented with certain hypothetical test situations, how they actually react may bear little relation to their hypothetical answers. Unfortunately, severe ethical and other methodological barriers can be anticipated in any research trying to explore these kinds of issues in further detail.
Conclusions

This study has examined children's help-seeking behaviour in the context of two interpersonal problems. Female helpers were preferred overall, although a relationship existed between the child's and helper's gender. Parents, friends and teachers were all chosen, and parent and peer helpers were seen as complementary rather than competitive sources of help for problems with bullying and parental arguing. Reasons for choosing helpers were notably varied, but largely related to the perceived qualities of the helper, rather than the child's own needs.

Even within the constraints of the current research, a number of pointers for professional helpers are raised. According to the children in this study, listening is an active behaviour, and they look for a number of behaviours to demonstrate the listener's attentiveness. Findings here relate to the study of sexually abused children's perceptions of interviewers, and further research could usefully explore these connections, especially with respect to the helper's gender. As noted above, however, research needs to move beyond children's responses to purely hypothetical scenarios, and instead look at children's actual help-seeking behaviour in given situations. In this respect, children's experiences of parental arguments, and the role of friends in child abuse disclosures, seem particularly worthy of further study.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE EXOSYSTEM
MEMORANDUM TRAINING IN ACPCS: A SURVEY

The fourth and final study focused on investigative interviewing training in relation to child witnesses, specifically looking at training on the Memorandum of Good Practice. This represented an exploration of the ‘exosystem’ in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model. That is, a context in which decisions are made about children that will affect them (here, how to interview suspected abuse victims), yet being one in which children do not themselves participate. However, decisions made in these contexts affect children (eg the promotion of good practice in interviewing), and children can themselves affect these contexts (eg if feedback from victims was incorporated into the training programme). The value of training for interviewers was stressed by the study of children-as-interviewers (see Chapter Three), and the study of children’s views on investigative interviews (Chapter Two) raised a number of issues which it would be possible to examine further in this research. For example, do trainers agree with some of the opinions expressed by children and young people in the earlier study?

The importance of training for the professionals involved in child abuse investigations was highlighted by the events in Cleveland in 1987. Subsequently, and simultaneously with publication of the Cleveland inquiry report (Butler-Sloss, 1988), the Home Office published its key circular 52/1988 ‘The investigation of child sexual abuse’. This stressed that

training has an important role in equipping police officers, social workers and doctors to deal with the important professional and personal issues raised by cases of child sexual abuse...Such training should be aimed at enabling the investigators to develop an understanding of, and respect for, each others’ functions, the role of the police in investigating criminal offences and of social workers in child care, and the consequences for day-to-day practice. Joint training can also provide a useful forum for the consideration of the criminal and civil law in relation to child sexual abuse ... (it) should pay particular attention to the development of interviewing skills and an understanding of the child’s behaviour and response to the experiences of the interview. (p7)
Subsequent circulars for police officers and social workers reaffirmed the value of training, and particularly joint training, with Home Office Circulars 66/1989 and 67/1989 devoted to training issues in child sexual abuse. Revised guidance published in *Working Together* (1991) by the Department of Health observed that education and training are essential, and ‘not luxuries’. Further,

The aim of this training is... above all, to learn how to interview children who may have been badly abused by other adults in such a way as to encourage them to provide information without further hurting them. Interviews must always and only be conducted in the best interests of the child. (p53)

It is somewhat surprising, then, to note the lack of information about developments in training subsequent to these guidelines.

The implementation of the *Memorandum of Good Practice on Video Recorded Interviews with Child Witnesses* (Home Office, 1992) in August 1992 raised a host of implications for trainers, and initiated a new wave of joint-training programmes across the country. The *Memorandum* itself reiterated the importance of training, stating that

Those who are responsible for convening joint investigating teams will need to review practice and see to it that the various professional skills and specialised expertise necessary to make a successful video recording are satisfactorily represented amongst team members. Training programmes capable of delivering and maintaining those skills should be in place and regularly reviewed in the light of practice development. Every opportunity should be taken to promote mutual inter-agency understanding on a professional and personal level. That will be enhanced by joint training. (p3)

Initial *Memorandum* training was provided at the Hendon Metropolitan Police Training Centre; the related Open University pack ‘Investigative Interviewing with Children’ was published later (Stainton Rogers & Worrel, 1993). However, the majority of training was organised at a local level, and practitioners were quick to reflect on their experiences and difficulties in local training programmes (Godfrey & Hopkins, 1992;
Jeffery, 1993; Robson, 1993; Wonnacott, 1993). For example, issues surrounding training for managers, and inter-agency working relationships were raised. At a conference to mark one year of the Memorandum’s implementation, training was one of the concerns raised by delegates in a brief questionnaire (N=126). Training issues accounted for 19% of professionals’ concerns about meeting the needs of their own agencies, and for 15% of their concerns around meeting inter-agency needs (Westcott, 1994a).

Training issues figured in research conducted by both the Home Office (Davies, Wilson, Mitchell & Milsom, 1995) and Department of Health (Holton & Bonnerjea, 1994) as part of their evaluations of the Memorandum. Davies et al (1995) surveyed a sample of practitioners before and after they had experience with the Memorandum. The post-survey, conducted in August 1994, reflected a number of outstanding training concerns. For social workers (N=42), whilst the content of training was reported as satisfactory, over half felt it could be improved, increased, and changed to an ongoing basis, rather than an one-off event. Police officers (N=76) also reported deficiencies in their training, and ‘a few felt they were not properly prepared for interviewing children’ (p8). This latter finding was underscored by recent Home Office research on practitioner views of policing child sexual abuse (Hughes, Parker and Gallagher, 1996). Training, or rather the lack of it, was a consistent theme. Police officers working in child protection wanted more, and better, training on almost all aspects of their role; for example, knowledge, skills and current policing developments. They also advocated greater multi-disciplinary training.

Holton and Bonnerjea (1994) surveyed 91 social services departments (SSDs) in September 1993. There was considerable variance in the number of social workers trained, the ‘optimum’ appearing to be between 11 and 20 social workers. The training consisted of both a general Memorandum awareness training (88%), and an additional specialist evidential interviewing training (93%). The most common model seemed to be a one-day general course, and 5-10 days specialist training. Eighty percent of SSDs had a procedure for selecting evidential interviewers, but 84% had no formal assessment of competence following training. Senior managers were provided with
training by 60% of SSDs. The Open University pack was used to some degree by two-thirds of respondents.

This survey reported that partial progress had been made in training around disability and child protection issues, with one-third of SSDs reporting that general training had been given to professionals working with disabled children, and one-quarter reporting that specialist evidential interviewing training had been given to these professionals. Staff from multi-racial and multi-ethnic backgrounds had been trained in two-thirds of SSDs, and three local authorities had trained language interpreters. The authors concluded that generous resources had been allocated to Memorandum training, but that there were signs that too many social workers were being trained at a cost of inadequate standards and experience. Further, there should be more intensive training of fewer professionals, and more training for middle and senior managers.

Although these two reports contain useful information about training in their evaluations of the Memorandum, there remained considerable gaps in knowledge about associated training issues. Most notably, there was a lack of direct feedback from trainers themselves. Since these professionals are presumably influencing the skills and knowledge of those practitioners actually interviewing children, their perspective is an important contribution to the debate surrounding the Memorandum. It is also possible that things may have moved on, given that the Holton and Bonnerjea data is two-years old, and the Davies et al data one-year old. For these reasons, then, a survey dedicated to Memorandum training issues was planned. In order to try and improve on the relatively small numbers in Davies et al's study, a national survey was designed. Instead of sampling only SSDs, as in the Holton and Bonnerjea study, it was decided to survey Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs), since Memorandum training for both police officers and social workers would have most likely been provided under their auspices. Like Holton and Bonnerjea, however, a small number of indepth interviews with knowledgeable professionals involved in training was also planned, to explore the issues in more detail than was possible in a survey questionnaire.
Method

Participants

Questionnaire

In essence, the ‘participants’ of the survey were ACPCs in England and Wales. The questionnaire (see below) was mailed to the Chairs of all ACPCs in England and Wales (N=114). The covering letter asked Chairs to delegate the questionnaire to the most appropriate person in their ACPC, eg the ACPC Training Co-ordinator, or representative from social services or police on the training sub-committee. In total, 73 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 64%. These were completed by 12 training co-ordinators, 31 social services trainers, 14 training co-ordinators/social services trainers and 15 other professionals acting in an advisory capacity to the ACPC on this topic (one unspecified). Respondents were aged 26-66 years with a mean age of 42.12 years; 27 were male and 43 female (three unspecified).

Respondents had backgrounds predominantly in local authority social work (n=68, 93%). A few had backgrounds in probation (n=2, 3%), in the police (n=3, 4%) or in other professions (eg health; n=7, 10%). Approximately one-third of respondents had attended the Hendon course (n=24, 33%), whilst 10 (14%) had attended the Open University course, and just over half had attended relevant ‘training for trainers’ courses (n=39, 53%). Sixteen respondents (22%) had themselves conducted a Memorandum interview.

Indepth interviews

Six professionals were approached about participation, none refused. These professionals were selected on the basis of their experience in this field, many having contributed to related conferences and publications. Four were female and two male; their occupations were as follows:
Principal child protection adviser to an ACPC, with experience of the pilot of
*Memorandum of Good Practice* (female)

Senior social worker, with particularly wide experience of interviewing disabled
children and training on child protection and disability (male)

Social services trainer, with experience of running joint courses on investigative
interviewing (female)

Police trainer, with experience of running joint courses on investigative interviewing
(male)

Freelance/independent child protection trainer/consultant (female)

Social services team manager, with wide experience of investigative interviewing and
training, especially in multi-racial and multi-cultural London Boroughs (female)

**Instruments**

**Questionnaire**

The questionnaire (see Appendix Six) consisted of four sides of mostly tick-box and
rating scale questions, in order to encourage a high response rate by minimising the
time required to complete it. It asked about *Memorandum* training content, success,
format, issues for trainers, and general interviewing issues. Information about the
ACPC (eg funding for training, numbers of staff trained etc) and respondent (eg age,
profession) was also requested.

**Indepth interviews**

The indepth interviews were unstructured, and apart from a list of topics to be touched
upon, which broadly corresponded to the areas covered by the questionnaire, no
questions were pre-formulated (see Appendix Seven).
Procedure

Questionnaire

Prior to drafting the questionnaire, the author sought out advice from a number of professionals knowledgeable about the issues. This included interviews with researchers on the Home Office evaluation of the Memorandum, police and social services trainers, and police officers and social workers who had themselves been trained in investigative interviewing. It was decided not to pilot the questionnaire, since the total number of ACPCs was not especially large, and a low response rate was anyway anticipated. Instead of piloting, therefore, particular care was taken in drafting the questionnaire and in seeking comments upon it from personnel involved in this field. They included trainers, researchers, and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) representative on the Memorandum (Mr Tony Butler, Chief Constable of Gloucestershire Constabulary). Unfortunately, the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) representative was unable to participate in the drafting process. The questionnaire was drafted in June-July 1995, and mailed out to ACPC Chairs (with covering letter and stamped addressed reply envelope) in August 1995. Completion was required by October 1995. A follow-up reminder about the research was sent to the substantial number of Chairs of ACPCs who had not returned their questionnaire by the end of September 1995.

It was unclear whether formal permission from the ADSS Service Evaluation, Research and Information Committee was required for the research, since it was a survey of ACPCs, and not a survey of SSDs. However, such backing was in fact sought and obtained, and a number of Chairs who were themselves directors of social services did question whether approval for the project had been received.

Returned questionnaires were coded and analysed. Agreement in coding between the author and a research assistant was measured by separate coding of the first seven (10%) of questionnaires received. It was excellent at 98% agreement. The remaining questionnaires were coded by the author only.
Indepth interviews

These were conducted by the author either face-to-face or by telephone in the period July-November 1995. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by the author. Excerpts are used in this report, to highlight or expand upon particular issues raised by the questionnaire responses.

Results

Training Content and Success

Respondents were asked to rate how successfully overall eleven areas were covered by the Memorandum training offered by their ACPC. These eleven areas had emerged as important from the pre-discussions and drafting process. The small number of 'don't know' and 'not included' responses suggest that the chosen areas were relevant to the respondents and an accurate reflection of their training content. Table 5.1 presents the means and standard deviations for the rating scales; a score of 1 represents 'very unsuccessful' and a score of 5 represents 'very successful'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Content</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conducting the interview (practice, eg role play)</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal requirements in the interview</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-by-step guide to Memorandum</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducting the interview (theory)</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning the video interview</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency roles and relationships</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice with video equipment</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical requirements</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for conducting a Memorandum interview</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child development</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-discriminatory practice</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trainers felt that training had been highly successful, with the three lowest ratings (still above the scale midpoint) being given to the issues of anti-discriminatory practice, child development and criteria for conducting a Memorandum interview. The indepth interviews too raised these as areas of concern, particularly anti-discriminatory practice.
It appeared from both the questionnaires and the interviews that disability issues had been tackled to a greater degree than those of race and culture. Three interviewees stressed how difficult it was to prioritise relevant material on racial and cultural issues in ACPCs including only small minority ethnic communities, especially given other resource constraints on Memorandum training. A further problem for some interviewees appeared to be a certain amount of reluctance to see these as issues for the investigating team, rather than simply for the social worker(s).

The police's perspective of exercises such as working with strengths of black families, effect of oppression etc, is 'this isn't relevant to us'...for them, it's very much the social work side...their perspective is that generally 'we don't have a problem with race, the child will agree to be seen by either police officer or social worker, it doesn't really matter'. The social workers will see it as 'oh great, at last the police are having some anti-discriminatory training'!

Child development was proving particularly difficult to meaningfully include into Memorandum training for two interviewees. For example, training participants were reported as questioning the relevance of a psychologist's input on child development, since,

Again they're wanting even more practicals...the psychologist sort of does a degree course child development in like an hour and a half, you wonder the value of it. I mean I find it really interesting but as the rest of the course is so practical I think it's difficult making that link between the psychologist and the rapport.

Trainers used a variety of materials to provide training. The Open University pack was used by 63% (n=46); the 'Abuse and Children who are Disabled (ABCD)' pack by 53% (n=39); the Child Witness pack by 38% (n=28), and a mixture of trainers' own material and other resources (e.g., local social services/police protocols) by a further 56% (n=41). A number of respondents commented critically on the OU pack itself, and generally their feelings mirrored those of the interviewee who described it as 'too little, too late'. The social workers interviewed also reflected again on the general lack of attention in the OU materials to anti-discriminatory practice, with one commenting that videotaped
interviews themselves, carefully and sensitively used, could be very helpful in this respect (eg if the child is disabled):

My own sense is that it (use of videos) is one of the most effective ways of conveying the lesson that...the difficulties which we imagine can be overcome and that it’s worthwhile. And a way of bringing the child into the room rather than the disablement. People tend to focus on the difficulties that they see rather than the fact that we’re dealing with a child. And I suppose creating a motivation and desire to do something about that, and reducing some of the barriers that there might be.

Training Format and Professionals Trained

Respondents indicated the basis on which their ACPC’s joint training was offered, both initially (at introduction of joint training) and currently (present practice). Initially, one-off courses had been preferred by the majority of ACPCs (n=58, 79%), although a few had arranged one-off and follow-up courses (n=8, 11%) or other alternatives, eg workshops, practice-based seminars or day release (n=9, 12%). There was a move towards more mixed packages of training at the current time, although one-off courses were still the most popular (n=27, 37%). One-off and follow-up courses were currently offered in 15 (21%) ACPCs, and alternative models by 22 (30%). These included a variety of models based largely on follow-up courses of some kind, and practice support groups. Where one-off courses were chosen, the duration ranged from 1-10 days initially, and 2-14 days currently, most popular lengths being 5 days initial training and 10 days current training.

Overwhelmingly, Memorandum training in ACPCs was funded by both social services departments (n=64, 88%) and police constabularies (n=48, 66%). Other arrangements, including direct funding by the whole ACPC, were reported by 14 (19%) respondents. Similarly, Memorandum training included input from social services departments (n=68, 93%), police constabularies (n=66, 90%) and other agencies/individuals, eg freelance trainers, health workers, psychologists and the NSPCC (n=17, 23%).
For all ACPCs participating in the survey, Memorandum training was available to frontline social workers and police officers (n=73, 100%). It was reportedly available to social services managers in 54 (74%) ACPCs, and to senior police officers in 38 (52%) ACPCs. Almost one-quarter of ACPCs offered training to other professionals such as specialist workers with disabled children, interpreters and health workers (n=17, 23%). Details of the numbers of different professionals trained are presented in Table 5.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frontline social workers</td>
<td>21.63</td>
<td>42.23</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>6.00-250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontline police officers</td>
<td>24.57</td>
<td>38.41</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>0.00-200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social services managers</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>12.68</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0.00-60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior police officers</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>9.65</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00-50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professionals</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>21.74</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00-170.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As reflected in Table 5.2, there was considerable variation across ACPCs in the number of professionals receiving training. This may be partly explained by the differing sizes of ACPCs, but may also reflect different policies towards Memorandum training; for example, for social services whether to train a smaller number of specialists, or a larger number of generic workers.

The questionnaire probed the ways in which the performance of trained professionals is monitored and assessed. A large majority of ACPCs had selection criteria for both social workers (n=62, 85%) and police officers (n=55, 75%). A minority (n=8, 11%) also had rejection criteria. Performance was evaluated during training for the majority of professionals (n=47, 64% social workers; n=45, 62% police officers). Less frequent was evaluation of practice after training (n=20, 27% social workers; n=18, 25% police officers). Videotaped Memorandum interviews were assessed for social workers in 23 (32%) ACPCs and for police officers in 31 (42%) ACPCs.

From remarks on the questionnaires, and from the indepth interviews, it became obvious that the question of assessment of practice was proving a thorny one for trainers, leading one respondent to comment,
In conclusion I would add that it is a brave authority that decides to embark on the path of assessed practice in joint investigation. The experience in (ACPC) has been salutary.

Partly problems arose in trying to achieve consistency or equivalence in procedures for both social services and police, but also because there remain anxieties about whether it is appropriate to use videotapes for purposes other than evidence.

I feel a crucial issue is the linking of training with the evaluation and monitoring of work. In (ACPC) we have tried to set up a ‘video monitoring group’ to evaluate quality and consistency of interviews. However, it is very difficult to establish a coherent policy for supervision/evaluation and monitoring across the two organisations (police and social services). Also, there is the major problem of disclosable material if videos are viewed and assessed.

We have a system, I think I’d hesitate to say it works well at the moment. I mean there is a real problem about the number of videos which are being made and how you monitor all of them. We have a system of monitoring which is a random selection basis, sort of so they’re pulled out on a random basis to be reviewed and that’s a joint police and social services responsibility and recently, because it was felt it wasn’t working as well as would be liked, a new group, a working party from police and social services, is looking at how to improve that. I think the police, from what I hear, have a much more structured system...so I’m sure that their videos get looked at and they get, sort of, pulled up if you like, on things that they haven’t done particularly well, much more systematically than the social workers who don’t really, I think, have the equivalent, because it is not the team managers who see the videos, it would be planning officers etc, and I think that’s something that needs looking at more.

However, there were other views on this topic which reflect the quandary videotapes appear to pose. For example,
When you mention auditing videos people look at you totally blankly, so it would be quite good if that was more standard practice, to keep some sort of handle on what sort of standards people are achieving. Some of it is that people doing the auditing don’t know what they’re looking for, so that’s an added problem.

This links to the question of national standards for *Memorandum* training, discussed further below.

**Trainer Issues**

A number of statements arising out of current debates about *Memorandum* training were presented, and respondents were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed. Table 5.3 gives the means and standard deviations for these rating scales; a score of 1 represents 'strongly disagree' and a score of 5 represents 'strongly agree'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is not enough training on how to interview disabled children</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be more training on interviews with children whose first language is not English</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too few managers are trained</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be national standards (eg NVQs) for training on the <em>Memorandum</em></td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be a nationwide curriculum for training on the <em>Memorandum</em></td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be more emphasis on child development</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be more emphasis on actually 'doing' the interview</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videotapes of <em>Memorandum</em> interviews should be routinely used in training</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many social workers are trained</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainers are not adequately prepared and supported for the task of training</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too few police officers are trained</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There appeared to be strong support for better training around anti-discriminatory practice, and opposition to the notion that trainers are inadequately prepared and
supported for this work. The mean ratings accorded to different statements, however, show that trainers themselves are not totally in agreement with recently expressed views. For example, mixed feelings were reflected in the ratings concerning a nationwide curriculum and national standards, not wholly supporting those who have recently argued for such developments. Whilst respondents did not agree that too few police officers are trained, they did not strongly agree that too many social workers are trained, contrary to the current debate. They did, however, feel that too few managers are trained, in line with most popularly voiced arguments.

Not surprisingly, there was a significant relationship between respondents indicating that there should be more emphasis on child development, and the ratings given for the success with which child development had been covered by training. Thus the less successful child development was reported to have been covered, the more respondents agreed that there should be more emphasis on it in training ($r = -.36, p < .01; n = 64$). However, other anticipated relationships were not found. Specifically, there was no relationship between the successfullness of training on ‘conducting the interview in practice’, and the degree to which respondents felt there should be more emphasis on ‘doing’ the interview ($r = .09, p > .05; n = 68$). Neither were there relationships for the judged success of training on anti-discriminatory practice, and the statements regarding training around children whose first language is not English ($r = .02, p > .05; n = 65$) and children who are disabled ($r = .02, p > .05; n = 66$).

Again, these various issues were raised in the indepth interviews and by some respondents on questionnaires. Training for differing levels of management has proved problematic for a number of reasons, including resources. As one interviewee remarked,

Part of the problem I think is that there’s a much smaller number of police needing to go through the training, a much larger number of social workers because of the way we’re organised, and if a social work manager was taking a place, they would be taking it away from a social work practitioner.
There was appreciation, however, of the vital importance of training managers in this area of work, and of the challenges implementation of the Memorandum had posed managers.

They’ve (managers) probably needed more training than the social workers doing it, because you do get some practice on the job. It’s been far more difficult to train managers in supervising the staff...most of them haven’t done Memorandum interviews themselves...We felt they ought to experience what it’s like trying to do the job so they have some empathy with workers trying to do it, and some understanding of the complexity...They found it invaluable, they found it far more difficult than they thought, they came away with a lot more respect for their workers.

I think (management training)’s been helpful in giving them a sense of their role when it comes to decision making at strategy meetings and things like case conferences...what it hasn’t equipped them to do is to provide the sort of supervision necessary for the workers doing interviewing. That still feels like it needs to be done by those who are closely involved with it...None of their colleagues or their manager really has much of a sense of the impact at an emotional level some of this work can have, just sometimes to talk things through a day later about an interview.

A lot of managers, sort of the staff development function of the management role has been getting less, certainly in social services departments with the emphasis on budgets and all that sort of thing. I think that the good old kind of supervision and developing staff bit is quite hard to hang on to, and so one good thing hopefully about the Memorandum and that sort of training is that it might be forcing people to hang on to some of that, but I think in lots of instances that hasn’t happened and that’s a bit of a worry. And the whole business about managers feeling deskilled because they feel staff know more than they do...

A national training curriculum and standards were generally favoured by those professionals interviewed. This was for two reasons; firstly, to standardise the quality of training offered to practitioners, and secondly, to achieve consistency in the skill and
knowledge levels attained by practitioners attending training courses. One social work
trainer had introduced a 'certificate of attendance', outlining what the training had
covered, as a gesture towards competency measures.

One of the reasons why interviewees favoured national training materials and
competency measures was their apparent belief that Memorandum work would easily fit
into assessment schemes similar to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).
Several stressed how Memorandum training was much more skills-based than other
training (and therefore amenable to description in terms of competencies), supporting
the idea that it would be suitable for this type of assessment.

The Memorandum makes you focus so much more on your practice, and
especially when you’re doing interviews...and people do look at you, they’re
looking at your style of questioning, you’re very much the primary focus...and so
there’s all those sort of things even more than in other types of training.

I would like some sort of national training material, so we could all be going in
the same direction. It is very much practically based and may be getting some
advice on...likely skill areas which we should be addressing. I’ve actually
produced a form for me to look at the skill areas that I’ve picked up from the
Memorandum.

Probably more amenable (to competency assessment) than other types of training,
because you could very clearly look at people’s skills and evaluate skills on it.

The interviewees’ discussion of whether social services should follow police colleagues
and have 'specialists' for Memorandum work reflected the mixed feelings indicated by
the questionnaire rating scales. Although specialism was seen as advantageous in that
specialist social workers could match police levels of experience and expertise, there
were a number of perceived disadvantages. Particularly, interviewees were concerned
that specialist social workers would lose the ‘balance’ of practising other child care
work, and that their remit would create difficulties for colleagues involved in post-
investigation work with the child and family.

You have the specialist investigative team type thing, they go in, do their bit,
leave, and who actually takes the responsibility, regardless of the outcome of the
inquiry, who actually attends to a family’s feelings about what’s gone on, whether or not abuse has been disclosed? That’s something that too often we encounter.

Several interviewees linked this issue to the current ‘section 17/section 47’ debate surrounding the Children Act 1989 and family support highlighted in Chapter One. This debate, heightened by the recent Department of Health publication ‘Messages from Research’ (1995), questions the degree to which social workers are concentrating their energy and resources on child protection investigations at the expense of more general support work with children and families in need. Interviewees were concerned that, paradoxically, social workers would be expected to make more crucial decisions earlier on about whether a criminal investigation was likely (and hence whether to pursue a Memorandum interview), yet also that there would be pressures upon social workers to withdraw from Memorandum work. For example,

For me the challenge now is to look at Memorandum training in the light of the current debate in social work and hope that we don’t lose a lot of the good bits by now people saying ‘well, this isn’t something we should be concentrating on’. We need to be saying this is an important part of the work, we need very skilled people involved in this, we need to invest in that as well as them looking at it in the context of everything else, and how it fits.

There was some discussion by interviewees and questionnaire respondents about trainers’ backgrounds. For example, the police trainer interviewed commented,

I’m not involved in child protection outside, I mean I’m a trainer and my background is detective work, so I don’t really know a great deal of the issues of joint agency training, I’ve not actually done what I teach, if you know what I mean, I’ve never put a Memorandum interview together and had it get to court...People might question ‘who are you to talk?’, so I tend to look at the Memorandum as a focus, you know, I mean I don’t profess to be a great interviewer with children, I just say ‘well this is what the Memorandum says, and this is what we’re going to do’.
Another respondent noted,

I have no practical experience of the Memorandum. All the experience I have, has been via Memorandum training courses which is not the same. I have been involved in role plays, which in itself is very stressful. I strongly believe that trainers should have been given the opportunity to attend a training course, which is experiential and at least three days duration.

This latter theme was picked up by one interviewee who felt that a model similar to that employed by the police would be beneficial, and would help standardise the quality of training offered across the country:

I mean the police tend to have, when they bring out new training packages, their trainers have to go off on a course and learn how to use them, and I think something like that would be good, that would meet some of the needs of the trainers.

**General Interviewing Issues**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed/disagreed with a number of general statements about investigative interviewing. These statements were drawn from the previous studies (see Chapters Two through Four), and from current debates about investigative interviewing. Results are presented in Table 5.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Don't Know (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidential requirements for detailed information in Memorandum interviews are difficult for children</td>
<td>64 (88)</td>
<td>7 (10)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police officers are more experienced than social workers in leading Memorandum interviews</td>
<td>57 (78)</td>
<td>14 (19)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should receive better preparation for Memorandum interviews</td>
<td>53 (73)</td>
<td>7 (10)</td>
<td>11 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewers should be able to behave more supportively towards children in Memorandum interviews</td>
<td>52 (71)</td>
<td>12 (16)</td>
<td>4 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigative interviews are very stressful for children</td>
<td>44 (60)</td>
<td>19 (26)</td>
<td>6 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally children prefer female interviewers</td>
<td>14 (19)</td>
<td>25 (34)</td>
<td>32 (44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Investigative interviews were judged to be stressful by the majority of respondents, and evidential requirements for detailed information were overwhelmingly seen to be difficult for children. There was strong support for the arguments that interviewers should be able to behave more supportively towards children, and that children should receive better preparation for Memorandum interviews. The widespread view that police officers are more experienced than social workers in leading Memorandum interviews was also strongly supported.

Respondents were uncertain, however, about children's possible preferences regarding the gender of interviewers. A substantial number indicated they did not know whether children preferred female interviewers (n=32, 44%), approximately one-third disagreed (n=25, 34%), and a minority agreed (n=14, 19%). There was no relationship between respondent gender and their agreement or disagreement with this statement (Chi-square=10, df=1, Fisher Exact Test p>0.05).

Discussion

The research reported here has presented an overview of Memorandum training issues in relation to ACPCs, with some more detailed insights from professionals involved in Memorandum training. Although the overall ratings suggest that training has been judged successful overall, the analyses presented also point to some continuing areas of concern. Many of the dilemmas highlighted by the research projects undertaken for the Home Office and Department of Health persist (Davies et al, 1995; Holton & Bonnerjea, 1994; Hughes et al, 1996).

Training Content and Success

As noted above, the trainers in this survey judged Memorandum training in their ACPCs to have been highly successful overall. This in itself is a positive finding, although the homogeneity of respondents' backgrounds (in social work) did not allow the author to compare responses from trainers with different professional perspectives. It had been anticipated that, for example, more police trainers may have completed questionnaires to allow further analyses of this variable. Davey and Hill (1995) found some significant
associations between professionals’ backgrounds and their responses to a survey about child sexual abuse.

Those areas where training was judged to be least successful - anti-discriminatory practice, child development and criteria for conducting an interview - were also raised by the earlier research. (It should perhaps be remembered, however, that the ratings were not dramatically poor for these areas, rather they were relatively weaker). Holton and Bonnerjea (1994) discussed the problems trainers were encountering in issues around disability and interviewing, and, in common with Davies et al (1995), found confusion about when Memorandum interviews should take place. Certainly, the need for improved training on anti-discriminatory issues in relation to Memorandum interviews was a consistent theme in the current research. It appeared that appropriate consideration of race and cultural issues was especially difficult.

It is interesting to note that the three areas judged to be least successful represent the most obvious ‘child welfare’ components of Memorandum training. In this respect, then, there is room for continuing critical debate about the degree to which Memorandum interviews are detrimental to children’s welfare (see Chapter Two), especially given that 60% of questionnaire respondents agreed that they are very stressful for children. This issue is highlighted further below, when the Memorandum is discussed in the context of the criminal justice system as a whole.

The Open University pack was used to some extent by 63% of trainers in this survey, almost mirroring Holton and Bonnerjea’s results. The ABCD pack (funded by the Department of Health) appeared also to be a useful resource, used by over half of respondents. Given this finding, and continuing concerns about issues of race and culture in Memorandum training, it may be worth considering whether a specialist training resource along the lines of the ABCD pack would be helpful for these issues too.
Training Format and Professionals Trained

In agreement with Holton and Bonnerjea, one-off courses are apparently the favoured training format, despite social workers in Davies et al’s research asking for alternative approaches. A number of such alternatives were described in this research, for example, day-release study or practice-based sessions, and it may be worth pursuing different approaches for future training initiatives. Greater communication between ACPCs about their own developments would be beneficial in this respect. (Palusci and McHugh (1995) describe a recent attempt to evaluate a novel approach to child sexual abuse training compared with standard procedures). The extended length of current training in comparison to initial training suggests the complexity of Memorandum work has necessitated greater resources for successful training.

Compared to Holton and Bonnerjea’s findings, progress appears to have been made in training greater numbers of social services managers (and senior police officers). However, respondents indicated that they still felt there was room for improvement in this area, and pinpointed a number of challenges facing managers in this work. For example, feeling deskilled, and not being able to devote sufficient resources to staff development considerations. There is also a reported increase in the use of selection criteria for course participants from the current survey. Holton and Bonnerjea found that 16% of social services departments had instituted formal assessment procedures for Memorandum work. Findings here are not directly comparable, but evaluation of practice was reported for over one-quarter of both social workers and police officers, with videotapes being evaluated for 32% of social workers and 43% police officers. Even if some of these measures are on an informal basis (it is not possible to be certain of the formality), there has been a shift to greater use of assessment measures. Again, sharing of experiences of assessment across ACPCs, and across involved professionals, would seem worthwhile. Comments from interviewees, and remarks on questionnaires, suggest a number of common dilemmas which have faced those trying to instigate assessment measures, such as inter-agency consistency and auditing. Some of these dilemmas would benefit from greater discussion at a national level, however, such as the use of videotaped interviews for purposes other than evidence. Government guidance on this topic in the Memorandum can best be described as ‘vague’, and the
practical, legal and ethical problems researchers and practitioners have encountered in deciding how best to review videotaped interviews is worthy of greater attention at all levels.

**Trainer Issues**

Perhaps the most obvious issues here were the findings regarding the questions of a nationwide curriculum and national standards, and specialism for social workers. In both cases, the questionnaire findings were not wholly supportive of the recommendations of Davies et al or Holton and Bonnerjea.

**National standards**

Davies et al reported a 'perceived need for national standards in training' (p44), and there was some support in this research for national standards and a nationwide curriculum amongst both the questionnaire respondents and interviewees. However, the questionnaire ratings show that this support is not complete. Perhaps trainers feel they would be restricted by the imposition of standards or a nationwide curriculum, as illustrated by the comments of one trainer who noted that while he favoured the idea, he had serious concerns about what a nationwide curriculum might consist of, given his unhappiness with the government commissioned Open University training package. As over half of trainers reported using their own materials at present, such a curriculum could result in restriction to a greater or lesser degree. Alternatively, standards may present something of a threat to trainers, bound up as they are with notions of 'effectiveness' and evaluation of practice.

Interviewees favoured a national approach since they felt it would standardise quality of both training and practice. Their comments suggest that Memorandum work may be particularly amenable to national standards, since it is heavily skills based. However, Jones (1995a, b) has cautioned against narrow competency-based assessment, arguing that child protection demands a reflective and holistic approach that goes beyond simple skills analysis. Again there appears to be room for greater debate of this issue.
amongst practitioners and trainers across all disciplines. The police officers involved in the research by Hughes et al (1996) raised the interesting notion of a national standard of accredited training which should apply to every professional involved in child protection, including solicitors, barristers and judges.

Specialism

In contrast to both previous reports, trainers completing the questionnaire in this study did not strongly feel that too many social workers are being trained. The findings from the indepth interviews suggest that the issue is perhaps more complex than first appears; whilst there are arguments which favour specialism by social services (eg greater hands-on experience), a number of disadvantages were also cited (eg lack of general child care work experience). Perhaps it should be questioned as to whether training more people inevitably means lower standards, with closer scrutiny of the relationship between training and practice. Adams and Hendry (1996) have recently presented a useful discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of specialism from the police perspective. For example, they contrast the valuable skills and knowledge obtained by officers in specialist units with the general decline in knowledge about child protection found amongst uniformed officers and CID. Lloyd and Burman (1996) give further examples of the difficulties specialism can create in their discussion of specialist police units in Scotland, such as the effect on relationships between unit officers and others. They give examples of the derogatory names used by non-specialist officers to refer to the work of the units. Similar findings have also been reported by Hughes et al (1996). The current 'section 17/section 47' debate in social work has no doubt increased the complexity of the specialism issue further, making it even more important that discussion continues as to the relationship between child protection and criminal investigation in relation to Memorandum interviews, and the roles of different professionals involved.

General Interviewing Issues

Over 75% of trainers in the questionnaire survey agreed that police officers are more experienced than social workers in leading Memorandum interviews, supporting the
results of Davies et al and Holton and Bonnerjea. This result reaffirms the need for discussion of this issue, especially given the findings on specialism noted above. Concerns about child welfare were expressed here, with questionnaire respondents agreeing that, for children, investigative interviews are stressful and evidential requirements difficult. Further, children should receive better preparation for Memorandum interviews, and interviewers should be permitted to behave more supportively towards children in Memorandum interviews. These findings suggest an encouraging sensitivity to the needs of children, which is itself in line with the views expressed by children themselves in the earlier research (see Chapter Two). The only discrepancy between the trainers and the children was with respect to interviewer gender. Children preferred female interviewers, but the trainers largely either disagreed with the statement 'generally, children prefer female interviewers', or were undecided. This is no doubt a difficult issue to resolve to everyone’s satisfaction, but sensitivity to a possible gender preference is required, and where possible choice offered to children.

**The Memorandum and the Criminal Justice System**

One macro-level issue repeatedly featured in both questionnaire responses and indepth interviews. This was the criminal justice system, and its relationship to Memorandum interviews (and vice versa). The following comments are illustrative of the many that were made:

I think the training issues relate very closely to policy/legal issues regarding the MOGP as well as to local arrangements. The judicial system (anti child still) creates so many obstacles to viable prosecutions and it is this which causes distress and frustration for children, non abusive parents as well as to investigating professionals. (Questionnaire respondent)

One of the wider issues affecting MOGP training not reflected above is the wider issue of the effectiveness of the MOGP - both locally and nationally. Both design and delivery of training and operational management of child sexual abuse investigations are bedevilled by the perception that the MOGP is largely ineffective in protecting children or prosecuting offenders - however hard we try
to do ‘better’ interviews... I guess I and others are reluctant to commit time and energy to MOGP work, when it doesn’t seem to be doing any good.

(Questionnaire respondent)

(We) try to put the Memorandum interviewing in its place really. That isn’t all we’re about, that’s a small part of the work we do, and so it shouldn’t be the focus of all our training...(we’re) fighting against being court-led, focus on what’s in the best interest of children, rather than what’s in the best interest of the court process. (Interviewee)

Well I think there’s a real difficulty for people at the moment in terms of the difficulties that they’re aware the child is going to experience in court, having to actually give evidence, the way that the criminal justice system seems to be operating... they realise they have to do a job, they want to do it as well as possible, but they realise that the whole process subjects the child to a very difficult experience. (Interviewee)

These arguments have already been briefly discussed in earlier chapters, and again mirror concerns raised by the government’s own evaluations of the Memorandum (Davies et al, 1995; Holton & Bonnerjea, 1994). Partly, such concerns arise from the way the Memorandum has been interpreted in practice; two interviewees commented

It is essential that people generally have an idea of what the Memorandum is, and what it isn’t, there is also so much mystique attached to it that that becomes a further obstacle and people take the word as gospel by someone who says ‘well, we can’t do this according to the Memorandum, therefore it’s no good.’ They need to have a sufficient level of knowledge to challenge ‘well, why?’, and ‘I think these were exceptions within it’, and so on.

The Memorandum is guidance, and child protection is just as important as getting a prosecution, in fact it’s more important. I think we’re balancing that a bit more now than we used to... it’s about relaxing the rules a bit now, about interpreting
the guidance, about being more child friendly, and being more about children’s welfare.

Inhibiting practitioners’ efforts to challenge the way the Memorandum has been interpreted, however, is their knowledge that compared to the judicial system and those professionals within it, they are relatively powerless. Westcott (1995b; Kranat & Westcott, 1994) has highlighted the discrepancies between the manner in which frontline interviewers are permitted to question children in Memorandum interviews, and the manner in which lawyers (particularly for the defence) are permitted to ‘question’ children in court. Until and unless such discrepancies are recognised and addressed by those in a position to do something about them, children’s welfare will continue to be subjected to the needs of evidence. This research showed that trainers were sensitive to children’s position as witnesses, even if they felt that child welfare issues were least successfully covered in training, and in need of improvement. However sensitive trainers and interviewers are towards children, their efforts will nonetheless be compromised if the greater system of which Memorandum interviews are a part continues to be insensitive.

Conclusions

This survey has found that, overall, trainers feel Memorandum training has been successfully implemented. Given the importance of training, as stressed in the introduction, this is itself an encouraging finding. In surveying ACPCs, and in interviewing knowledgeable professionals, this research has contributed to the growing ‘stock of knowledge’ about Memorandum training, but it is clear that there are plenty of areas for discussion and debate, and for sharing of experiences across ACPCs and across disciplines within ACPCs.

Generally, there was consistency between the current findings and those of the earlier studies by Davies et al (1995) and Holton and Bonnerjea (1994), offering some support for the study’s methodology. Although this was a fairly small and unsophisticated survey, the relatively high response rate (for an unsolicited questionnaire survey) is encouraging. However, it must be noted that the findings are all based on trainers’
perspectives (which is what was desired here), and almost exclusively from trainers with local authority social work backgrounds. A more comprehensive analysis of Memorandum training - and the implications for practice - may well be useful, especially if it included feedback from practitioners who have been themselves been trained, multi-disciplinary input, and studied also related policy and legal issues.

The current research suggests that to a certain degree things have moved on since the earlier studies. It also suggests that some issues deserve more indepth analysis than has previously been offered - such as the questions of national standards and specialism for social services - and simple solutions seem unlikely. Perhaps such issues could be tackled by the relevant government departments as part of a revision of the Memorandum itself, something which many professionals see as a necessary exercise (eg Hughes et al, 1996; Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1996). This exercise would also offer the opportunity to re-appraise how successfully the Memorandum is protecting children's welfare, and examine the criminal justice system as a whole in relation to children's evidence. Along with the earlier reports, this survey suggests these are continuing concerns for both trainers and practitioners involved in Memorandum work.
CHAPTER SIX: INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWING REVIEWED

Do you know the people what go around the woods saving animals, it's a bit like that but saving children instead of animals.

This was one six year old’s description of interviewers, when she took part in the study reported in Chapter Two. Much ground has since been covered in an attempt to gain a better understanding of investigative interviewing with children, and this chapter reviews the results and implications of the four different studies. In discussing the key findings, pointers for policy, practice and research will be highlighted, as well as some methodological observations made. The objectives of the four studies, as outlined in Chapter One, were firstly to consider children’s perspectives, and secondly to consider investigative interviewing in a broader framework. This chapter will also discuss the ecological approach adopted and see how successfully these objectives have been achieved.

Summary of Studies

The first study (Chapter Two) examined children’s perspectives on investigative interviews for child sexual abuse. Fourteen children and young people aged 6-18 years participated in indepth interviews, nine girls and five boys. A semi-structured approach was adopted, covering all aspects of the investigative interview’s structure and content, as well as children’s perceptions of the interviewers and their feelings about the experience. Interview transcripts were subjected to qualitative content analysis by the author. The children reported a mixture of good and bad aspects to interviews, such as the positive feelings engendered by supportive interviewers, and the negative difficulties of describing their abuse. The findings suggested that on the whole the Memorandum of Good Practice (Home Office, 1992) is too heavily oriented towards evidential matters, and could do more to help interviewers and child witnesses. In particular, children should be given better preparation and more choice over issues relating to the interview, such as who is present (or ‘listening in’ behind one-way mirrors).
In the second study (Chapter Three), children and young people aged 8-17 years were themselves interviewers, trying to establish what had happened during a videotaped event. These interviews were contrasted with ones carried out by adult interviewers. Forty-three children and young people (26 girls, 17 boys) and 13 adults (10 female, 3 male) participated, providing 15 peer-peer interviews, and 13 adult-child interviews. As few differences in accuracy or style were found between peer and adult interviewers, a selection of the transcripts was shown blind to 16 social workers specialising in child protection. The social workers were able to distinguish between the peer and adult interviewers at a rate significantly greater than chance, and the results further suggested that a more qualitative approach to this area might be productive, as illustrated by the analysis of social workers’ comments on the interview transcripts. The study also highlighted the relative lack of empirical study of questioning, and the importance of training for interviewers.

The third study investigated children’s help-seeking behaviour (Chapter Four). Ninety-eight boys and girls aged 8-17 years completed a questionnaire containing scenarios in which a fictional child faced personal problems. Key scenarios for analysis concerned bullying and parental arguing, and the children were asked to select a helper and give their reason for choosing that helper. In addition, the children reported on their actual help-seeking behaviour in similar situations, and general questions were asked about the qualities of ‘good listeners’. The identity of helpers chosen with respect to bullying and parental arguing problems were very varied, as were the reasons for choosing them. Female helpers were, however, preferred overall and the children described the helping they required as an active process. This research also suggested a need to shift emphasis from studying hypothetical to ‘real life’ help-seeking. For example, this was illustrated by the discrepancy in percentages of children electing to talk to no one when responding to the scenarios (4%), and when reporting on their past help-seeking behaviour (20% for bullying, 54% for parental arguing).

Finally, the fourth study (Chapter Five) surveyed training on the *Memorandum of Good Practice* in Area Child Protection Committees. Seventy-three ACPCs returned questionnaires, and an additional six indepth interviews were completed with professionals selected on the basis of their experience in this field. The questionnaire
and interviews pertained to training content, success, format and associated issues. Overall, trainers felt that Memorandum training has been successfully implemented, with the weakest areas judged to be those pertaining to child welfare issues. The results suggested that the questions of national standards and specialism for social workers need greater discussion than has previously been offered, and that work in this area remains strongly influenced by the demands of the criminal justice system.

Implications for Policy, Practice and Research

Policy and practice

Most policy issues raised by the four studies relate to the Memorandum itself. Findings from the study of children's perspectives on investigative interviews, and from the survey of Memorandum training, suggest that the document's guidance is too narrowly focused on evidential matters at the expense of proper consideration of children's welfare. The Memorandum fails to consider child sexual abuse as a process of victimization (Sorenson & Snow, 1991), and instead portrays it as a discrete event. This effectively minimises the difficulties children are anticipated to face in trying to describe their abuse, and undermines the likely success of the interview as it is based on an inaccurate premise. The role of children as participants in the interview is portrayed as an inactive one, rather than one which encourages them to actively assist in the way the interview is planned and carried out. This is in direct opposition to the spirit of the Children Act 1989, Working Together (Department of Health, 1991) and the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (1992). The government's recent policy shift, as advocated in Messages from Research (Department of Health, 1995), is also relevant here, since, as noted in Chapter Five, it places social workers in even more of a quandary with regard to Memorandum interviews. Put simply, they are under pressure to both withdraw from the so-called 'heavy end' of investigative work, yet also to make crucial decisions early on about whether this type of investigation (including a Memorandum interview) is necessary.

There are also concerns about the way the Memorandum has been implemented in practice. From the research reported in Chapter Two it appears that investigative
Interviews have come to resemble interrogations, rather than opportunities for children to describe in their own words what (if anything) has happened to them. Despite its limitations, the Memorandum does advocate a ‘free narrative’ as the most valuable stage of the interview. Although the free narrative stage is not ideal for children, it is one opportunity for those who are more able (and willing) to recount their experiences. Pressures on practitioners, particularly requirements to obtain ‘evidence’, have no doubt contributed to their eagerness to ask questions, but this is neither in the interests of children nor themselves. Children need to be able to talk about their experiences in a manner most suitable to their own needs and requirements; policy makers and practitioners must question whether Memorandum interviews are able to provide such opportunities. This is particularly pertinent where children are very young, have impairments (for example, learning difficulties) and/or are highly traumatised.

The studies of children’s views on interviews, and of children’s help-seeking behaviour contain many pointers for individual practitioners about the kind of help children want. They liked interviewers who were supportive and empathetic, and disliked interviewers who alienated them, for example by being too blunt. One issue for both policy and practice appears to be that of gender - female interviewers and helpers were preferred by children in this research. Implications include ensuring an adequate number of female interviewers are available, as well as reviewing the way in which possible preferences regarding interviewer gender, age and race/culture on the part of children are included in the planning stage.

Despite this confidence about the kind of intervention children want, however, one striking finding from the study of children’s help-seeking behaviour is that professional helpers (with the exception of teachers) were not chosen in response to the bullying and parental arguing scenarios. Helpers were selected from within children’s families or social support networks. This may reflect a lack of experience of professional helpers such as social workers, or a lack of knowledge that they might be able to help. Alternatively, as argued by Butler and Williamson (1994), and as supported by the numbers of children electing to tell no one about their actual experiences, this finding may reflect the lack of confidence children have in adults’ ability to help per se. There is a need for policy makers to reconsider children’s social support networks in relation
to investigative interviewing and professional intervention. Is a radical approach and 'rethink' necessary even for such complex and potentially criminal problems as child sexual abuse? For example, is there a need for a totally confidential access service, where children are able to seek advice and gain information about possible lines of action without any pressure to participate in an investigative interview? Such a service could advise children on how they may utilise their existing support networks to effect change. Development of a helpline like ChildLine - perhaps offering a drop-in service too - could be one possibility. Alternative approaches should be explored, such as that offered by the 'confidential doctor' service in the Netherlands and Belgium (Findley, 1987/8; Maneffe, 1992).

Research

Some specific areas for future research have been suggested by the four studies. Firstly, Chapter Two introduced the idea of a tracking study, building upon the research conducted by Sharland et al (1993) and Cross, Whitcomb and De Vos (1995). This would follow children referred for suspected child abuse from their point of entry into the child protection/criminal justice systems and throughout, documenting their experiences and 'outcomes'. A variety of self-report, observational and clinical measures could be used to contrast the experiences of different groups of children (see possible design outlined in Figure 6.1). Of particular importance would be the attempt to examine whether children's eventual 'outcome' (that is, no change in their situation, or a change in their situation for better or worse) is significantly influenced by their experiences within the child protection and criminal justice systems (see Cross et al, 1995; Sharland et al, 1993).

Figure 6.1: Possible Design for a Tracking Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investigation but no MemoInterview</th>
<th>Investigation and MemoInterview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No civil or criminal proceedings</td>
<td>N(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil proceedings only</td>
<td>N(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal proceedings only</td>
<td>N(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal and civil proceedings</td>
<td>N(c)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N(c) represents the number of children.
However, such a study would be extremely complex to carry out, and laden with many
methodological and ethical barriers (refer back to Chapter Two). For example, for each
of the eight groups of children shown in Figure 6.1, experiences could vary dependent
upon whether the original allegation concerned physical or sexual abuse, whether the
abuse was judged to have occurred, whether the child underwent a medical or
psychiatric examination, whether they were offered therapy, whether they themselves
were implicated as a perpetrator as well as victim, whether they had English as a first
language, or any physical or learning impairments, and so on. Given such a large
number of variables a large cohort of children would be required (in itself difficult for
some of the cells in Figure 6.1 as so few cases reach court), and, further, given the
delays endemic in the criminal justice system (Davies et al, 1995; Plotnikoff &
Woolfson, 1995) the timescale for such a project would be considerable. On a resource
basis alone, therefore, this research might be impossible, and the complexity of the
design would certainly make it a daunting project. Further, as Sharland et al (1993)
have observed,

The capacity of the professional intervention process itself to affect outcomes is
often outweighed by characteristics of the case, such as abuse, child or family
factors. (p169)

If such a project itself appears unlikely, the continuing questions surrounding
children's involvement in the child protection and criminal justice systems remain to be
addressed. Following their own tracking research, Cross et al (1995) have called for 'a
new understanding of the prosecution of child sexual abuse', which 'might better serve
justice and the needs of child victims' (p1441). They envisage that within such a
paradigm

Judgements about prosecution would be based on the entire distribution of
outcomes...Attention to cases that are investigated but not prosecuted, or that
end in plea bargains, would be in greater proportion to their numbers. Research
would examine more thoroughly the consequences for children and families of
legal intervention for a wide range of case dispositions in addition to trials.
Finally, professionals and policy makers would devote greater attention to
investigation and alternatives to prosecution in addition to new trial procedures.

(p1441)

How such an understanding may be achieved therefore remains a challenge for researchers, practitioners and policy makers.

Linked to this, the study of children as interviewers indicated that further empirical study of questioning and its relation to responding would be useful. Some basic assumptions about the question-answer relationship were challenged by the results of this study, for example, that open-ended questions lead to detailed responses (see also Hutcheson et al, 1995). Perhaps it is necessary to start comparing questioning strategies and their successfulness with children and with adults, to ensure that what has proved successful with adults is not simply assumed to be successful with children. Collaboration between ‘front line’ practitioners such as police officers and social workers, clinicians and researchers could begin to examine what interviewing techniques work well with which groups of children and why. It might also be useful in this regard to integrate experimental cognitive psychology with educational research (eg Dillon, 1990), and other research strategies, to examine children’s question-and-answer behaviour in natural contexts.

The results of the third study suggested that observation of children’s natural help-seeking behaviour, and their methods of gaining information from peers would be helpful. This was prompted by the differences observed in children’s responses to the hypothetical problems and their reports of actual help-seeking behaviour in similar situations. The social workers’ analyses of the interview transcripts in the second study suggested that there were qualitative differences in the peer-peer interactions compared to the adult-child interviews, and it might be useful to explore such differences with a view to gaining a better insight into children’s help-seeking. There may still be lessons that could usefully be learned by those trying to offer help to children in professional settings.

This study also suggested that the role of friends in child abuse disclosures might be a useful avenue to research, again with a view to enriching the helping services offered to
children. Given the remarks made above concerning a 'radical rethink' of the way child protection services currently operate, it might be that peers could (perhaps do) play an important role in helping children to challenge personal situations that make them unhappy, including possible preparation for investigative interviews and professional intervention where necessary. The findings from this study, and from the help-seeking and social support literature, emphasise what a valuable resource peers can be.

Finally, a more comprehensive study of Memorandum policy, practice and training was proposed following the research in the fourth study, and to some degree such issues would be covered by the tracking research discussed above. It is apparent from the final study that professional perspectives are important, and that the need for continuing debate amongst practitioners, trainers, and policy-makers is great. Crucial to such a debate would be the sharing of perspectives, and a more comprehensive study could perhaps fulfil this role of gathering and sharing relevant information. A variety of sources could be used, including questionnaire surveys, indepth interviews, and an audit of relevant documentation.

Methodological Issues in the Current Research

The preceding chapters have spelt out limitations of the individual studies, but other general issues remain to be addressed. In studying children's perspectives in the current research a range of methodological and ethical problems have been encountered, simply because the participants have been children themselves. These have ranged from the fundamental issues of obtaining parental consent and children's assent, to ensuring that questionnaires and interview protocols are meaningful to children. In attending to such issues, especially in the context of child protection, it is apparent that traditional reporting of psychological research has minimised discussion of the difficulties encountered when researching children (eg Westcott, 1994c). This favours neither children nor researchers (Butler & Williamson, 1994), and hinders the open sharing of experiences which may lead to innovative developments in future research.

In the current series of studies, one notable feature was the frequently idiosyncratic nature of the findings (for example, in children's help-seeking, and in social workers'
judgements of peer versus adult interviewers). If psychologists are to genuinely study children's perspectives then perhaps alternatives to the traditional 'experiment' will have to be re-explored, in order to learn from this idiosyncrasy, rather than find it 'troublesome' or 'irritating'. Qualitative approaches such as observation or discourse analysis may be necessary - adopting such approaches does not imply that any less rigour is advocated in terms of design or analysis (eg Strauss & Corbin, 1990; refer to earlier discussion in Chapter Two).

Although such qualitative approaches may in themselves be useful, they also represent an essential compromise that has shaped the purpose and execution of the four studies. That is, a desire to carry out research that has 'real world' usefulness. Much is made of 'forensic realism' or 'ecological validity' in research carried out in the area of child witnesses, yet many studies are so laboratory-bound that their results have little 'real world' relevance. The opposite dilemma is practice-based research which is so methodologically weak that the results can carry little weight. An attempt has been made in the current research to conduct studies which are both relevant and well constructed. Some methodological weaknesses are no doubt a consequence of this compromise, but again this is an area which receives little attention in the published literature. Certainly, there is room for greater discussion and collaboration between practitioners and researchers (of whatever academic persuasion) to delineate both common areas of concern and mutually acceptable research methodologies. Further, such discussion could encourage psychologists to produce their research findings in formats accessible and useful to practitioners, rather than shrouding their results in statistics and experimental jargon so that they are, at best, mystifying to practitioners working in child protection and criminal investigation. Similarly, practitioners should strive to abandon unnecessary jargon, and to present findings of practice-based research in forums where it will be accessible to their academic colleagues.

Linked to this point, there must now be a debate about the role of research, and its relationship to practice, in the fields of child protection and criminal justice. Where does research go forward and how? Access to children is a key issue. It is increasingly difficult and sometimes impossible - especially if the children have been abused - to reach potential participants, as noted in the research reported in Chapter Two, and as
vociferously stated by a growing number of researchers. There are a number of reasons for this difficulty in reaching children, such as gatekeepers' fears that participation in research will in itself be harmful for children, or that it will 'drag up' difficult past feelings for them, or that their own practice may be subjected to scrutiny. Resources are scarce too, and public criticism of social work in particular cultivates a culture where practitioners and managers feel the need to 'watch their backs'. Hence practitioners are increasingly reluctant and/or unable to facilitate research, despite relying on research findings to inform their work and to justify their decision-making or past actions in court. If this state of affairs continues, research will become outdated and irrelevant. Partly it is the responsibility of individual practitioners to find time to support research, and partly it is the responsibility of management at all levels to ensure adequate resources and a culture which encourages research. Such a culture must respect certain requirements of research, especially respondent confidentiality. For their part, researchers must make greater efforts to ensure that demands on practitioners are minimised, that the research proposals developed relate to current practice issues, and that where possible there are tangible rewards for gatekeepers. As adults, perhaps both practitioners and researchers need reminding that children have a right to speak about their experiences, and to contribute to decisions that will affect them. This includes decisions relating to legal or procedural reforms designed to facilitate the reception of children's testimony, and decisions regarding the development of child protection services.

Ecological Dimensions of Investigative Interviewing

The overall objectives of the four studies, outlined in Chapter One, were to consider children's perspectives and to examine investigative interviewing in a broader framework. These objectives sprung from the ecological framework adopted for the research. Bronfenbrenner (1979) makes the following proposition:

In ecological research, the properties of the person and of the environment, the structure of environmental settings, and the processes taking place within and between them must be viewed as interdependent and analyzed in systems terms.

(p41)
The above review of the four studies, and discussion of their implications, has served to highlight the interdependent nature of work in the area of investigative interviewing, and the value of the ecological framework in making this 'interdependent-ness' clear. For example, one respondent in the survey of Memorandum training made the following comment,

...Both design and delivery of training and operational management of child sexual abuse investigations are bedeviled by the perception that the MOGP is largely ineffective in protecting children or prosecuting offenders - however hard we try to do ‘better’ interviews ... I guess I and others are reluctant to commit time and energy to MOGP work, when it doesn’t seem to be doing any good.

This quotation effectively illustrates the inter-relations. Both individual practice - the interviews - which represent the microsystem, and training and management - the exosystem - are being negatively influenced by the macrosystem - the Memorandum’s failure to achieve protection for children or successful prosecutions. Further, the quotation emphasises the importance of personal perspectives, again in line with the ecological approach. It is the practitioners’ perception of the Memorandum’s ineffectiveness which is influential.

If the ecological approach has provided a useful framework, it has not proved a panacea. The preceding discussions have highlighted the enduring importance of the macrosystem, and it is perhaps in this respect that Bronfenbrenner’s work is - paradoxically - least helpful. Research issues are raised in considering the macrosystem which his approach only partly addresses, more in principle than in practice.

As emphasised throughout this thesis, the criminal justice system exerts a powerful influence over the ways in which children are treated in terms of child protection and investigative interviews. Having highlighted this influence, the question becomes how to research it further. Bronfenbrenner states:
Research on the ecology of human development should include experiments involving the innovative restructuring of prevailing ecological systems in ways that depart from existing institutional ideologies and structures by redefining goals, roles and activities and providing interconnections between systems previously isolated from each other. (1977, p528)

This proposition is intuitively appealing, yet in the current context it is difficult to know how to devise such 'experiments'. Could one experimentally 'restructure' the criminal justice system? The piecemeal approach to change concerning children's testimony shows both that some changes are possible within existing structures (Spencer & Flin, 1993; Murray, 1995), yet also that these changes are insufficient. It is the structures themselves which need to be restructured, something that research alone is unlikely to achieve. Although many researchers and practitioners would welcome the opportunity to drastically restructure the criminal justice system, and evaluate the outcome for children, other vested interests and historical influences make such a venture extremely unlikely if not impossible.

A key concept appears to be that of power (Nelson, in press; Westcott & Jones, in press), but it is difficult for researchers to operationalise such a concept in a meaningful way. For example, a superficial response might be to count the number of male adult figures in the courtroom during a typical child witness case, but such an exercise is unlikely to satisfy many people. Yet for all the difficulties in tackling these kinds of issues, this chapter has shown that they must remain the goal for those researchers, practitioners and policy-makers who seek to safeguard children's welfare in the criminal justice and child protection systems. For, as Bronfenbrenner has stated,

The macrosystem encompasses the blue-print of the ecological environment not only as it is but also as it might become if the present social order were altered. (1979, p289)
Conclusion

It is appropriate that the discussion should have returned to the macrosystem, since this initially set the context for the research studies. Despite the progress that has been achieved for child witnesses, such as the Pigot proposals (Pigot, 1989) and the various reforms of the Criminal Justice Acts 1988 and 1991 (see Chapter One), it is clear that not only has this progress been achieved at some cost to children’s welfare, but that much remains to be done (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1996; Westcott & Jones, in press).

Investigative interviews are but one part of child protection and criminal justice systems which have struggled to prioritise children’s requirements, and it is essential now to evaluate the success of these systems as a whole. In this respect the ecological model is a valuable tool for ensuring that the broader context is considered, and the preceding discussions suggest that this programme of research has achieved its objective of considering investigative interviewing in a wider framework.

Returning to the review of studies above, the research also appears to have achieved the objective of highlighting children’s perspectives. This is most obviously illustrated by the studies of children’s views on investigative interviews, and children’s help-seeking behaviour. Having obtained children’s perspectives the challenge now is to ensure they are acted upon, through collaboration between researchers, practitioners and policy-makers. The comments of one fifteen-year-old interviewed by Roberts and Taylor (1993, p33) provide a fitting final remark:

Don’t just go ahead with the investigation...we’ve got brains and can make decisions. Take account of us. We are people.
APPENDIX ONE: QUESTIONS TO SEXUALLY ABUSED
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CHAPTER TWO)

The following questions were used flexibly in the interviews, the exact grammar or order of presentation being determined on an individual interview basis.

(1) Since people first became aware that something had happened to you - how many interviews with the police, social services or NSPCC have you had?
(2) Think about the first interview you had:
   (a) who were the interviewers?
   (b) was the interview videotaped?
(3) Which interview do you think was the most important?
   (a) why?
   (b) who were the interviewers?
   (c) was the interview videotaped?

EXPLAIN WHICH INTERVIEW WILL BE FOCUS OF RESEARCH INTERVIEW

(4) (a) Where were you interviewed? (If not at home, then 'what was the room like?)
   (b) Did you have any choice about where you were interviewed?
   (c) Did you feel comfortable being interviewed there?
   (d) Where would you have preferred to have been interviewed.
(5) (a) Did you understand why you were being interviewed? What did you think you were being interviewed for?
   (b) Had anybody explained to you what would happen? What did they say?
(6) (a) Who was in the room while you were being interviewed?
   (b) How did you feel about them being there?
   (c) Were you asked who you would like to be in the room or not be in the room with you?
(7) (a) How did the interview begin?
   (b) What were you feeling like then?
(8)  (a) What happened next?
(b) What were you feeling like then?

REPEAT PROMPTS ‘What happened next’ ‘What were you feeling like then?’ UNTIL
END OF INTERVIEW DESCRIBED

(9)  (a) How did the interview end?
(b) What were you feeling like then?

(10)* (a) How long did the interview last for?
(b) How did you feel about the length of the interview?

GO ON TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

(11)  Think of interviewer 1 (identify which from interviewee’s previous descriptions).
(a) What did you like about him/her?
(b) What did you dislike about him/her?
(c) Was it important/not important to like him/her? Why?
(d) Did you feel that he/she believed you? What made you feel like that?
(e) Was the interviewer’s sex important/not important to you? Why?
(f) Was the interviewer’s race/culture important/not important to you? Why?
(g) How many of the interviewer’s questions did you understand? (If not many,
‘What made it difficult to understand? Can you give me an example?’)
(h) How many of the interviewer’s questions could you answer? (If not many,
‘What made it difficult to answer?’)
(i) How difficult were the interviewer’s questions? (If difficult, ‘What made
them difficult?’)

(12)  Think of interviewer 2 (identify).
(a) What did you like about him/her?
(b) What did you dislike about him/her?
(c) Was it important/not important to like him/her? Why?
(d) Did you feel that he/she believed you? What made you feel like that?
(e) Was the interviewer’s sex important/not important to you? Why?
(f) Was the interviewer’s race/culture important/not important to you? Why?
(g) How many of the interviewer’s questions did you understand? (If not many, ‘What made it difficult to understand? Can you give me an example?’)

(h) How many of the interviewer’s questions could you answer? (If not many, ‘What made it difficult to answer?’)

(i) How difficult were the interviewer’s questions? (If difficult, ‘What made them difficult?’)

(13) Was there anything about the interview which you found really helpful? Why?

(14) Was there anything about the interview which you found really unhelpful? Why?

(15) Did anything about the interview itself upset you? Why?

(16) What would have made you feel more comfortable in the interview - made it easier for you to talk about what happened?

(17) If you were the social worker/police officer interviewing you, is there anything you would have done differently? Why?

(18) Did you feel any better or worse about what had happened to you as a result of the interview? Why?

(19) (a) If you had known what the interview was going to be like, would you have gone through with it?

(b) If you knew a friend was in the same position as you, what would you tell him/her to do? Why?

(20) Is there anything else which could make interviews better for other children and young people who are interviewed?

(21)** (a) How do you feel about the interview you have just had with me?

(b) How could it have been improved?

* Responses to this question were often missing, as the young people found it hard to remember. They are not reported.

** Responses to these questions were very favourable, but are not reported.
APPENDIX TWO: BRIEFING INSTRUCTIONS (CHAPTER THREE)

Briefing Interviewees

When collecting 8/9 year old child, to say

"Do you remember the video I showed you? (Pause for response, remind if don't remember) Well, I'd like to take you to meet another boy/girl who hasn't seen it, and s/he has to find out what happened in the video. Would you mind talking to him/her for a little while? (Pause for response, if child says 'no', thank and return immediately to class)"

When collecting older children, to say

"Do you remember the video I showed you? (Pause for response, remind if don't remember) Well, would you mind discussing it with someone else for a short while? They haven't seen it, and have to find out what happened on the video. (Pause for response, if child/young person objects, thank and return to class)"

Briefing Interviewers

For 8/9 year old children, to say

"Some other children in your school saw a video today/yesterday about something happening at another school, and if you agree, I'd like you to talk to a boy/girl about the video and find out what happened in it. Do you think you could do that? (Pause for response, if child says 'no', thank and return to class) Would you mind talking to someone about the video? (Pause for response, if child says 'yes', thank and return to class)"
OK. It's important for you to get as much detail as you can, so that afterwards you can tell me everything you've found out. But don't worry, it's not a test, I just want you to try the best you can. Try to find out exactly what happened at the school on the video.

Do you see these cards? They can help remind you what to ask about. This card shows some people (hold card up), so remember to ask about people at the school. This one (hold up) shows some people talking to each other, remember to ask about what people said at the school. This last card shows something happening (hold up) - what do you think it is? Remember to ask about what things happened at the school.

OK. Do you understand what I want you to do? (Pause for response) Is there anything you want to ask me? (Pause for response)"

For older children and adults, to say:

"Some other children/young people in your school saw a video today/yesterday about something happening at another school, and if you agree, I'd like you to talk to a boy/girl about the video and find out what happened in it. Is that OK? (Pause for response, if child says 'no', thank and return to class)

OK. It's important for you to get as much detail as you can, so that afterwards you can tell me everything you've found out. It's not a test, I just want you to do your best. Try to find out exactly what happened at the school on the video.

I have some cards which can remind you what to ask about. Please excuse my drawing! This card shows some people (hold card up), so ask about people at the school. This one (hold card up) shows some people talking to each other, remember to ask about what people said at the school. This last
card shows something happening (hold up), so ask about what things happened at the school.

OK. Do you understand what I want you to do. (Pause for response) Is there anything you want to ask me? (Pause for response)"  

Interview

Introduce children/young people/adults. Ask if children remember what they have been asked to do? Remind interviewer to ask about what happened on the video, and interviewee to talk about the video with interviewer. Explain that the interview will be tape recorded so that later we can listen to what they said to each other. Check both OK, start tape recorder and leave room.

Once interview naturally stops, or after 10 minutes (whichever is first), stop tape recorder. Thank both children, ask interviewer to stay behind, take interviewee outside room and debrief. Return interviewee to class.

Back to interviewer, start tape recorder and ask general questions. Debrief interviewer and return to class.
APPENDIX THREE: INSTRUCTIONS TO SOCIAL WORKERS
AND RATING SHEET (CHAPTER THREE)

Thank you for agreeing to help out with my research. Attached are 12 interview transcripts, which are all very brief as you will see. Half of the transcripts are from interviews where a child or young person was interviewed by an adult, and half stem from interviews where the child/young person was interviewed by a peer the same age as themselves. In all cases, the interviewers are trying to find out what happened during a short video which the interviewees saw prior to being interviewed. The interviewers were briefed to find out as much as possible (you may find this surprising when you see the transcripts!), but the only guidance given to them was in the form of three prompt cartoon cards, depicting people, conversations and events. The cards would hopefully remind the interviewers to ask about each of these categories, as explained in the briefing given to interviewers. No other instructions about ‘how’ to interview, or what questions to ask, were given.

Each transcript shows the age of the child being interviewed. Interviewers’ questions are marked with an ‘Q’ and the interviewees’ responses are marked with an ‘A’.

I would like you to read through each transcript and answer the questions on the last (yellow) page of each. The same questions are asked after each transcript - I ask you to rate the age-appropriateness of the interviewer’s language, and to tell me whether you think the interviewer is a child or an adult, and why. I hope it will take you no longer than an hour to respond to all 12 interviews.

Please feel free to keep the transcripts if you wish, but please return all the yellow answer sheets to me in the SAE provided. Make sure you also return the ‘Personal Information Sheet’ with your answers. I hope you don’t mind giving me this information, but I need it for my write-up. YOUR NAMES AND IDENTITY WILL NOT BE REVEALED. Once I receive your answer sheets, I will send you a list telling you which ones were adult or child/young person interviews, so you can compare your responses. If you’re interested, I will also send you a copy of the research findings later on.
Q1. Please estimate what percentage of the interviewer's questions, in your opinion, were age-appropriate for the age of the child being interviewed (Please tick one box):

0-25% □
26-50% □
51-75% □
76-100% □

Q2. Please indicate whether you think the interviewer is an adult or a child/young person (Please tick one box):

Adult interviewer □
Child/Young Person interviewer □

Q3. Please give up to 5 reasons for your decision in Q2:

Reason 1: ........................................................................................................................................
Reason 2: ........................................................................................................................................
Reason 3: ........................................................................................................................................
Reason 4: ........................................................................................................................................
Reason 5: ........................................................................................................................................

Thank you!
APPENDIX FOUR: QUESTIONNAIRES (CHAPTER FOUR)

In the following questionnaires, the text and layout remains unchanged. However, the original questionnaires had a front page printed on NSPCC headed paper, were personalised with the name of the school and were printed on green paper.
RESEARCH PROJECT

PRIMARY SCHOOL
Thank you for agreeing to help with our project. We are trying to find out who children and young people talk to about things that might be worrying them.

This booklet contains four short stories and asks you some questions about each story. This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. I want you to read Story 1 and then answer the questions about Story 1. Next read Story 2 and answer the questions about Story 2. Do the same for Stories 3 and 4. At the end of the booklet there are a few other questions about talking to people which I would like you to answer.

If you don't understand what I am asking you to do please tell me. Also, tell me if you don't know what any of the words mean. Please try to answer the questions as truthfully as you can.

You don't need to tell me your name, but please tell me:

how old you are..............

whether you are a boy or a girl...........

what language you speak at school........................................

what language you speak at home...........................................

Thank you very much for your help, and good luck!
STORY 1

Bhasker was walking home from school slowly. He kept doing very badly in maths, and was afraid of looking silly in front of his friends. Bhasker didn’t like maths, and he didn’t know what to do.

1. If you were Bhasker, how would you be feeling?
   .....................................................................................................................
   .............................................................................................................

2. If you were Bhasker, who would you talk to about how you were feeling?
   1st Choice: .............................................................................................................
   2nd Choice: .............................................................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?
   .............................................................................................................
   .............................................................................................................
   .............................................................................................................

4a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
   Yes □   No □

b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
   Yes □  (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below)  No □  (Please answer question (e) below)

  c. If you did tell, who did you tell?
     .............................................................................................................
     .............................................................................................................

  d. Why did you tell that person
     .............................................................................................................
     .............................................................................................................

  e. If you didn’t tell anyone, why not?
     .............................................................................................................
     .............................................................................................................
STORY 2

Sarah was playing with her skipping rope in the playground. Suddenly some girls came and stood around her, laughing. They were bigger than Sarah and they pulled her skipping rope off her, and ran away with it. Sarah ran after the other girls but she couldn't catch up with them.

1. If you were Sarah, how would you be feeling?
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

2. If you were Sarah, who would you talk to about what had happened?
   1st Choice............................................................................................................................
   2nd Choice............................................................................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

4.a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
   Yes □  No □

4.b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
   Yes □  No □
   (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below)

4.c. If you did tell, who did you tell?
   ........................................................................................................................................

4.d. Why did you tell that person?
   ........................................................................................................................................

4.e. If you didn't tell anyone, why not?
   ........................................................................................................................................
Christine was hiding from Laura and the others. They had caught her at playtime and told her they were going to batter her. Laura said Christine had been calling her names, but it wasn't true. Christine didn't know what to do.

1. If you were Christine, how would you be feeling?

2. If you were Christine, who would you talk to about what had happened?
   1st Choice: ............................................................................................................
   2nd Choice: ............................................................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?

4.a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
   Yes □  No □

   b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
      Yes □  (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below)  No □  (Please answer question (e) below)

   c. If you did tell, who did you tell?

   d. Why did you tell that person?

   e. If you didn't tell anyone, why not?
Robert was sitting by himself on his bed upstairs. Downstairs he could hear his mum and dad shouting at each other. Robert began to cry, he was frightened they might break up.

1. If you were Robert, how would you be feeling?

2. If you were Robert, who would you talk to about how you were feeling?
   1st Choice: .................................................................
   2nd Choice: .................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?

4.a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
    Yes ☐ No ☐

b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
    Yes ☐ (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below) No ☐ (Please answer question (e) below)

c. If you did tell, who did you tell?

4.d. Why did you tell that person?

4.e. If you didn't tell anyone, why not?

WHO MAKES A GOOD LISTENER ABOUT PROBLEMS AT HOME AND SCHOOL?

1. Think of someone who really listens to you when you have problems with your school friends. Who is that person, and why are they a good listener?

2. Think of someone who really listens to you when you have problems with your parents. Who is that person, and why are they a good listener?

3. Think of someone who really listens to you when you have problems with your teacher. Who is that person, and why are they a good listener?

4. How can you tell that someone is really listening to you? (PLEASE TICK ANY BOXES THAT YOU WANT)
   - The things they say to you
   - The way they say things to you
   - The way they look at you
   - The things they do to help you after you have spoken to them

5. How would you show someone you were really listening to them?
6.a. If you tell someone about a problem that is worrying you, do you want them to: (PLEASE TICK ANY BOXES YOU WANT, BUT PUT A 1 BY THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE)

☐ Just listen to what you say
☐ Keep it a secret - not tell anyone
☐ Tell someone else about your problem
☐ Tell someone else, but only if they have asked you first
☐ Tell you what to do
☐ Do something to help you

b. Does the type of help depend on whether it is a problem at home or school?
Yes ☐  No ☐

7. Is there anything else you would like to say - about talking to people, listening to people, or about the questionnaire?

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP
RESEARCH PROJECT

HIGH SCHOOL
Thank you for agreeing to help with our project. We are trying to find out who young people talk to about things that are bothering them.

This booklet contains four short stories and asks you some questions about each one. This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. Please read Story 1 and then answer the questions about it. Do the same for Stories 2 to 4. At the end of the booklet there are a few other questions about talking to people which I would like you to answer.

Let me know if you don't understand what I am asking you to do or if you have any problems. Please be as honest as possible.

This booklet is anonymous; I don't want you to give me your name. Please tell me:

your age..............................................

your gender (male/female)........................

language you speak at school..............................

language you speak at home..............................

Thank you very much for your help.
STORY 1

Bhasker was hiding from his friends. They had started smoking recently, and kept on at him to start too. He wondered what they would say or do if he didn't join in smoking with them.

1. If you were Bhasker, how would you be feeling?

2. If you were Bhasker, who would you talk to about how you were feeling?
   1st Choice: ...............................................................................................................
   2nd Choice: ..............................................................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?

4.a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
   Yes ☐ No ☐

4.b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
   Yes ☐ (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below) No ☐ (Please answer question (e) below)

4.c. If you did tell, who did you tell?

4.d. Why did you tell that person?

4.e. If you didn't tell anyone, why not?

STORY2

Sarah had been bullied on the way home. A group of girls from her class had kicked and punched her, and she was pretty shaken up. She was frightened of them doing it again, but worried about what would happen if she told on them. She didn't know what to do.

1. If you were Sarah, how would you be feeling?

2. If you were Sarah, who would you talk to about what had happened?
   1st Choice: ........................................................................................................
   2nd Choice: .......................................................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?

4.a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
   Yes □  No □

   b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
      Yes □  (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below)  No □  (Please answer question (e) below)

   c. If you did tell, who did you tell?

   d. Why did you tell that person?

   e. If you didn't tell anyone, why not?
Christine left the classroom. Her teacher had asked her to stay behind after the others left, and he had really spoken down to her about her work. It was the way he talked to her - it was so annoying.

1. If you were Christine, how would you be feeling?

2. If you were Christine, who would you talk to about how you were feeling?
   1st Choice: ................................................................................................................
   2nd Choice: .............................................................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?

4.a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
   Yes ☐  No ☐

   b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
      Yes ☐  (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below)  No ☐  (Please answer question (e) below)

   c. If you did tell, who did you tell?

   d. Why did you tell that person?

   e. If you didn't tell anyone, why not?
Robert was sitting by himself on his bed upstairs. Downstairs he could hear his mum and dad really shouting at each other. Robert began to cry, he was frightened they might break up.

1. If you were Robert, how would you be feeling?

2. If you were Robert, who would you talk to about how you were feeling?
   1st Choice: ............................................................................................................
   2nd Choice: ............................................................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?

4. a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
   Yes □ No □

   b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
      Yes □ (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below) No □ (Please answer question (e) below)

   c. If you did tell, who did you tell?

   d. Why did you tell that person?

   e. If you didn't tell anyone, why not?
WHO MAKES A GOOD LISTENER ABOUT PROBLEMS AT HOME AND SCHOOL?

1. Think of someone who really listens to you when you have problems with your school friends. Who is that person, and why are they a good listener?

2. Think of someone who really listens to you when you have problems with your parents. Who is that person, and why are they a good listener?

3. Think of someone who really listens to you when you have problems with your teacher. Who is that person, and why are they a good listener?

4. How can you tell that someone is really listening to you? (PLEASE TICK ANY BOXES THAT YOU WANT)
   - The things they say to you
   - The way they say things to you
   - The way they look at you
   - The things they do to help you after you have spoken to them

5. How would you show someone you were really listening to them?
6.a. If you tell someone about a problem that is worrying you, do you want them to: (PLEASE TICK ANY BOXES YOU WANT, BUT PUT A 1 BY THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE)

☐ Just listen to what you say
☐ Keep it a secret - not tell anyone
☐ Tell someone else about your problem
☐ Tell someone else, but only if they have asked you first
☐ Tell you what to do
☐ Do something to help you

6.b. Does the type of help depend on whether it is a problem at home or school?

Yes □  No □

7. Is there anything else you would like to say - about talking to people, listening to people, or about the questionnaire?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP
RESEARCH PROJECT

COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Thank you for agreeing to help with our project. We are trying to find out who young people talk to about things that are bothering them.

This booklet contains four short stories and asks you some questions about each one. This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. Please read Story 1 and then answer the questions about it. Do the same for Stories 2 to 4. At the end of the booklet there are a few other questions about talking to people which I would like you to answer.

Let me know if you don't understand what I am asking you to do or if you have any problems. Please be as honest as possible.

This booklet is anonymous, I don't want you to give me your name. Please tell me:

your age.........................
your gender (male/female)..........................
language you speak at school..........................
language you speak at home..........................

Thank you very much for your help.
STORY 1

Christine left the classroom. Her teacher had asked her to stay behind after the others left, and he had really spoken down to her about her work. It was the way he talked to her - it was so annoying.

1. If you were Christine, how would you be feeling?

2. If you were Christine, who would you talk to about how you were feeling?
   1st Choice: ..................................................................................................................
   2nd Choice: ................................................................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?

4. a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
   Yes □  No □

   b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
      Yes □  (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below)  No □  (Please answer question (e) below)

   c. If you did tell, who did you tell?

   d. Why did you tell that person?

   e. If you didn't tell anyone, why not?
Sarah had been bullied on the way home. A group of girls from her class had kicked and punched her, and she was pretty shaken up. She was frightened of them doing it again, but worried about what would happen if she told on them. She didn’t know what to do.

1. If you were Sarah, how would you be feeling?

2. If you were Sarah, who would you talk to about what had happened?
   1st Choice: .................................................................
   2nd Choice: .................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?

4.a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
   Yes ☐  No ☐

b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
   Yes ☐  (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below)  No ☐  (Please answer question (e) below)

c. If you did tell, who did you tell?


d. Why did you tell that person?


e. If you didn’t tell anyone, why not?

.................................................................
Bhasker was listening to some tapes in his bedroom. He was upset and didn't know what to do with himself. He had just found out that his grandfather had died, and he was unsure about going to the funeral.

1. If you were Bhasker, how would you be feeling?

2. If you were Bhasker, who would you talk to about what had happened?
   1st Choice: ............................................................................................................
   2nd Choice: ..........................................................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?

4.a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
   Yes □  No □

4.b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
   Yes □ (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below)  No □ (Please answer question (e) below)

4.c. If you did tell, who did you tell?

4.d. Why did you tell that person?

4.e. If you didn't tell anyone, why not?
STORY 4

Robert was sitting by himself on his bed upstairs. Downstairs he could hear his mum and dad shouting at each other. Robert began to cry, he was frightened they might break up.

1. If you were Robert, how would you be feeling?

2. If you were Robert, who would you talk to about how you were feeling?
   1st Choice: ............................................................................................................
   2nd Choice: ............................................................................................................

3. Why would you tell that person?

4.a. Has something like this ever happened to you? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX)
   Yes □  No □

   b. If it has, did you tell anyone?
      Yes □  No □ (Please answer questions (c) and (d) below)

   c. If you did tell, who did you tell?

   d. Why did you tell that person?

   e. If you didn’t tell anyone, why not?
WHO MAKES A GOOD LISTENER ABOUT PROBLEMS AT HOME AND SCHOOL?

1. Think of someone who really listens to you when you have problems with your school friends. Who is that person, and why are they a good listener?

2. Think of someone who really listens to you when you have problems with your parents. Who is that person, and why are they a good listener?

3. Think of someone who really listens to you when you have problems with your teacher. Who is that person, and why are they a good listener?

4. How can you tell that someone is really listening to you? (Please tick any boxes that you want)
   - The things they say to you
   - The way they say things to you
   - The way they look at you
   - The things they do to help you after you have spoken to them

5. How would you show someone you were really listening to them?
6.a. If you tell someone about a problem that is worrying you, do you want them to: (PLEASE TICK ANY BOXES YOU WANT, BUT PUT A 1 BY THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE)

☐ Just listen to what you say
☐ Keep it a secret - not tell anyone
☐ Tell someone else about your problem
☐ Tell someone else, but only if they have asked you first
☐ Tell you what to do
☐ Do something to help you

b. Does the type of help depend on whether it is a problem at home or school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Is there anything else you would like to say - about talking to people, listening to people, or about the questionnaire?

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP
APPENDIX FIVE: HELPER SHEET (CHAPTER FOUR)

People Who Might Help

Mum  Best friend (girl)  Pet
Dad  Best friend (boy)  Toy
Sister  Friends (girls)  ChildLine
Brother  Friends (boys)
Grandmother  Teacher (woman)
Grandfather  Teacher (man)
Aunt  Priest
Uncle  Counsellor

No one

Someone Else
APPENDIX SIX: QUESTIONNAIRE (CHAPTER FIVE)

QUESTIONNAIRE ON MEMORANDUM TRAINING IN ACPCS

1. Training Content

1.1 Please rate how successfully overall each of the following areas was covered in your training (circle the number or tick the box which applies).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Very successful</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Very unsuccessful</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Not included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Step-by-step guide to Memorandum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Agency roles and relationships</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Legal requirements in the interview</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Technical requirements</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Practice with video equipment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Planning the video interview</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Conducting the interview (theory)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Conducting the interview (practice eg role play)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Child development</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) Anti-discriminatory practice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) Criteria for conducting a Memorandum interview</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2. Which materials were used in the training provided? (Please tick as many as apply)

- Open University Pack 'Investigative Interviewing with Children'
- 'ABCD' Pack
- Child Witness Pack (for children and carers)
- Other (specify) ______________

2. Training Format

2.1. On what basis was joint training offered? (Please answer separately for the training which was offered initially, and for the training that is currently offered, by ticking the appropriate box for each)

Initial training Current training

- One-off course over a specified number of days (Please write in number of days)
- One-off initial and follow-up courses
- Day release
- Other specify) ____________________________
2.2 How do you monitor and assess the performance of trained professionals? *Please answer separately for social workers and police officers, by ticking any that apply for each*)

**Social workers**  
- □ Performance evaluation during training course
- □ Evaluation of practice after training course
- □ Assessment of videotaped *Memorandum* interviews

**Police officers**

2.3 Does your training include criteria for course participants? *Please answer separately for social workers and police officers by ticking any that apply for each*)

**Social workers**
- □ Selection criteria
- □ Rejection criteria

**Police officers**

3. **Issues for Trainers**

Below are some statements that have been made about *Memorandum* training. Considering your experiences, please rate how much you agree or disagree with each one of them, by circling the number or ticking the box which applies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Too few police officers are trained</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Videotapes of <em>Memorandum</em> interviews should be routinely used in training</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) There should be more emphasis on child development</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Too many social workers are trained</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) There should be more emphasis on actually 'doing' the interview</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Too few managers are trained</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) There should be more training on interviews with children whose first language is not English</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) There should be a nationwide curriculum for training on the <em>Memorandum</em></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) There is not enough training on how to interview disabled children</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) There should be national standards (eg NVQs) for training on the <em>Memorandum</em></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) Trainers are not adequately prepared and supported for the task of training</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 4. General Interviewing Issues

Below are some general statements about investigative interviewing. Considering your experiences, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each one of them, by ticking the box which applies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Police Officers are more experienced than social workers in leading <em>Memorandum</em> interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Generally children prefer female interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Investigative interviews are very stressful for children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Interviewers should be able to behave more supportively towards children in <em>Memorandum</em> interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Children should receive better preparation for <em>Memorandum</em> interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Evidential requirements for detailed information in <em>Memorandum</em> interviews are difficult for children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 5. About Your ACPC

a) Name of ACPC ____________________________ (Please note this is for research purposes only. Individual ACPCs will not be identified in any reports)

b) *Memorandum* training was funded by (Please tick any that apply)
- [ ] Social services
- [ ] Police
- [ ] Other ____________________________ (specify)

c) *Memorandum* training was designed by (Please tick any that apply)
- [ ] Social services
- [ ] Police
- [ ] Other ____________________________ (specify)

d) *Memorandum* training is available to (Please tick any that apply)
- [ ] ‘Frontline’ social workers
- [ ] Social services managers
- [ ] ‘Frontline’ police officers
- [ ] Senior police officers
- [ ] Other ____________________________ (specify)

e) Approximately how many professionals have been trained? (Please write in numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>‘Frontline’ social workers</th>
<th>Social services managers</th>
<th>‘Frontline’ police officers</th>
<th>Senior police officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
6. About You

*Please note this information is required for research purposes only, individuals will not be identified in any reports*

a) Age ________

b) □ Male □ Female

c) In what role are you completing this questionnaire? *(Please tick box that applies)*

□ Police Trainer responsible for  □ Social Services Trainer responsible for  
□ ACPC Training Co-ordinator  □ Other _____________________ *(specify)*

Memorandum interviewing

□ Police Trainer responsible for Memorandum interviewing

□ ACPC Training Co-ordinator

□ Other _____________________ *(specify)*

□ Police

□ Social services

□ Probation

□ Other

Memorandum interviewing

d) Professional background *(Please tick as many as apply)*

□ Social services

□ Probation

□ Police

□ Other

Memorandum interviewing

THANK YOU for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It is much appreciated. Please return it in the S.A.E. enclosed as soon as possible, and no later than 6 October 1995. If you have any queries, please ring Helen Westcott on 0171 825 2759.

If you would like to make any comments, please use the space below, or attach any additional sheets.
APPENDIX SEVEN: LIST OF TOPICS FOR INTERVIEWS
(CHAPTER FIVE)

1. Training Content and Format  
   eg issues covered

2. Assessment and Monitoring  
   eg methods of evaluating training and performance

3. Standards of Training and Performance  
   eg accreditation

4. Inter-agency Issues  
   eg joint working

5. Evaluation of Training and Review  
   eg comparison to other training
REFERENCES


Confidence is the first step in the march against abuse. (1994, October 14). *Times Education Supplement*.


ACTIONS/EVENTS
CONVERSATION
Did you see that programme on Telly last night?

No, I was out with my friends.
PEOPLE