



‘JUST SAY IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS’

**THE SOCIAL INTERACTIONAL NATURE OF
INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWS INTO CHILD
SEXUAL ABUSE**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Combined Master of Psychology (Clinical)/Doctor of Philosophy

April 2010

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Finding the research question

Investigative interviewing of children about alleged sexual abuse has been the focus of a great deal of research. Whilst it is a diverse field, the binding thread in most of this research is to find the best possible way to interview children so as to maximise the detection and prosecution of genuine cases of child sexual abuse and minimise or eliminate false ones.

As I began reading across the different bodies of research related to investigative interviewing, it became clear that for the most part there was an overwhelming focus on the role that the interviewer plays in producing a quality investigative interview. A quality interview is one that, ideally, elicits a clear account from the child upon which decisions to prosecute, or not prosecute, can be made. It also means an interview that, should it make a finding that the allegation is true, will be robust against accusations from defence lawyers that something about the way the interview was conducted casts doubt upon the veracity of the child's evidence.

I found myself wondering about the image this seemed to conjure of the controlling interviewer who, if they could just get the format right, would elicit the required detail from the passive child. Because of my interest in conversation analysis - the study of people talking in interaction - I was attuned to how interdependent interlocutors are when it comes to getting things done in and through talk. Thus, it seemed to me that although a skilled interviewer might have more success at navigating the difficulties that might come up during an interview - a shy, distracted, or embarrassed child who is reticent to talk, for

instance – there was still a sense in which the role that the child plays in producing what comes to be seen as a quality interview was not given enough emphasis in the literature. Specifically, I mean the child’s ability to talk and to be responsive in an interactional setting such as an interview.

Although they were writing about social science interviews and not sexual abuse interviews, Holstein and Gubrium (1995) make the point that when interviews are conducted from a positivist stance, it is as though the interviewer believes the information they are trying to get from the person is ~~held~~ uncontaminated by the subject’s vessel of answers. The trick is to formulate questions and provide an atmosphere conducive to open and undistorted communication between the interviewer and respondent” (p.9).

MacMartin (1999) argues that this vessel of answers metaphor is apt when thinking about the way that children’s disclosures of sexual abuse are typically understood but notes how most of the frameworks conceptualising children’s disclosures invariably ~~neglect~~ the relational context of disclosure by which two or more people shape, negotiate and define an emerging account of sexual abuse” (p. 509). This also applies to the way child sexual abuse interviews are conceptualised in the literature, with great emphasis placed on the interviewer’s skill in asking questions in a way that will elicit the child’s evidence but not spoil that evidence through clumsy or coercive questioning techniques.

The present study takes the method of conversation analysis (CA) and applies it to a set of child sexual abuse interviews to show that children are not like vessels of answers, pouring out their contents untainted if the interviewer asks questions in some abstracted, ideal, formatted way. Rather, as participants to an investigative interview, children are

first and foremost social beings engaged in a special form of social interaction. Therefore, we can expect to see them attending through their talk to a range of socially oriented concerns, which are likely to include being, and being seen to be, competent, truthful, polite, helpful, likeable and moral human beings. I contend that instead of seeing these kinds of socially oriented concerns as something that needs to be minimised in order to have the best chance of accessing the truth, we instead need to understand that such concerns are pervasively present, even when the very best practice interview methods are used. If we accept that children (and interviewers) are engaged in doing social actions with their talk within these interviews together with delivering facts about their experience, then we can begin to ask some new kinds of questions about what constitutes a quality investigative interview.

1.2. Aims of the research

This research has several aims. First, I aim to explore some of the interactional practices of police interviewers who conduct investigative interviews with children about alleged sexual abuse. For the most part I focus on illustrating the conversational competence that interviewers show as they balance the practical objectives of an investigative interview with the social objectives of helping children feel at ease enough to talk about what has happened to them.

Second, I aim to demonstrate how an interview needs to be seen as a joint product of responsive conversational turn-taking between the interviewer and the child and not merely the product of a skilful interviewer. This is an important aim to redress the image of the interviewer as inordinately responsible for the way the interview unfolds. Whilst the interviewer's lead role in directing the interview is undeniable, it is important to show

that children are active participants who generate conversational contingencies that interviewers must respond to. The degree to which they succeed in this responsiveness to children's turns at talk is, of course, an important part of what comes to be deemed a quality interview.

Third, it is hoped that relevant findings can be applied to training settings for police, psychologists, child protection workers and others tasked with investigating allegations of sexual abuse, or other crimes involving children as witnesses.

Finally, it is an express aim that the research findings are extended to child interviewing in other contexts, in particular within clinical assessment and therapeutic settings, since these are also settings where children are often being questioned about difficult or sensitive topics.

1.3. Choosing to study investigative interviews into child sexual abuse

Often when I hear someone present their research I wonder what brought them to that particular topic. People's reasons are sometimes pragmatic I realise but I find myself feeling curious about the person's motivations when there is something confronting about the topic (suicide, child abuse, domestic violence). It is, of course, an unaskable question, or at least I have never been brave enough to ask. So, for the curious, I offer my own motivations.

At the end of my Honours years a young baby within my extended family was seriously injured at home by his mother's boyfriend and later died of those injuries in hospital. I was profoundly affected by this up-close experience of children's vulnerability. My initial

thoughts went to action-research focused on young mothers and babies at risk of domestic violence. However, my strong interest in conversation analysis and the study of social interaction opened up the area of child abuse investigations, since one of my supervisors had experience in that area of child protection. Initially we approached one of the Child Protection Services in Adelaide that was responsible for interviewing children younger than 7 years old in cases of suspected sexual abuse. For various reasons, they did not feel they could participate and, hence, I approached the Sexual Crimes Investigation Branch of the South Australian Police (SAPOL). A detective there listened to my ideas, saw merit in the project and advocated on my behalf to those charged with permitting research using SAPOL data. Thus, this project in its current form is the product of a galvanising personal experience that steered me toward the child protection field, coupled with an interest in examining that field through a particular methodological lens.

1.4. Overview of thesis

So far I have outlined how I came to this particular topic and the aims of the research. In **chapter 2**, I describe the theoretical approaches of conversation analysis and discursive psychology that inform the thesis, as well as describing how the data were accessed and analysed, along with the associated ethical issues and how these were addressed.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the main research topics that comprise the investigative interviewing literature. This is useful background to the reader unfamiliar with the field but more importantly it brings into focus that there is an overriding emphasis on the interviewer as the one in control, with the child positioned as the more passive party. I divide the research into that which looks at children's reliability as witnesses, patterns of disclosure and field studies. At the end of the chapter, I describe

conversation analytic research applied to children interacting in child protection and interview settings, which most approximates my own research.

Chapter 4 sets out the core conversation analytic concepts that I will be referring to regularly throughout the thesis so as not to interrupt the analytic writing needlessly with lengthy explanations.

Chapter 5 is the first of the analytic chapters. I examine moments in the data corpus where interviewers move from the rapport building stage to the substantive part of the interview. Specifically, I focus on how interviewers deal with the particular contingencies that children's responses at this particular point present to them in order to progress the activity at hand, which is to firstly elicit some kind of disclosure from the child that provides grounds for going on to question them about the alleged perpetrator and event(s).

Chapter 6 extends the previous chapter to look at those parts of interviews where interviewers are trying to establish in detail what sexual acts have been perpetrated on the child or, conversely, what the child has been made to do to the perpetrator. Specifically, I examine some of the ways that interviewers demonstrate responsiveness to the child's discomfort at these moments, and the things interviewers do that appear to help restore a degree of progressivity to the interaction. A primary focus is on how props such as body diagrams and children's drawings can function to assist a child who seems reticent to disclose the details of what happened to them to start interacting once again.

Whilst chapters 5 and 6 focus more upon the things that interviewers are doing in response to the contingencies that children's talk and visible behaviours create in the

interaction, chapters 7 and 8 bring into focus the socially oriented concerns that children are expressing in and through their talk.

In **chapter 7** I look at children's epistemic claims: how it is that children formulate their claims to know or remember things or, conversely, not to know or remember things. I argue that examining how children formulate their epistemic claims in this way reveals that children engage in active work in interaction to represent the extent of their knowing or remembering precisely.

In **chapter 8**, the final analytic chapter, I focus on moments during the interviews where children's talk is concerned with the moral matter of their own response to the perpetrator at the time of an abusive incident. Specifically, I examine moments where children are delivering accounts about their own agency in stopping the perpetrator's abuse of them or, conversely, accounting for why they could not make it stop. I argue that the fact that children find these accounts necessary, at these precise points in the interaction, suggests that they bring to the interaction an understanding that the arena of sexual abuse contains a moral assumption that the victim should not have had any agency in initiating or willingly participating in the types of activities that constitute sexual abuse. Furthermore, children's talk surrounding this topic implies that they sense some kind of moral imperative that they should have at least tried to make it stop. In other words, children come to these interviews as moral agents.

In **chapter 9** I summarise the findings of the four analytic chapters and consider the implications of the research for investigative interviewing as well as for interviewing children in other contexts, such as clinical assessment and therapy settings.

I turn now to the theoretical and methodological approaches informing this research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical approach and methodology

2.1. Discursive psychology and conversation analysis

The theoretical approach adopted in this thesis is informed by discursive psychology and conversation analysis. Discursive psychology (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 1992) takes a stance toward cognition and language that is radically different to mainstream psychology. Modern psychology has for the most part adopted a cognitivist paradigm, with its basic premise ~~that~~ we start with a given, external world, which is then perceived and processed, and *then put into words*" (Edwards, 1997, p. 19).

As Edwards (2006) notes, the essential difference between a cognitivist and discursive approach to psychology is the status given to discourse or language. Cognitive psychology assumes, for instance, that language provides ~~the~~ input to, or output from, or categories and schemas used in, mental models and processes" (Edwards, 2006, p. 42). In plain terms, cognitivism theorises language as the thing that mediates the exchange between what is ~~under~~ "under the skull" or ~~in~~ "in the mind" and what is in the outside world. Thus, from this cognitivist stance it makes sense to treat language as a methodological resource for ~~getting at~~ "getting at" people's mental states and mental representations: their attitudes, schemas, measurable levels of depressive symptoms and so on. In a great deal of psychological research, therefore, interview data is treated, more or less, as a window into people's inner cognitive world.

By making language or discourse the main site of interest, discursive psychology reconceptualises this cognitivist account of the relationship between cognition and language, adopting the position that explanations for what people say and do cannot be

reduced to cognitive processes alone. Typical discursive psychological research instead focuses on how people *use* cognitive concepts (e.g. perception, memories, attitudes, emotions) in their descriptions of mind as part of doing things in interaction with others. As such, researchers within the field of discursive psychology –[move] *both* the *analytic* and *explanatory* focus from cognitive processes and entities, to discursive practices and the resources they draw on” (Potter, 1998, p. 235-236).

In its project to reformulate traditional understandings of cognition and the relationship between cognition and language, discursive psychology takes its theoretical influences from ethnomethodology, the sociology of scientific knowledge, rhetoric and post-structuralism, as well as conversation analysis (Potter & Edwards, 2001). Driven by Harvey Sacks’ (1995a) original insights in the 1960s and 1970s, conversation analytic research over the past 40 years has illuminated two important properties of –talk” (shorthand for social interaction or talk-in-interaction), which challenge the idea of talk simply being a *medium for thought* and instead make talk an object for study in its own right.

Firstly, talk is action-oriented: people –do” things in talk. So, instead of language simply being the mode of transmitting thoughts from one mind to another mind, conversation analysts and discursive psychologists observe that people’s utterances are doing particular actions within a *sequence* of interaction, and these things are not merely straightforward reflections of underlying cognitive events or objects like attitudes, memories, or emotions that precede and thus cause the utterance.

Secondly, talk is organised sequentially. People take turns at talking and an interaction can be viewed as a sequence of turns, each turn being connected to the prior turn as

people display their understanding to one another of what is *going on*, or what is *getting done* at any particular moment in the interaction. This is important from the perspective of the analyst trying to decipher what action is being performed by a speaker's turn at talk because in order to do so the analyst must focus on how the interlocutors are interpreting one another, which can only be determined by examining the surrounding talk. Critically, the immediate context for one speaker's turn at talk is the immediately prior turn by the previous speaker and it is this sequential feature of interaction, specifically, the way it reveals to the analyst how people are interpreting one another's talk, turn-by-turn, that allows conversation analysts to justify their findings as empirically grounded.¹

Fundamentally, conversation analytic research sheds light on how people establish shared meaning when interacting together and demonstrates that this meaning-making project is ongoing for as long as the interaction lasts. Turn-by-conversational-turn, people display their understanding of the prior person's meaning in their next turn at talk. If they display misunderstanding, then this misunderstanding is itself visible in the next turn of the person who was misunderstood via their effort to restore understanding through a process known as repair.

This unrelenting focus on what gets displayed in people's talk, without recourse to cognition, is very challenging for the *vessel of answers* conception of what goes on in an interview situation. If we turn our attention back to investigative interviews, instead of conceptualising the child witness as containing the truth in his or her vessel of answers (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) that can only be accessed by a skilled interviewer who asks

¹ As Heath (2001) observes, "rather than simply stipulate the meaning or significance of particular utterances in the light of their own personal intuition, researchers can inspect subsequent actions [embodied in turns at talk] in order to determine how the participants themselves are responding to, and displaying their understanding of, each others' conduct" (p. 187).

the right kind of questions, we are instead invited to see that the content and structure – the *architecture* - of the interview (which ultimately becomes the child's evidence and determines whether or not prosecution proceeds) is a joint creation of the interviewer and the child, each person shaping the other's responses, turn-by-turn, in the process of establishing shared meaning.

In essence, conversation analysis starts with an assumption that there is more going on in the interaction between a child and interviewer than simply the exchange of information because this is also an occasion of social interaction (albeit an out of the ordinary one) and each participant has an influence over how the interaction proceeds. Even though the interviewer is the initiator of much of the talk in investigative interviews (Lloyd, 1990, 1992), from a conversation analytic perspective the child's responses also exert an influence over the next turn taken by the interviewer in the conversation. The final product - the interview recorded on video tape – is entirely the product of this joint interaction.

2.2. Evidential interviewing as a form of institutional talk

In the field of conversation analysis, a number of people have taken a special interest in institutional talk (Arminen, 2005; Drew & Heritage, 1992). Institutional talk has come to mean any form of talk-in-interaction that has a different kind of organisation to ordinary conversation, usually because the purpose or function of the interaction in a particular setting has brought about certain specialised practices, conventions and restrictions that give the interaction its distinctive character (Heritage, 2005; Schegloff, 1999). Thus, research of this kind has examined institutional talk such as the news interview (Clayman,

1988), courtroom talk (Atkinson & Drew, 1979), doctor-patient interactions (Peräkylä, 1998) and police interviews with suspects (Stokoe & Edwards, 2008), amongst others.

2.2.1. What makes investigative interviews with children institutional?

Although I do not make it an explicit focus in this study, investigative interviews of children are clearly a form of institutional talk. Heritage (2005) delineates three characteristics of institutional talk that distinguish it from ordinary conversation. The first is that institutional talk is characterised by interactions that involve the participants in specific goal orientations tied to their institutional identities. In the case of the investigative interviews analysed here, interviewers orient the interaction toward the gathering of information to either support or rule out a decision to pursue the prosecution of alleged sexual abuse, which is tied to their institutionally defined identity as gatherers of facts.

The second characteristic of institutional talk is that the interaction involves special constraints on what is treated as allowable or passable contributions to the interaction, constraints that are characterised by the goal orientation or function of the interaction. Thus, in investigative interviews, police normally ask questions about sexual abuse, and children provide answers to those questions. Departures from this topic and format (at least in the substantive stage of the interview) are perceptibly at odds with what is deemed normal and expectable in this setting, and close examination of the interaction at these points indicates that these moments generate trouble for the progressivity of the

interaction², as well as being audibly (and visibly) problematic for interviewers who appear to work hard to return the interaction to its normative footing.

The third characteristic of institutional talk, according to Heritage (2005), is that the interaction is associated with inferential frameworks and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts. Drew and Heritage (1992), drawing upon Levinson's (1992) insight, express this idea most clearly:

In a context where particular institutional goals may be the object of the participants' orientations and where the participants' conduct departs in various ways from ordinary conversational conduct, Levinson argues, there will also tend to be special – "institutional" – aspects of the reasoning, inferences, and implicatures that are developed in institutional interaction (p.24)

As an example, Drew and Heritage observe that certain kinds of institutional interaction constrain the professional participant to withhold expressions of surprise, sympathy, agreement, or affiliation to lay participants' turns at talk and make the point that this would be treated as disaffiliative in ordinary conversation.

This holds true for investigative interviews too. For example, when police receipt³ children's descriptions of sexually abusive acts neutrally, with no display of sympathy, surprise, or disgust, they are displaying that in this setting it would mean something if they did otherwise. It could mean they are not sensitive to the need to show children that they are un-shockable, so that children can feel easier about disclosing embarrassing things. It could also mean they are biased toward the child's account and not entertaining

² See chapter 4 for an explanation of the concept of progressivity

³ "Receipt" refers to how a second speaker responds to something the first speaker says that demonstrates they have heard what was said.

an alternate hypothesis - that there is another explanation for the allegation of abuse, other than abuse – and this could be damaging to the prosecution case. This is what is meant by special inferential frameworks being a feature of institutional talk.

While there is ample room for variation in institutional talk, as with ordinary conversation, this variation, according to Heritage (2005), tends to be quite strongly reined in by the limits imposed by goal orientation (e.g. get the child's version without seeming to lead them), special constraints on contributions (e.g. police ask questions, children answer questions), and special inferences (e.g. if police don't show neutrality, the evidence may be judged invalid).

A risk that Drew and Heritage (1992) point to in delineating between institutional talk and ordinary conversation is the tendency to look for exogenous features in the environment to explain the institutional character of the talk being analysed. In other words, context can easily be viewed as the thing that is shaping the interaction from the outside in a one-way direction. But if we flip the relationship around, context can simultaneously be seen as something that is generated by the participants' actions. Thus, as Heritage (2005) states:

Rather than starting with a 'bucket' theory of context in which pre-existing institutional circumstances are seen as enclosing interaction and unaltered by it, CA starts with the view that 'context' is both a project and a product of the participants' actions. The assumption is that it is fundamentally through interaction that context is built, invoked and managed, and that it is through interaction that

institutional imperatives originating from outside the interaction are evidenced and made real and enforceable for the participants. (p. 109)

In plain terms, instead of viewing these investigative interviews as the product of external imperatives that force the participants into a particular way of talking, we are invited to see the interaction itself as *also* building that very context. There is a reciprocal influence between external imperatives (“get the facts and only the facts”) and the way that interviews get done and, simultaneously, the way that the actual talk between interviewers and children itself generates and re-generates that context (this kind of talking is what it *means* to be “doing an investigative interview”).

As mentioned above, this research does not make the institutionality of the investigative interview an explicit focus of analysis but it may do so implicitly at times. This is because there are some things that police and children are doing in their talk that are presumably unique: if not to investigative interviews about sexual abuse, then at least to interviewing children about delicate matters. So I wish to make clear that while I am aware that this study could have been located directly within the conversation analytic body of research that directly sets out to explicate what makes a particular form of talk institutional, perhaps by comparing it to some other setting, I have not done so. Nonetheless, those interested in institutional talk as a topic may find points of comparison between some of the features of the talk that I discuss and other settings.

2.3. Method

2.3.1. Data

The data used in this research are 11 retrospective videotaped interviews of children conducted by police interviewers from the Sexual Crimes Investigation Branch (SCIB) within the South Australian Police (SAPOL). The children ranged in age between 7 and 11 years at the time they were interviewed and the interviews were conducted between 2003 and 2006⁴ (see Appendix 1 for details about each case). Ten of the interviews are investigating allegations of sexual abuse and one of the interviews is investigating a homicide, where the child was a witness. All of the interviews were from cases that had been finalised when I gained access to the video tapes.

The five female police interviewers whose job it is to interview children in the SCIB were asked to volunteer two cases each for the research, although one interviewed the same child twice and so gave me those two interviews plus another one she had conducted with a different child. I asked the police interviewers to consider putting forward one interview where they felt the interview had gone very well and another they had found difficult. This was to try and gain some variability in the data but I had no real influence over which interviews they chose. Understandably, police interviewers may have chosen cases according to which families they thought might be most receptive to allowing their child's interview to be used for research. Obviously, selecting families in this way introduces a possible selection bias. There may be something different about those interviews where the police interviewer had a positive working relationship with the family. On the other

⁴ Children younger than 7 are normally interviewed by the two hospital-based child protection services in Adelaide, South Australia. The Local Service Areas (suburban police stations) do most child interviews of children aged 7 and above now, while the SCIB interviewers do those that are more complex or where a detective from a particular Local Service Area asks them to.

hand, from an ethical point of view, the police interviewer's positive relationship with the family may also have mitigated any potential distress caused to the family when being approached about an event they may not wish to be reminded about.

Although I did not probe which of the cases used in the data set had resulted in prosecution or conviction, since this was not relevant to my area of inquiry, I am aware of at least one case which did not. The interviewer involved explained to me that the mother of the child was still quite upset that a prosecution had not resulted. That seemed to imply that the interviewer had not chosen that interview with the satisfaction of the family in mind in that case at least.

Regardless, gathering whatever specimens are to hand is an entirely acceptable method of sampling data for a conversation analytic study because the notion of gaining a representative sample is not the kind of claim made in conversation analytic research. As ten Have (2007) notes:

Most often, methodological discussions of sampling presuppose a factist perspective, rather than a specimen approach . . . That is, data are sought in order to represent a reality that is not directly observable. Therefore, the sample should provide a set of indicators for the population parameters to be estimated. When the evidence is used in a specimen perspective, however, the reality to be studied is seen to be directly observable in the specimens at hand (p.70).

Drawing upon ideas contained in Sacks' (1995a) lectures, ten Have (2007) makes the point that because the existing corpus of CA studies show that the way people organise

talk-in-interaction is based on an orderly set of procedures that appear to be highly generalisable across many different settings, then the specimens one chooses in order to study that order is not so important. One piece of evidence for this orderliness, according to ten Have, is that as members of a culture each of us has been exposed to a limited and arbitrary sample of the possible universe of interactional moments and yet we still acquire the competencies to deal with other people that one encounters across many settings in an orderly way.

2.3.2. *Procedures for accessing, handling and analysing the data*

Once the video-tapes were selected, they were copied onto DVD by staff within the SCIB. I was given some temporary office space on-site to view the videos and transcribe them. The conditions attached to ethics approval did not permit me to view the video tapes outside of SAPOL.

Each interview was transcribed in a three stage process. I used Adobe Premiere Elements version 2.0 to play back the DVD files on the computer. The functionality of that software allowed me to replay segments quickly and easily and also to time the gaps in the talk.

As a first step I transcribed the interview verbatim, replacing people's names with pseudonyms and anonymising other identifying details, such as birthdays, street addresses, and names of schools. Next I re-transcribed the interview using Jeffersonian notation (Jefferson, 2004; ten Have, 2007), a conventional form of notation in conversation analysis that captures both linguistic and para-linguistic details, such as faster versus slower speech, intonation shifts, and gaps in talk (see Appendix 2 for a key to the transcription symbols).

The next stage was to transcribe body movements, gestures or physical actions (which I henceforth abbreviate to body movements), such as writing, playing with an object, or drawing. I initially had only two reasons for transcribing body movements. I wanted to be able to account for times when gaps in talk could be explained by activities such as the interviewer writing notes, which occupies a significant amount of time in investigative interviews and could be misinterpreted as a problem in the interaction otherwise. Also, because of the subject matter, I expected to see visible signs of children looking uncomfortable at times and since I was interested in how interviewers work through moments where there is trouble in the interaction, this seemed important to capture as an adjunct to the talk.

Others have transcribed body movements in ways that incorporate video still shots within, or near the extracts of transcribed talk together with a verbal description of the movements that accompany that talk (Beach & LeBaron, 2002; Goodwin & Goodwin, 2000; Heath, 2004; LeBaron & Streeck, 1997; MacMartin & LeBaron, 2006). However, I needed an alternative because the conditions of access to the data in my research would not permit the use of video still shots in this way. Goodwin (2000) uses a method that does not rely upon video still shots but since it involves inserting text, symbols and sketches directly into the body of the transcribed talk, it appears to work best for small fragments to avoid appearing cluttered.

By contrast, I needed to be able to transcribe and show long sequences of talk, which a good portion of my analysis relies upon. Also, because of the restrictions on my access to data, I wanted to complete most of the transcription upfront so that I only needed to go back to the Sexual Crimes Investigation Branch (SCIB) to check the accuracy, rather than returning daily to transcribe a new fragment of data.

For those reasons I developed my own system, which uses different coloured frames for each interlocutor: blue for the police interviewer and red for the child witness. The frames enclose sections of talk and silence to indicate that some particular body movement was occurring simultaneously. A text box to the right hand side of the transcribed talk describes the body movements that the frame refers to, as in this example:

(1)		Darren (01:32 video 1)		
27	I3	.hhh c'n you tell: me: why:: you've		27. looking down at notes, hands clasped 28. looks up at C3, gesturing at own chest with both hands on "see me" 27-34. looking downward and toward I3's notes, fidgeting hands, ankles crossed and swinging feet out from chair lightly. 30. turns head back down to look at note pad on table and readies to write 33-37. writing 35. wedges hands between knees, still swinging feet 36-39. still looking towards notes, motionless 38. lifts pen from page, straightens paper 39. still looking down at page, pointing pen onto page
28		come to see me today?		
29		(0.2)		
30	C3	.hhh <(yeah) co:s: Phi:ll::[i:p:] my]>=		
31	I3	[ye:s?]		
32	C3	=step brother,		
33	I3	yep		
34		(0.2)		
35	C3	um: (0.8) °he sexually abu:sed me°=		
36	I3	=he sexually abu:sed you:. okay.		
37		(6.5)		
38	I3	alri:ght [there's a fair bit] I'll need to		
39		↑find ↑out [↑won't ↑↑I. [.hh]		
40	C3	[mmhh]		

A full description of how to read the body movement transcription is contained in Appendix 3.

In addition, I used the draw function in Word to draw a floor plan of the room set up for each interview, since it varied depending on the room the interview was conducted in and becomes relevant at times when describing body movement, and where in the room the participants are moving to or from (See Appendix 4).

I transcribed the first 5 interviews in their entirety using this 3 step process. By that stage I had a broad sense of those parts of the interviews I would focus on and so for the remainder of the interviews I only used Jeffersonian and body movement transcription on

those parts. I also knew that I could return to SAPOL to transcribe more when I needed to. In all, I spent almost 12 months part-time on this transcription process.

The ethical constraints on this research, which I describe in the next section, unfortunately meant that I could not allow anyone else to view the video tapes and to check the accuracy of my transcription. This is clearly a methodological limitation of my study.

However, in an effort to limit this, I made sure that I checked the transcription of all data extracts used in the thesis on three separate occasions and this enabled me to hear and see things that I had missed on previous viewings/hearings.

Once I had a complete set of transcripts, I was permitted to take hard copies off-site from SAPOL for analysis. When I was not working with the transcripts, they were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office at the university.

Conversation analytic (CA) research is typically inductive and the process begins with a close inspection of the data, from which the analyst begins to form hypotheses about certain features in the data. From there, more instances of these features are searched for in the data and so on, in an iterative fashion. In other words, the most interesting findings - and many of the questions - often emerge from a close and detailed examination of the data themselves.

In my case, I had some broad aims that guided my looking (see chapter 1). Most of the analytic observations I make in this thesis have grown out of notes I made about parts of the interviews as I was transcribing them, parts that I was drawn to because it seemed that something interesting and pertinent to my guiding questions was going on.

Hence, by the time I had a complete set of transcripts, I had already generated many potential analytic lines of inquiry to follow (see Appendix 5). From there I began reading and re-reading the transcripts, highlighting sections that appeared to fit with, for example, “children’s signs of discomfort”, or “children’s accounts of resisting abuse”. The next step entailed making photocopies of the relevant parts of the transcript and developing a corpus of that particular feature. From there I worked slowly through different extracts, applying conversation analytic principles to unpack what the interviewers and children seemed to be doing, and how they were doing it. Through this process the four analytic chapters took shape.

2.3. Ethical considerations

The ethics of a project that relies on such sensitive data were clearly a significant issue to work out and I set out the issues here and how they were addressed. The process of gaining approval from the South Australian Police Research and Survey Coordination Committee and the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee to conduct the research took 9 months, with all parties making sure that the project was ethically sound.

The first and most obvious concern was the impact on children and their families of being asked for access to their videotaped interviews. Asking a family member to consent to the use of their child’s interview when they may have long since put the abusive experience behind them had the potential to be distressing. To address this risk, the officer in charge of the Sexual Crime Investigation Branch (SCIB) suggested that police select the cases themselves and only approach families whose children had been interviewed quite recently but whose cases were closed. Of particular concern was the risk of causing

family conflict by approaching families after a long time had lapsed, where there was a risk that the accused may be living with, or in contact with the family again.

The officer in charge also suggested that police make the first contact with families, telephoning those they thought would be open to consenting to the use of their child's interview for the research project. Selecting families based on knowledge of their likely willingness, or based on a positive working relationship with that family, could have increased or decreased the possibility of them feeling some kind of social pressure to consent. This was not possible to determine. However, to limit the risk of families feeling pressured to consent, I suggested that police read out parts of the written information sheet about the study I had prepared (see Appendix 6), which emphasized they were under no obligation to consent to participation, and I gave this to the police to use as a guide.

Following that initial telephone contact, I posted families the written information sheet about the study (see Appendix 6), a consent form for them to sign⁵, which clearly stated they were under no obligation to consent (see Appendix 7) and a form detailing an independent complaints procedure to follow (see Appendix 8). The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) required these three forms to be included as part of the consent gaining process, guided by standards issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in Australia.

A second concern was the risk of a child, the child's family members, or police interviewers being identifiable by the illustrative data extracts used in the final thesis, or

⁵ A separate consent form was prepared in the event that any of the children were now aged 16 or over, in which case they would need to provide their own consent. However, none of the children were of this age at the time of seeking consent.

in any journal articles generated from the research. To limit this risk, when an interview was first transcribed verbatim, I anonymised it by removing all names and replacing them with pseudonyms and also removing references to addresses, towns, schools, well known public events or sporting teams that a child might refer to, and any other kind of detail that held any risk of identifying people referred to in that interview.

It was also made clear in the information sheet given to families that the written transcripts produced from their child's interview would be anonymised. Furthermore, it was explained to families that when the research was published in thesis form or in journal articles, the brief, de-contextualised sequences of interaction were highly unlikely to reveal the identity of a child or a family by content, especially when compared to social science methods that include entire case study descriptions when reporting findings.

Pseudonyms were also used to preserve the anonymity of the police interviewers who conducted the interviews (Interviewer 1, 2, 3 etc.), although they may be identifiable to themselves or their immediate colleagues because of their style of interviewing or by the content of the extract used. Although I prepared a consent form for the interviewers as well, SAPOL did not wish to use it, stating that organisational consent to the project was sufficient without each interviewer providing individual consent.

A third and final concern was the the need to keep the data secure. As mentioned above, as a condition of approving the project the university HREC asked that the video recordings only be viewed on-site at SAPOL and not at the university because of the sensitive nature of the material. Initially, the university HREC was also unwilling to permit me to view the anonymised written transcripts outside of SAPOL. However, they amended this condition when I explained how limiting this would be to my ability to

complete the research in a timely manner, and once SAPOL had communicated that they were satisfied it was acceptable for me to take paper copies of the transcripts off-site to work with them at the university.

Moving away from methodological concerns, in the next chapter I summarise the main areas that make up the current literature on investigative interviewing.

Chapter 3: Prior work on child investigative interviewing

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the main topic areas that comprise the investigative interviewing literature pertaining to child sexual abuse interviews and some of the key findings. One aim of this overview is to give useful background to the reader unfamiliar with the literature but a more important aim is to show that, from almost every angle, the research literature contains an implicit image of the interviewer as the one who must take into account a multitude of factors impacting on a child's ability to give a reliable, consistent account of sexual abuse, and who must hold all this in mind as they ask questions so as not to fall into any traps that could taint the child's account or prevent the child from disclosing at all. By providing a broad overview of this kind, it permits me to locate my own research as a (potential) modification to this point of view by foregrounding the interactional, co-constructive nature of an investigative interview, with both interviewer and child shaping its trajectory.

An initial literature search into investigative interviewing of children about sexual abuse shows that the research is to a large extent occupied with explicating children's age related abilities, particularly their ability to recall and report things about themselves in a clear, consistent and reliable way (for a review see Lamb, Orbach, Warren, Esplin & Hershkowitz, 2007). From there, it makes sense that one of the stated aims of the main body of research becomes to ensure that interviews are done in such a way that children's reports about what they remember during an interview are not tainted by poor questioning methods amongst other things.

My reading of the majority of literature suggests that it falls into three main topic areas, the largest being the literature on the reliability of children's reports. In this context, reliability refers to the quality of children's evidence (Rosenthal, 2002); that is, when, and under what conditions can a child's report about sexual abuse be judged truthful in substance and accurate in detail, and what kinds of factors influence children to either give false reports, or to provide inaccurate details during an interview. The reliability literature is further divisible into two sub categories: research that investigates the various factors that influence the reliability of children's reports, and research that looks at ways of discerning reliable from unreliable reports.

There are two practical objectives that seem to motivate the extensive research into children's reliability as witnesses. Firstly, by providing empirical evidence of how certain factors can impact on a child's ability or willingness to provide truthful, accurate and comprehensive reports about personally experienced events such as sexual abuse, the literature contributes knowledge that can be translated into improved investigative interviewing practices. Secondly, it is of practical and ethical concern to the criminal justice system that the only cases prosecuted are those where there is a high probability that a child has been abused and the investigative interview is usually the main basis for the decision to prosecute.

A second major topic area in the literature on investigative interviewing relates to children's disclosure of sexual abuse and this is also divisible into two sub-categories. The majority of the disclosure literature is focused on explicating the nature of children's disclosures, specifically, whether disclosure is better characterised as a one-off event or as a gradually unfolding process (DeVoe & Faller, 1999; London, Bruck, Ceci & Shuman, 2005; Richardson, 2003; Summit, 1983). This has a practical upshot, as the nature of

disclosure has implications for whether it is reasonable to expect that a child will disclose in a single interview, or whether multiple interviews are more appropriate.

The second subcategory in the disclosure literature is focused on what promotes disclosure of sexual abuse (see Alaggia, 2004 for a summary). The practical thrust of the disclosure literature is aimed at helping professionals discern between true and false disclosures, avoid techniques that might prompt a false disclosure, and aid understanding of the social and emotional factors that might make a child unwilling to disclose their experience of sexual abuse or, conversely, to make a false disclosure.

The third major topic area in the literature on investigative interviewing focuses on what investigators actually do in practice when conducting interviews. The substance of this body of research to date is to compare what empirical research tells us about best practice interviewing methods with interviewer's actual practices in the field, and to suggest ways to improve those practices.

Next I outline some of the major findings from each of these three main topic areas before explaining how theoretical and methodological insights from discursive psychology and conversation analysis may offer additional insights into the practice of investigative interviewing, thus setting the scene for the present study.

3.2. The reliability of children's reports

As mentioned, the reliability literature is divisible into two sub categories: influences on children's reliability, and ways of identifying reliable reports. I begin with a précis of the literature pertaining to influences on children's reliability.

3.2.1. *Influences on children's reliability*

The reliability literature is to a large extent focused on identifying the various factors that influence the quality of children's reports about sexual abuse. These include the age-related cognitive and language abilities of children, social-motivational factors, such as a child's willingness to provide information, the different effects of certain forms of questions and interviewing protocols on the accuracy or otherwise of children's reports, as well as combinations of these factors, such as the way that adult-child talk about an event after its occurrence can aid memory retrieval differently according to the age of the child, or the effect of repeated interviews on the consistency of children's reports (Akehurst, Milne & Köhnken, 2003; Bruck & Ceci, 2004; Ceci & Bruck, 1995; Lamb et al., 2003; Lamb, Orbach, Hershkowitz, Esplin, & Horowitz, 2007; Lamb, Orbach, Warren, Esplin & Hershkowitz, 2007; Malloy & Quas, 2009, McGuigan & Salmon, 2004; Peterson, Moores & White, 2001; Poole & Lamb, 1998; Roebbers, Moga & Schneider, 2001; Saywitz & Camparo, 1998; Walker, 1999; Walker & Warren, 1995).

The concept of suggestibility is of key importance in the reliability literature. Whilst definitions vary, suggestibility generally means that what a child witness says - or does not say - in an interview setting can be shaped by the suggestive techniques used by the interviewer, such as asking leading questions, repeating questions, invoking peer conformity, and using praise. Ceci and Bruck (1995) define suggestibility as —the degree to which the encoding, storage, retrieval, and reporting of events can be influenced by a range of internal and external factors” (p.44). While a more narrow definition of suggestibility emphasises how post-event information can be unwittingly incorporated into a child's memory, Ceci and Bruck argue that their broader definition also includes instances where a child correctly remembers what actually occurred but does not report it, or reports something different for social or other motivational reasons.

Many studies have shown that pre-school children are more suggestible as a group than school age children or adults (Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Ceci & Bruck, 1995; Ceci, Powell, & Crossman, 1999; Kuehnle, 1996; Poole & Lindsay, 2001), though Bruck and Ceci (2004) suggest this is a consequence of the disproportionate number of studies focused on preschool children during the last 20 years of the 20th century. They claim that more recent evidence shows proneness to suggestibility is also common in middle childhood, and under some conditions older children have been found to be more suggestible than younger children.

Other research refines this general finding by demonstrating the conditions under which these suggestibility effects are diminished or eliminated. For instance, factors known to influence a child's proneness to suggestibility include the timing of inconsistent post-event information provided by another person, the perceived prestige of the person providing the inconsistent information, and the degree of certainty about what is to be remembered (Gordon, Schroeder, Ornstein, & Baker-Ward, 1995).

Failures in memory processes have been posited as the most likely mechanism for suggestibility effects. Gordon et al. (1995) summarise the factors that are thought to influence children's memory at the encoding, storage and retrieval stages. Encoding is aided by prior knowledge, which places younger children at greater risk of memory failures at the stage of encoding abuse related information. The salience of the stimuli also influences encoding, with details about people, actions or objects the child is interested in being more likely to be encoded. Once encoded, the strength of the memory may vary depending on the amount of exposure to the target event (duration and frequency), though repeated events can also mean that children form scripts of the event

(“what usually happens”), interfering with their ability to recall the details of a specific instance. Age related changes in the efficiency of information processing, use of memory strategies, along with increased knowledge, are all thought to contribute to stronger, more robust memory traces for older children compared to younger children. Once encoded, retrieval can be compromised by lengthy delays between the experiencing and reporting of the event, and repeated interviews may also affect the integrity of memories, particularly when suggestive in nature, where misleading or inconsistent post-event information may interfere with the original memory trace (Gordon et al., 1995).

Repeated interviews are generally held to be undesirable in the criminal justice system due to the possibility of inaccurate information being added to the child’s report if suggestive techniques are introduced, although there are proponents who argue that multiple interviews are necessary for some children to disclose (Carnes, Wilson & Nelson-Gardell, 1999; Carnes, Nelson-Gardell, Wilson & Orgassa, 2001; The National Children’s Advocacy Center, 2010). Bruck, Ceci and Hembrooke (2002) demonstrated that repeated interviewing where the interviews contain suggestive techniques can cause pre-school children to introduce inaccurate information into their reports of true events. They studied a group of 16 preschoolers on five separate occasions and on each occasion they were interviewed about four different events: two true events and two false events. The first interview was non-suggestive; the following three contained increasing numbers of suggestive techniques; the final interview was non-suggestive. They found that with repeated interviewing, children introduced details they had not reported in earlier interviews and these details were often inaccurate.

Repeated interviews introduce the possibility of inconsistent details being provided by the child from one occasion to the next, a problem that is utilised by defence lawyers tasked

with discrediting children's accounts. Consistency has a very specific meaning in the suggestibility literature, referring to whether the same information about a target event is reported across multiple occasions (Fivush, 1993; Fivush, Hamond, Harsch, Singer, & Wolf, 1991; Ghetti, Goodman, Eisen, Qin, & Davis, 2002). Inconsistency means the introducing of new information not reported on an earlier occasion about a target event, whether that information is accurate or not. The important point is that in this context inconsistency does not only mean contradiction (Ghetti et al., 2002). Fivush (1993) makes a useful distinction between accuracy and consistency in children's reports. The research she reports indicates that although pre-school children can be highly accurate in what they recall over time, they can also be quite inconsistent. One study found that pre-school children recalled a substantial amount of information in later interviews that they had not reported in earlier interviews, yet the new information was verified as accurate.

Age does predict consistency but this appears to depend on the types of questions asked of preschoolers. Studies into preschooler's reports about personally experienced events show that they tend to be more inconsistent when their reports are elicited using open-ended questions (Fivush et al., 1991; Peterson, Moores, & White, 2001). At the same time, the accuracy of any details introduced across multiple interviews is often quite high (Fivush & Shukat, 1995). If specific and non-leading questions are asked, then both consistency and accuracy can be high for pre-schooler's reports of personally experienced events (Fivush, 1993).

In a forensic setting, a child may be asked to report the details of the same event on different occasions, by different people and in different contexts. Critically, children's ability to be consistent (report the same details on each occasion) is frequently treated as

an index of truth (Ghetti et al., 2002). If a child introduces new information not reported in previous interviews, it may be treated as a sign of fabrication and damage their reliability in the eyes of police, judges and jurors (Peterson et al., 2001). Yet as the research just reviewed demonstrates, consistency does not equate with accuracy, at least for preschoolers.

Although age related differences in memory abilities seem the obvious candidate for explaining age differences in consistency, the research is equivocal. Ghetti et al. (2002) found that although memory abilities did predict consistency across reports of sexual abuse, this was not true for reports of physical abuse, and they contend that other age-related factors may underlie consistency, such as children's increasing need to provide coherent images of self-related events as they grow older, an idea they draw from the field of personality theory (Mischel, 1990).

The picture is further complicated by the finding that a child's status in the event – as either an observer or participant – can affect accuracy. Gobbo, Mega and Pipe (2002) found that when exposed to misinformation, the accuracy of children's reports was greater when the child had experienced an event directly, compared to when the child had only observed or heard about an event vicariously.

Whilst research shows there are clearly age-related differences in children's abilities to provide accurate and detailed reports, and to resist suggestive techniques, it is also acknowledged that there are striking differences between the abilities of individual children (Ceci & Bruck, 1995). This has led some researchers to look for other child characteristics that can help professionals predict accuracy of recall and resistance to suggestibility over and above the child's age alone. Geddie, Fradin and Beer (2000)

examined the predictiveness of a range of factors on total recall and suggestibility. They found that age, intelligence, meta-memory, race and socio-economic status (SES) accounted for 47% of the variance in total recall, with age contributing just 8% of the variance. Age, intelligence, SES and race contributed to 40% of the variance in suggestibility, with age contributing just 5%. The authors conclude that —although the age of the child is an important factor, other individual difference or situational factors are likely to play an even larger role in predicting children’s accuracy during an interview” (p. 231). However, it appears that the complex combination of factors likely to affect accuracy and suggestibility mean that this finding is unlikely to be of practical use to professionals trying to predict which children are more or less likely to make reliable witnesses. Arguably it would be ethically fraught to make these kinds of distinctions between individual children anyway.

Some researchers have examined the relationship of social and motivational factors to suggestibility. Relevant to the present study is research pointing to children’s knowledge of the social conventions of conversation, and how this may cause them to make their answers consistent with what they see as the intent of the interviewer, rather than consistent with their knowledge of the event (Ceci, Leichtman, Putnick, & Nightingale, 1993). Children sometimes try to answer adults’ questions even if the questions are nonsensical, perhaps because they perceive adults as cooperative conversationalists who ask honest, logical questions that must have an answer (Hughes and Grieve, 1980 cited in Ceci & Bruck, 1993). Other research shows that when asked the same question more than once, children may change their answer, perhaps because they believe the first answer was inadequate in some way (Cassel and Bjorklund 1992 cited in Ceci & Bruck, 1993).

Roebers, Moga and Schneider (2001) examined the role of motivation in influencing children's meta-cognition, a mediating factor in accuracy of recall. They investigated how the social demands of an interview situation affected children's and adults' motivation to monitor their own memory retrieval process when being asked questions about an event they had witnessed, and examined how this impacted on the accuracy of their reports. One hundred and eighty participants from four age groups (6, 7 and 8 year olds and a group of young adults aged between 16 and 18) were shown a short video about a crime and were asked specific, non-leading questions about it three weeks later to tap long-term memory. The researchers manipulated participants' motivation in a combination of conditions using the presence and absence of incentives (awarding of tokens for accuracy/no tokens for accuracy), as well as different response options (forced report/free report), to test whether, and to what extent the incentives would result in more accurate responses across the different age groups. They found that when motivated to do so, even young children were able to effectively monitor their own memory retrieval processes and to withhold uncertain answers in the interest of accuracy. The study lacked ecological validity though, since children cannot be rewarded for correct answers in an investigative interview setting as the authors themselves admitted. Nonetheless their findings demonstrate that social demands can interact with children's ability (and willingness) to retrieve information from memory, and to attend more or less carefully to whether their recollection is accurate or not.

Amongst motivational factors that may affect the reliability of a child's report during an investigative interview, the motivation to lie has occupied some researchers. One reason is that child abuse allegations sometimes occur in the context of child custody disputes, prompting suspicions that an aggrieved parent may have coached a child to lie about abuse. Ceci and Bruck (1993) summarise a number of studies that show children as young

as three are capable of lying to avoid punishment, to sustain a game, to keep promises, to gain rewards and to avoid embarrassment. It is important to note that with one exception, none of the studies on which these findings are based used experimental manipulations that resembled material relating to sexual abuse. The exception was a study that showed children would lie about being kissed by a parent if they were told that it was naughty to be kissed but only four three-year-olds made up that sample (Ceci, Leichtman, Putnick, & Nightingale, 1993). Hence, there is no sound empirical evidence to either support or deny the contention that children lie about sexual abuse.

Most of the findings on children's reliability and suggestibility described so far are based on experimental analogue studies, where the children witness a staged event and then interviewers ask the children scripted questions. Children's responses are then analysed for how they have been influenced by certain kinds of questions, such as whether or not a suggestive question led to the child acquiescing to something that did not happen.

A notable exception to this paradigm is a study by Gilstrap and Ceci (2005). They appeared to notice the literature's almost exclusive interest in how interviewer behaviour influences the child, whilst overlooking how the child's behaviour might also be influential upon the interviewer. Of the dominant experimental paradigm used to study children's suggestibility, Gilstrap and Ceci (2005) say:

This type of experimental design, albeit an important source of information about the potentially deleterious effects of suggestive questions, cannot address the possibility that in unstructured interviews the adult tailors his or her questions to the type of responses the child has already provided, and

differentiates his or her questioning as a function of the child's perceived competencies, intransigence, and personality. Thus, the structured experimental situation controls half of the dyad instead of allowing the conversation to be progressively and jointly determined, and constantly reevaluated. If the adult's behavior is controlled, researchers cannot look for influences of the child on the adult. (p. 41-42)

Gilstrap and Ceci (2005) had 41 children aged between 3 and 7 witness a staged event in their classrooms, followed by a videotaped interview with 1 of 41 experienced child protection interviewers. The interviews were unstructured, which meant interviewers did not have to adhere to a script but could follow their own line of questioning.

Transcribers trained by the police department involved in the research created transcripts from the interviews, which included both verbal content as well as certain gestures, such as nods. Each turn taken by the interviewer and child were then coded into categories. Adult turn types were coded into either a "leading" or "neutral" category and the child turn types into either "acquiescence", defined as some level of positive response, or "denial", defined as some level of negative response to the interviewer's question. The researchers then used a statistical method called sequential analysis (Bakeman & Gottman, 1997) to answer a range of questions about the way that children's and interviewer's responses related to one another, or how children's earlier responses were related to subsequent responses in the interview. For instance, to inquire about the influence of a child's response on an interviewer's subsequent response, the question might be: "Given that the child has not acquiesced, will the interviewer be more likely than chance to ask a leading question?" (Gilstrap & Ceci, 2005, p.42). The method

entailed computing the probabilities that, for example, behaviour B would occur given that behaviour A had occurred.

Gilstrap and Ceci (2005) found several unexpected things, including that children were less likely to acquiesce to leading questions than is usually found in studies based on structured, scripted interviews. However, of most relevance to the present study were their findings on child influences upon interviewer responses. They found that a child's *denial* was more likely to be followed by a suggestive question from the interviewer, compared to when a child gave an acquiescent response in the first instance. They hypothesised that the interviewers may be using leading questions only with the less responsive children. Therefore, they speculated, perhaps the relationship between leading questions and subsequent child denial in the sequence of conversation might start with the child denial that preceded the leading question.

However, this was not the relationship they found. Instead, they found that a child's prior response was the best predictor of a subsequent child response, regardless of the intervening response of the interviewer. In other words, a child's denial was a better predictor of a subsequent denial in the sequence than what kind of question the interviewer asked in-between (i.e. whether it was categorised as a "neutral" or "leading" question). That is, children tended to be consistent. In discussing their findings, Gilstrap and Ceci (2005) say:

We do not conclude that leading questions are without causal impact. Instead, we argue that in unstructured interviews, leading questions tend to be used with children who are already denying, and because of what appear to be

strong consistencies in child behavior, children who deny are likely to continue to deny. Rather than arguing that leading questions are benign, we argue that leading questions must be considered in the context in which they are being asked, which includes the effects of the child on the adult. It could be that adult questions merely mediate child behaviors, or that children's denials set in motion a chain of behaviors including the interviewers' leading questions and that those questions still have some causal impact. (p.52)

At least one subsequent analogue study using sequential analysis on interviews conducted with children after a medical exam also found that children's prior responses in a sequence were the best predictor of subsequent children's subsequent responses (Melinder & Gilstrap, 2009).

These studies are important because they examine heretofore unexplored questions about how children's responses might influence an interviewer's responses and, thus, how children's responses might be an important factor in what comes to be seen as a high or low quality interview. However, to avoid confusion, I wish to be clear that the method used in these last two studies is not similar to the meaning of sequential analysis in conversation analysis, the method adopted in this thesis. In particular, Gilstrap and Ceci's (2005) quantitative approach relied upon making interviewer's and children's responses fit within a finite number of categories developed by the researchers, to which they then applied a statistical method to determine predictive relationships amongst these different categories. Gilstrap and Ceci themselves acknowledge there may be problems with how they categorised interviewer's and children's responses, for example, whether their results

might have been confounded by including “weakly suggestive” questions with “strongly suggestive” questions in the analysis.

In conversation analysis and discursive psychology, which come from a different epistemological stance, there is no attempt to impose categories upon the data except in the sense that the analyst attempts to describe the actions that the turns at talk are involved in, as evidenced by how the interlocutors themselves are displaying how they are interpreting one another. The aim is to explicate what people are doing as they interact and how they are doing it, which is a different project to trying to predict the likelihood of certain behaviours occurring.

Nonetheless, the forensic value of the kind of research conducted by Gilstrap and Ceci (2005) and Melinder and Gilstrap (2009) is apparent: knowing that children are more likely to deny in response to a suggestive question if they have previously done so has important implications for how we think about the practice of interviewing. However, it is also valuable to examine in detail what it is that children and interviewers *actually* do in investigative interviews, and *how* they do it, using naturalistic data (i.e. actual investigative interviews) that are not overly influenced by the researcher.

So far I have summarised the research concerned with identifying the factors that influence the reliability of a child’s report. Next, I examine another substantial area of research aimed at finding ways to distinguish true from false reports.

3.2.2. *Ways of identifying reliable reports*

Following on from the research that identifies the various factors impacting on children's reliability as witnesses is literature focused on finding ways to discern between true and false reports. Undeutsch (1967, cited in Vrij, 2005) first described criteria hypothesised to distinguish true from false statements. Others revised this early work into Criteria-Based Content Analysis (CBCA) and then into Statement Validity Analysis (Pezdek et al., 2004). Statement Validity Analysis (SVA) is a more comprehensive approach to evaluating the credibility of witness statements, incorporating a structured interview, a validity checklist, and CBCA as the core element. Essentially, if a child's statement fulfils more of the content-based criteria purported to be present more often in true statements, then it is deemed to be more reliable than a statement that fails to satisfy as many criteria.

Most research has focused only on the core element of CBCA and its validity as a tool for evaluating the reliability of children's reports and the results have been mixed (Buck, Warren, Betman, & Brigham, 2002). There are serious criticisms of CBCA, which include a lack of established validity and reliability of the technique, an absence of any decision rule for determining how many criteria should be present in order to classify a statement as true, and a tendency for older children's statements to meet more criteria for being found truthful than younger children's statements (Buck et al., 2002; Pezdek et al., 2004). This latter finding is concerning because it suggests either that young children are making many more false reports or, more likely, that the CBCA is systematically biased toward determining that young children's reports are false. Buck and colleagues (2002) analysed 104 transcripts of actual child sexual abuse interviews conducted with children aged between 2 and 14 years. Many criteria were absent in the statements of the youngest children and the authors concluded that CBCA strongly discriminates against young children.

Pezdek et al. (2004) found that a child's familiarity with an event they have experienced is also correlated with how credible their statement is judged using CBCA criteria. They applied CBCA to the verbal reports of children who had undergone a traumatic medical procedure more than once (familiar event condition), with the reports of children who had undergone the same traumatic procedure for the first time (unfamiliar event condition). They found that CBCA scores were higher for the familiar than the unfamiliar group. In other words, where the children were familiar with the event, their statements were considered more credible and the statements of children in the unfamiliar condition were judged less credible, yet both groups had genuinely experienced the event. In addition, the authors found the same age correlation as Buck et al. (2002): younger children's reports met fewer criteria on the CBCA. They conclude that these findings cast serious doubt over the forensic suitability of the CBCA for assessing the reliability of children's accounts about sexual abuse.

Criterion 3 of the CBCA checklist relates to the quantity of details present in the child's statement, based on the notion that true statements contain a greater number of details overall than false statements. In a qualitative review of the literature into SVA and CBCA, Vrij (2005) found that 16 of 20 studies examining true and false reports did find that "truth tellers" included more detail in their reports than "liars", and Vrij concludes that there is therefore very strong support for the reliability of criterion 3. However, Vrij justifiably restricted his literature search to studies that included the search terms *Statement Validity Analysis*, *Statement Validity Assessment*, and *Criteria-based Content Analysis*. Thus, at least one study that found some potential evidence against the reliability of criterion 3 was not included. Bruck, Ceci and Hembrooke (2002) investigated whether certain linguistic markers could differentiate between pre-schooler's

narratives about true and false events under conditions where the interviewer used a range of suggestive techniques across repeated interviews. Contrary to Vrij's review, which supported the reliability of criterion 3, they found that narratives based on *false* events contained more details overall than narratives based on true events.

Vrij's review also found that there was strong support for the reliability of several other CBCA content criteria purported to distinguish true from false statements. These were (1) unstructured production (true accounts tend not to follow in a chronological time sequence); (2) contextual embeddings (references to time and space); and (3) reproduction of conversation (e.g. ~~and~~ then he said: Would you like to play a game?").

One of the most serious flaws in the research on the reliability of CBCA as a means of discerning true from false statements about sexual abuse is that there is rarely an independent, reliable means of verifying whether or not a child was actually abused. This is a serious problem for field based studies that use actual statements given by children about sexual abuse. For instance, Vrij (2005) acknowledges that the measures used in most CBCA studies to categorise supposedly confirmed cases of sexual abuse are almost never based on independent measures, such as physical evidence, which is rarely present in any case. Thus, field based studies frequently use perpetrator confessions or court convictions as proxies for confirming that abuse occurred and neither of these can be seen as truly independent measures. For example, if a child's statement is judged highly credible by an expert witness, this could influence an innocent defendant to confess if that is likely to mean a lesser penalty. In the case of court convictions, research suggests that jurors' perception of a child's credibility can be influenced by factors such as the child's age, the gender of the juror, and the character and past acts of the defendant, which, in turn influence the likelihood of a guilty verdict (Bottoms & Goodman, 1994). Hence, court convictions are not an independent measure of reliability either.

Because of these problems, many studies into the reliability of CBCA have been conducted as experiments so that children's statements can be compared against events that are known to be true or false. However, what these studies gain in rigour, they lose in ecological validity. Vrij (2005) nevertheless combines both field and laboratory studies together with their varying methodological flaws to draw conclusions about the reliability of the CBCA and this seems problematic. These flaws, in particular not being able to verify true and false statements in the first place, mean that finding in favour of the reliability of some criteria over others is premature at best. Without first identifying a truly independent means of discerning a statement based on true events, from one based on false events in the ecologically valid setting of actual sexual abuse cases, the validity of CBCA for assessing the veracity of allegations of sexual abuse cannot be confirmed. Wells and Loftus (1991, as cited in Richardson, 2003) make the point strongly, claiming that what CBCA really measures is not truthfulness but how convincing the child's account of their alleged sexual abuse is. In the end, Vrij does conclude that SVA is unsuitable for use in court because it does not satisfy legal rulings on the admissibility of expert scientific evidence due to its high error rate and because the validity and reliability of the method are disputed amongst the scientific community.

Other researchers have also searched for markers of truth beyond those proposed by CBCA. In a longitudinal investigation into preschoolers' narratives about events they had experienced, Fivush, Haden and Adam (1995) found several markers of coherence in children's true autobiographical narratives, such as temporal markers (e.g. if, next, then) and elaborations (e.g. adjectives, adverbs and metaphorical terms). However, in a later study into children's narratives, Bruck, Ceci and Hembrooke (2002) found that false narratives also contained these same markers of narrative coherence, and in greater

quantity than true narratives. In summary, it appears that at present there is no agreed upon method for assessing the veracity of children's evidential statements in forensic settings.

3.2.3. *Some limitations of the literature on children's reliability as eyewitnesses*

In summary, the literature into children's reliability as eyewitnesses contains some significant limitations in terms of its utility to professionals trying to discern a reliable from an unreliable report about sexual abuse. In the suggestibility literature, in particular, there is a tendency to overgeneralise the findings about reliable age differences at the expense of considering individual children's abilities, as Ceci and Bruck (1995) note:

Results sometimes vary dramatically among studies, and children's behaviours sometimes vary dramatically within studies. Thus, even in studies with significant suggestibility effects, there are always some children who are highly resistant to suggestion. We have seen this in our own studies and we have also seen it in transcripts of forensic and therapeutic interviews. In some cases, no matter how much an interviewer may try to erroneously suggest that a false event occurred, some children will consistently resist and not incorporate the interviewer's suggestion . . . On the other hand, although suggestibility effects tend to be most dramatic after prolonged and repeated interviewing, some children incorporate suggestions quickly, even after one short interview. (p. 273)

Therefore, forming generalisations about the reliability of a child's report based on existing knowledge about children's suggestibility is an imprecise science. In the setting of an investigative interview, all that this research can tell us is to beware of believing young children's reports because, generally speaking, they are more likely than older children to have incorporated post-event information into their accounts. But how does this help practitioners assess the likely truth of the account given by a *particular* child? There is rarely an objective measure of the substantive truth of a child's account. Nor is there a measure of whether a child is prone to suggestibility – although the search is on (Dye 2006) – and even if there were it would not guarantee that the child was suggestible on this occasion, about this event.

The lack of success in finding a reliable factor, either cognitive or social, that predicts which children are prone to suggestibility (and when) and are therefore at risk of being unreliable witnesses, naturally points to the need to find a valid and reliable method of discerning true from false evidential statements. CBCA is the most thoroughly researched method but, as mentioned, the studies aimed at testing its validity and reliability have been methodologically flawed. Field based studies are important because these have ecological validity and the findings can be generalised to the field of assessing allegations of sexual abuse. But for the results of these studies to be valid, there is a need for strong, corroborating evidence that proves that children who are classified as abused have actually been abused and, equally, the same standard of corroborating evidence is needed for those children who are classified as not abused. However, as mentioned, the measures used to classify children into groups in these studies, such as perpetrator confession or court convictions, may not be independent of the child's statement. There is an erroneous circularity in this method, whereby the *believability* of children's statements becomes a

measure of the *reliability* of children's statements. Nonetheless, this major methodological flaw has not prevented a burgeoning of studies into CBCA.

3.3. Disclosure

The second major topic in the literature pertaining to investigative interviewing of children about sexual abuse relates to disclosure: how, when, and to whom children disclose. This is also divisible into two sub-categories. The first addresses normative patterns of disclosure, specifically, whether or not disclosure is best characterised as a one-off event, obtainable in a single interview, or if it is more like a process, unfolding over time, thus necessitating more than one occasion for many children to disclose their abusive experiences. The second sub-category is aimed at identifying factors that either promote or inhibit a child's disclosure. I begin with a summary of the research on patterns of disclosure.

3.3.1. *Patterns of disclosure: How children disclose sexual abuse*

Finding the definitive answer to this question of whether disclosure is an event or a process has occupied researchers in the child abuse field because it has implications for the way investigative interviews are conducted (DeVoe & Faller, 1999; Pipe, Orbach, Lamb & Cederborg, 2007). As DeVoe and Faller (1999) observe:

If disclosure is a singular event, the child interview may be standardized and structured to elicit a narrative account of the sexual assault. . . [A] single interview with only a few open-ended queries would be sufficient to obtain a coherent narrative account from most sexually abused children.

However, if the disclosure were a gradual unfolding, which

may be accompanied by embarrassment, shame, or fear, interviewing strategies would need to be flexible in order to accommodate the dynamics of individual children. For example, multiple interviews and a flexible protocol may be necessary to fully assess what, if anything, has happened to a child. (pp. 217-218)

One of the most contentious theories supporting the notion of disclosure as a process is the *child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome* (CSAAS), first proposed by Summit (1983). According to Summit, there is a tendency for abused children to remain silent about the abuse, to deny it ever occurred or, commonly, to make a series of disclosures followed by recantations of these disclosures. Summit's theory prompted numerous studies aimed at answering the question as to whether disclosure is best characterized as a one-off-event or a process, as well as the prevalence of unreported sexual abuse (Pipe et al., 2007).

DeVoe and Faller (1999) studied the disclosure patterns of 76 children referred to a sexual abuse evaluation clinic for an assessment interview. Of 56 children who had disclosed prior to the interview, only 44 children disclosed during the initial interview and only one child made a spontaneous disclosure. An additional eight children disclosed possible sexual abuse at a second or subsequent interview. DeVoe and Faller conclude that multiple interviews may be necessary in order to elicit children's disclosures of sexual abuse.

Richardson (2003) also found support for the process model in an Australian study. She conducted a retrospective archival analysis of hospital case records of 200 children who

were assessed and treated in the Gatehouse Centre for the Assessment and Treatment of Child Abuse located in Melbourne. The majority of children's disclosures were made over time, and not just in a single interview.

London, Bruck, Ceci and Shuman (2005) examined the process model by reviewing studies on disclosure rates amongst sexually abused populations. They first examined survey studies of adults' retrospective reports about their sexual abuse histories and found that only one third of adults who had experienced child sexual abuse had ever revealed the abuse to anyone during childhood. From this they concluded that secrecy about sexual abuse may indeed be common. However, retrospective survey studies were not able to answer questions about the prevalence of other aspects of the CSAAS model in children's disclosures; specifically, whether children tend to deny, make tentative disclosures and then recant their disclosures if asked directly about sexual abuse. To answer these questions the researchers reviewed studies that had examined the disclosure patterns of children who had been directly assessed or treated for sexual abuse. Again they found that delay is common but concluded that no firm evidence exists for the other supposedly normative features of disclosure according to the CSAAS model: denials, tentative disclosures, and recantations. To the contrary, they conclude that when studies include data on the designated likelihood of abuse having occurred, then amongst those children who have been assessed as very likely to have been abused, a high number of them disclosed in the first or second assessment interview. While not stated explicitly, the implication seems to be that children who have genuinely been abused are more likely to disclose early, while those who have not been abused may, after a time, fall prey to the suggestible interview, and make a false disclosure.

The research into disclosure patterns shares the same methodological problem as the research into children's reliability as eyewitnesses. While there are exceptions, the great majority of studies have no independent evidence to confirm whether a child was or was not abused (Pipe et al., 2007). As mentioned in the section on reliability, even perpetrator confessions cannot be seen as entirely independent of a child's statement because of the possibility that if a child's statement is judged credible, then an innocent defendant may confess in order to receive a lesser penalty. London and colleagues (2005) mention but do not address the fact that for most of the studies included in their review it is the child's convincing disclosure of abuse that leads to a decision that a child has most probably been abused and results in them being assigned to the "abused" group in a research project. Again this is a circular and erroneous method of assigning children to groups. London and colleagues (2005) acknowledge this circularity but do not address it, evidenced by their final proposition that children who have been abused are more likely to disclose than those who have not been abused.

In summary, the research on disclosure patterns has not managed to identify one, normative way that children disclose their abusive experiences. An implied but unstated motive behind some of the research on disclosure patterns – particularly the research that finds in favour of disclosure being a one-off event that can be elicited in a single interview – seems aimed at treating the way a child discloses as another potential indicator of reliability. Thus, if sufficient evidence supports the notion that most children will disclose genuine abuse if directly asked about it in a single interview, then frank disclosure becomes a new measure of the reliability of a child's statement. However, judging by the division in the literature at present, this seems an unlikely outcome in the near future.

3.3.2. *Factors promoting disclosure*

A separate body of research has attempted to identify factors that promote or inhibit disclosure. Being young is one factor, with studies suggesting that younger children take longer to disclose than older children (Goodman-Brown, Edelstein, Goodman & Gordon, 2003). Gender, relationship to perpetrator and cultural considerations appear to influence disclosure also. Boys are less likely to disclose with some researchers suggesting this may be due to fears surrounding being labelled as homosexual in a homophobic society (Faller, 1989). If the perpetrator is a significant caregiver, then a child's attachment to that caregiver as well as a child's desire to preserve the family unit may influence whether or not a child discloses (Paine & Hansen, 2002). Children may be more inhibited about making disclosures in cultural groups that place a high value on preservation of the family (Paine & Hansen, 2002).

Other social-motivational factors that influence disclosure include a child's fear of getting the offender into trouble, or being punished by the offender for disclosing (Richardson, 2003). Research also shows that parental support, defined as believing the child, assuming a protective stance, and avoiding pressuring or punishing the child, plays a role in promoting disclosure, more particularly in discouraging retraction following disclosure (Lawson & Chaffin, 1992). Elliot and Briere (1994) found that maternal support was a predictor of whether or not children disclosed in their analysis of 248 cases of substantiated abuse.

Jensen, Gulbrandsen, Mossige, Reichelt and Tjersland (2005) point to social contextual factors that either promote or inhibit disclosure. Their study used transcripts derived from videotaped therapeutic sessions with 22 children who either attended sessions alone, or with their mothers at a Norwegian university-based family therapy clinic to talk about

possible sexual abuse. In addition to transcripts of the therapeutic sessions, the data included transcripts of follow-up interviews conducted one year later with the concerned adult caregiver and the child interviewed separately. Their main insight was to emphasise the relational, communicative aspects of disclosure. In particular, they observed that the disclosure process is aided if the caregiver and child are able to create a joint context through which to establish a shared frame of reference to begin a conversation about the sensitive topic of abuse. The difficult act of disclosing the sensitive information appeared to be aided when there was an opportunity to disclose, and a purpose for disclosing. Opportunities were present when the trusted caregiver began a dialogue about what was troubling the child, or when other situational cues, such as an impending visit to the alleged offender, prompted the child to initiate a dialogue. Jensen et al. (2005) suggest that having a purpose to disclose was also conducive to easing the disclosure process. However, the examples given seem to be more aptly described as the removing of interpersonal barriers to disclosing. For instance, according to the authors many children did not disclose because they were fearful of the consequences for the offender, or they were concerned about causing distress to their mothers in cases where the purported offender was a father or stepfather. Thus, they argued, if a mother separated from an alleged offender, then a child was more inclined to disclose because there was no need to protect the mother from this outcome.

3.4. Research into investigative interviewing practices in the field

Moving away from the large body of literature focused on reliability and disclosure, a number of researchers have turned their attention to seeing how investigative interviews are conducted in the field. A substantial section of this literature examines to what extent different question types, or the order in which certain question types are asked impacts

upon the quantity and accuracy of detail provided by children in an interview. Another section of the literature is focused on measuring the extent to which the interviewing practices of police officers and child protection workers align with the empirical evidence on what constitutes a good, non-suggestive interview and the impact that knowledge of, and training in, best practice interviewing techniques have upon actual practice.

Different jurisdictions use different guidelines for interviewing children. Australia has not as yet developed a formal set of guidelines as per the *Memorandum* (Home Office, 1992, 2002, 2008) in the United Kingdom but increasingly child interviewers are being trained according to the current state of knowledge on what constitutes a good, non-suggestive interview (Smith, Powell, & Lum, 2009), which is embodied in the *Memorandum*. This entails conducting an interview in four main phases beginning with (1) establishing rapport, then (2) obtaining a free narrative from the child, (3) asking the right type of questions in the right order (i.e. from open-ended to more specific) and (4) closing the interview properly (Bull, 2010).

Bull (2010) provides a useful summary of the aims of these four phases. In the rapport phase, the aim is to establish good communication with the child, and put them at ease by talking about non-abuse related topics. The interviewer should use this stage to let the child know that it is important they admit when they don't know, or don't remember something when that is the case.

In the free narrative phase, the interviewer tries to get the child to say as much as they can about what has happened without interruption, if possible. Prompts such as —“~~td~~ me more about that” are permissible.

In the questioning phase, the aim is to explore in more detail the child's account, using open-ended questions (e.g. "Tell me more about what Shaun did to you"). Only then should the interviewer use specific questions that clarify or expand on details, and they should remain open in style (i.e. "You said he came over on Wednesday, what time did he come over?"). Only once these questions have been exhausted is the interviewer advised to resort to forced choice questions if important details are still needed (e.g. "So he came over Wednesday, was it in the morning, the afternoon or the night time?").

In the closure phase, the interviewer should summarise what the child has said using the child's own words, answer any questions the child has, thank them and try to leave them feeling comfortable by returning to more neutral topics as in the rapport phase, and provide contact details so that the child can make contact if they have more to tell.

An early study by Davey and Hill (1999) looked at investigative interviewing practices before the *Memorandum* (2002, 2008) was introduced into the United Kingdom. They surveyed 60 investigative interviewers from a region of Wales in the United Kingdom. The survey sought information on professional background, training, interview experience, several personal characteristics of the interviewers as well as characteristics of their interviews, such as length of interview, number of interviews per child, and whether the parents were present at the interview. They found that several practices were contrary to recommendations from the literature. A large number (27%) of interviewers interviewed children for more than two hours at a time, interviewed them in the presence of their parents (only 27% never did so), or in the presence of the alleged offender (only 2% never did so). A methodological limitation of the study was its reliance on survey data: the participants reported on their typical practice but were not observed doing an

interview. The authors also noted that contemporary practices may have improved since their data was based on interviewer practices prior to the introduction of the *Memorandum* (Home Office, 1992, 2002, 2008).

At the same time as Davey and Hill were conducting their research in the UK, Freeman and Morris (1999) evaluated the impact of 6 hours of investigative interviewing training on twelve US child protection workers using questionnaires and simulated interviews in a pre-post quasi-experimental design. Participants completed a questionnaire to assess their knowledge of interviewing practices; they conducted a 30 minute simulated interview with a confederate (an adult woman acting as a child who had learned the scripted details of an invented case) which was assessed by the researchers for its compliance with recommended practices; they also completed a questionnaire before conducting the interview to indicate what information they would normally gather from a caregiver before commencing the interview, whether they would permit a parent to be in the room during the interview, and what materials they would utilize in actual interviews, such as drawings. These measures were conducted on 3 occasions: prior to the training, within 1 month of completing the training, and 3 months after the initial training.

They found that training increased participants' knowledge on the topic of investigative interviewing and they found improvement in some behaviours. There was a decrease in the participants' tendency to praise the confederate's responses, and an increase in time spent explaining the purpose and procedures of the interview. However, no other significant improvements in participants' behaviour were observed. In particular, although there was an increase in the proportion of open questions asked, they still remained below 20% of all questions. The authors queried whether the small number of participants may have reduced their ability to detect other significant findings. Also, the

contrived nature of the interview, and the fact that the confederate was an adult acting as a child, may have altered participants' behaviour in ways that affect the validity of the findings.

Cederborg, Orback, Sternberg and Lamb (2000) conducted a study that was stronger than the previous two studies in terms of sample size and ecological validity. They analysed transcripts of actual videotaped evidential interviews conducted by six police officers with 76 children in one police district in Sweden. In particular, they focused on the distribution and timing of different utterance types, such as *invitations* aimed at prompting free recall responses (e.g. "Tell me everything that happened"); *directives* aimed at refocusing the child on details already mentioned; *option posing utterances*, which focus a child on details of the alleged incident the child has not mentioned and asking them to affirm, negate or select an investigator-given option without implying a particular response is preferred; and *suggestive utterances*, which strongly communicate the expected response, or assume details that have not been provided by the child. They found that the average number of invitations per interview was very low (3.78), thus demonstrating that interviewers gave little opportunity for children to give their own spontaneous, free recall accounts of their experiences. Interviewers relied mainly on option-posing and suggestive utterances to elicit details from children, which together comprised 53% of overall utterances. This is problematic because research shows that information elicited using these types of utterances is less likely to be accurate than information elicited using open-ended prompts. In turn, eliciting poor quality information in investigative interviews is likely to make the case difficult to substantiate, or make the evidence inadmissible in court.

Sternberg, Lamb, Davies and Westcott (2001) conducted an even larger study of 119 videotaped interviews conducted between 1994 and 1997 by police officers from 13 different police departments across England and Wales. They were especially interested in comparing whether their sample, who had received training in *Memorandum of good practice on video recorded interviews with child witnesses for criminal proceedings* (Home Office, 1992), would conduct better quality interviews than previous samples from other jurisdictions such as Sweden, the US and Israel that had not, at that time, introduced structured protocols. However, contrary to expectations, they found few differences. Interviewers continued to rely heavily on option-posing and suggestive utterances (40%), and infrequently on open-ended utterances (6%) to elicit information from the children they interviewed.

Westcott and Kynan (2006) used a subset of 70 of the transcripts created from the videotaped interviews used in the Sternberg et al. (2001) study in order to investigate the presence or absence of interviewer behaviours other than the types of questions asked. They found problems in a number of areas. Interviewers frequently did not attempt to elicit a free narrative and, when they did, often did not try to maintain it once the child had begun to talk, coming in too early with specific questions. The rapport phase was frequently conducted mechanically using “utility” questions, such as asking the child to confirm details such as their name, age, address, date and time of interview. These kinds of questions only invite very short responses from children and do not provide practice at providing the kind of detailed, free-narrative responses required in the substantive part of the interview.

The closure stage was often poorly done and was altogether absent in over half the cases. This is the stage where the interviewer thanks the child, and invites them to come back if

they have anything more to tell, amongst other things. Other problems included distorting or contradicting things the child had said, which has implications for the credibility of the child if the child does not correct the interviewer, as well as behaviours such as expressing disbelief, commenting on the character of the accused, or being overly familiar with the child. Westcott and Kynan (2006) acknowledge that their analysis was conducted on old interviews, and that changes in practice may have occurred over time, especially since the first revision of the *Memorandum* (Home Office, 2002) was introduced in 2002 in the United Kingdom. They also acknowledge that access to the actual videotapes, and not just the verbatim transcripts, may have revealed further useful information, having noted the transcripts appeared to contain some mistakes made by the transcriber.

In a review of research into the effectiveness of training on investigative interviewing practice, Powell, Fisher and Wright (2005) conclude that there is no association between interviewer's knowledge of best practice interviewing guidelines and applying them in practice. In one of the studies they reviewed, after 10 days of intensive training even experienced interviewers did not improve their questioning style to include more open-ended questions; further, a large scale evaluation study in the UK conducted in 1995 showed that in approximately a quarter of cases reviewed, there was no attempt to elicit a free narrative from children, and a further 43% of cases showed the interviewer rushing too quickly away from the free narrative phase into the more direct questioning phase.

In an Australian study into what factors prevent police interviewers from adhering to best practice guidelines, Wright and Powell (2007) asked police interviewers what they thought constituted a good investigative interview. Interviewers tended to emphasise personal characteristics of the interviewer as most important, particularly those that promote rapport and a relaxed atmosphere, as well as the ability to listen and show

empathy to the child witness. The authors observed that the interviewers did not emphasise questioning techniques as might have been expected.

A second study by Wright, Powell and Ridge (2007) involved 75 police officers conducting a mock interview with 5-7 year old children about a staged event the children had witnessed at school. The police officers then provided a written evaluation of how they believed they had performed. The authors noticed that the police officers tended to attribute the outcome of the interview to the child. Specifically, they either expressed that the interview had gone well because the child talked, or did not go well because the child did not talk. In a recent review of the factors impeding prevent police interviewers from adhering to best practice guidelines, Powell, Wright and Clark (2009) evaluated this finding pejoratively, writing:

[t]his explanation is in contrast to that of experts who place the central onus of responsibility for the outcome of an investigative interview on the skill of the interviewer. In other words, experts perceive that the accuracy of the information obtained is an important consideration. Highly accurate information is elicited, they assert, via the use of open-ended questions which is the responsibility of the interviewer. (p.3)

This interpretation supports the premise of the present study: that there is currently a widely held view that primary responsibility for the outcome of an interview rests with the interviewer. By contrast, I hope to show that it is *both* the interviewer *and* the child who contribute to the unfolding trajectory of the interview, with the child possibly having a greater influence than is usually acknowledged, as others have also begun to observe (Gilstrap & Ceci, 2005; Melinder & Gilstrap, 2009).

In the same review, Powell, Wright and Clark (2009) ask the question: —Why did the participants in the studies by Wright and colleagues . . . believe that open-ended questions were not an important feature of investigative interviews?” (p. 3). They answer by suggesting that it may be due to a lack of mastery and/or to a lack of reinforcement for using an open-ended style of questioning and/or a lack of supervision in the field.

An alternative explanation might be that interviewers *are* aware that open-ended questioning is important *and* have difficulty adhering to that style. But perhaps their experience of what makes a good interview from an insider perspective is tied to how *responsive* the child is to their questions. From an interviewer’s point of view, an interview where the child talks easily and with minimal disturbance to the progressivity of the interaction (a concept discussed in chapter 4) is arguably a very good interview, particularly as this may, depending on the nature of the child’s talk, resemble the free narrative account that interviewers are encouraged to elicit. Hearing the natural data recording where the researcher asked the police interviewers questions and how the interaction unfolded around the topic of a good interview would potentially shed some light on how police may have been interpreting the questions they were being asked in Wright and colleagues’ (2007) study.

3.5. An alternative view: Investigative interviewing as social interaction

So far most of the research reviewed has in common the assumption that if investigative interviewers are sufficiently skilled (by conducting non-suggestive interviews that promote children’s free recall of their experiences, by allowing their practices to be informed by the relevant knowledge about what impacts on children’s reliability, how children disclose abuse, and what constitutes best practice interviewing) then they are more likely to conduct a better interview that will get them closer to the truth of what has

happened (or not happened) to a child: to access their vessel of answers (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). This reflects the fact that the research is conducted from a positivist epistemological stance: fixed, stable truths are discoverable so long as the data is gathered with sufficient scientific rigour and are analysed objectively.

As Holstein and Gubrium (1995) note, this positivist view “cautions interviewers to be wary of how they ask questions, lest their manner of inquiry bias what lies within the subject, which otherwise is available for truthful and accurate communication” (p.8). As mentioned in the introductory chapter, whilst not written with investigative interviewing in mind, it is striking how well this image of the child holding the truth inside their vessel of answers, and the need for interviewers to beware of doing things in the interview that may distort the truth on its way out, seems to capture the intent of much of the literature pertaining to investigative interviewing. Consider the image of the interviewer and child contained in this quotation from Cronch, Vilojen & Hansen (2006):

The interviewer carries enormous responsibility in child sexual abuse cases, as he or she can single-handedly determine the probability of disclosure and, thereby, the likelihood of prosecution. An interviewer has the power to elicit false allegations (e.g. Bruck & Ceci, 1995; Lamb & Fauchier, 2001; Saywitz et al., 2002 and Wood & Garven, 2000), to determine accuracy and amount of details provided by the victim (e.g. Davies et al., 2000; Hershkowitz et al., 2002; Lamb & Garretson, 2003; Sternberg et al., 1996 and Wood & Garven, 2000), and to prevent the victim from disclosing altogether (e.g. Saywitz et al., 2002 and Wood & Garven, 2000). The

interviewer's influence may stem from personal characteristics, but is often a function of interviewing skill.

(p.196)

Cronch and colleagues (2006) imply that the adult interviewer stands apart as a strategic individual who shapes the interaction in a uni-directional way. The quality of the child's responses is dependent on the quality of the interviewer's questions. The child is not construed as an active participant in shaping the interaction.

This view of the child possessing a store of objective answers, which are accessible under the right conditions, implies a particular view of language. It implies that language and communication are simply the medium through which people pass thoughts to one another (Wooffitt, 2005): the thoughts are the important thing, language is simply the transport for those thoughts.

In the investigative interviewing literature, this conception of the relationship between thought and language is apparent in ideas such as this: an interviewer's personal biases (their attitudes, beliefs, thoughts) can influence a child's statement because they tend to ask questions that confirm their pre-existing beliefs rather than potentially disconfirming questions, a phenomenon known as the Rosenthal effect (Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Ney, 1995).

There is a presumption here that a cognitive object (a thought, belief, or attitude) exists prior to language. The cognitive object is expressed through language by the interviewer

and is perceived by the child through the senses, thus influencing the child's cognition, which then shapes the child's next linguistic response, and so on.

However, a very different conception of the part that language plays in social interaction is posed by theorists and researchers in the fields of discursive psychology and conversation analysis, where talk is understood as action-oriented: people are doing things in and through talk-in-interaction. This was more fully discussed in chapter 2.

3.6. Prior conversation analytic work examining children's talk in interview and therapeutic contexts

To date there is limited research that has taken a conversation analytic approach to recorded social interactions pertaining to child sexual abuse. In a US study, Lloyd (1990; 1992) analysed eight child interviews conducted by therapists tasked with assessing allegations of sexual abuse. The study showed some of the methods adults used to elicit children's confirmations of abuse, such as treating children's weak agreements with the interviewer's suggestions as strong agreements, and ratifying children's conversational turns that were confirming abuse, while censuring those that were non-confirming. It also showed how children at times resisted the adult interviewer's interrogation by declining to respond to adults' initiations⁶, and neglecting to offer accounts for their minimal or rejecting responses. Lloyd's work makes a valuable contribution by demonstrating how a confirmation of sexual abuse is achieved as a negotiated product of the adult and child's interactional practices over the course of an interview.

A weakness in Lloyd's study, however, is that it used transcripts of sexual abuse interviews that, by current standards, would be judged highly coercive. Admittedly, Lloyd

⁶ Initiation is a CA term that refers to the first turn in a sequence of turns

employs this feature of the interviews to make several theoretical points about “coercion”, including that charges of coercion can be seen as a discursive resource to be used by others in future interactions to discredit the evidentiary status of previously produced accounts, reports, or results of investigations. Nonetheless, Lloyd’s research leaves a gap that the present study aims to fill by examining interviews conducted by investigators who are knowledgeable about the issues of children’s reliability, suggestibility and the importance of trying to generate a statement from a child that will not be perceived by the prosecution, defense, judge or jury as the product of (mis)leading or suggestive interviewing methods.

Heydon (1997, as cited in Heydon 2005) analysed seven practice interviews conducted by police interviewers in an Australian context who were learning to do investigative interviews. Children from a rural ballet school witnessed an innocuous event and were then questioned by police interviewers with the aim of eliciting as many details as possible. Coming from a linguistics perspective, Heydon adopts a synthetic approach, combining the concept of participation frameworks (Goffman, 1981) – the idea that participants in conversation adopt one of four possible roles: principal, animator, figure and author - together with conversation analysis. Heydon (2005) compares these training interviews between police and children with a set of actual police interviews with adult suspects and for the most part she is concerned with articulating the institutionality of police investigative interviews with suspects, which is not of direct relevance to the present study.

However, of some bearing on the present study is Heydon’s finding that at the point of the interview where police interviewers start to close the interview by summarising what a

child has told them, children are more inclined to correct or elaborate if the interviewer invites them to do so. In Heydon's terms, this is due to the interviewer making clear the participation roles, seen in the opening turn of the interviewer (VPO7) in this extract from her data:

[Heydon 2005 *Extract 5-3 V-INT4*]

67. VPO7: OK(.) I'm just going to go through what you've told me about this man OK and um I'd like you to just to make sure that I've got it right and if there's anything you want to add to what I've said you can just(.) interrupt me and add
68. CH4: Yep
69. VPO7: Or um if there's something that's wrong that I've said you can just tell me if I've got anything wrong (..)OK you said that at ballet school on Thursday at about six o'clock↑
70. CH4: Yeah

Heydon does not include the whole sequence to show where children either correct or elaborate but she does report instances of the child doing so in the interaction that follows.

By contrast, Heydon notes that when police did not make the participation roles clear children tended not to add to, or adjust any of the information contained in the interviewer's summary. The opening turn she uses as an illustration is represented here:

[Heydon 2005 *Extract 5-3 V-INT4*]

149. VPO6: Right(.) OK(.) certainly sounds very interesting(.) we'll stop the tape there(.) but um just so I make

sure I've got this right(.) so last Thursday you went
to ballet↑

150. CH7: Yeah

In the language of conversation analysis, the difference between the examples Heydon gives is that the former is formatted as an *invitation* to interrupt the interviewer during her summary, whereas the latter is more like an *announcement* of the coming summary, without the invitation. As will become clear during my analysis, the different actions contained within interviewers' initiating turns do indeed have different implications for how children respond.

A second observation made by Heydon (2005) is the prevalence of receipt markers uttered by police interviewers (*OK, certainly, right*) as a way of acknowledging a child's response to a question, which she notes are less common in standard police interviews with adult suspects. These receipts are also prevalent in my own data, although they can be seen to be doing different actions depending on their position in the turn in which they appear, and the position of that turn within the sequence. Although I was initially drawn to look at aspects of sequence organisation in the present data, I chose not to make it a primary focus because to do it justice would have consumed the entire thesis. Instead, I refer to sequence organisation as and when it has some bearing on the other analytic foci I explore.

A third observation made by Heydon is the prevalence of indirect, embedded requests, such as —~~an~~ you tell me about when . . . ?” in the interviews she analysed. This is compared to, for instance, a direct request, such as —~~td~~ me about when . . . ”. She examines how some forms of embedded request are more obligating than others. In my

data, I also describe occasions where the way an interviewer formulates their request for information is more or less constraining in terms of the kind of response the child can make and still be seen to be responding in a relevant way.

Although not based on data from investigative interviews, Hutchby's (2007) work on the interactional organisation of child counselling also has some bearing on the current study. He analysed audio recordings of children and counsellors in a family mediation centre. The children were brought to counselling by a parent/s concerned about the impact of family break-up. Of particular interest is Hutchby's observation about the disjuncture between what is proposed as ideal counselling practice and what counsellors actually do in practice. He takes the example of the skill of "active listening", where the text book approach tends to promote it as a means of creating an interactional context that allows the child to feel comfortable enough to tell their story and, in enabling that telling, permits the counsellor to draw out and reflect back the "feelings" expressed by the child. Thus, counsellors are advised to "reflect" and "summarise" in order to display the skill of active listening. Hutchby notes that "when we observe the techniques used by counsellors in the real-time unfolding of their interactions with children, we see that such ideal models map only loosely at best onto the therapeutic interchange" (p.81). What conversation analysis offers, notes Hutchby, is a way of revealing "the practical skills that counsellors use – often regardless of models recommended by their training – to accomplish outcomes amidst the contingencies of turn by turn talk-in-interaction" (p.81).

When first faced with the police interview data, I shared Hutchby's sense that what gets presented in textbooks and practical guidelines as the ideal form of interaction for counsellors, or police interviewers in my case, was likely to (1) create a sense of never quite measuring up to the ideal amongst the interviewers and (2) reveal the practical ways

that police interviewers still manage to achieve the institutional outcome they are tasked with; that is, to conduct an interview that allows a decision to be made about whether or not abuse is likely to have occurred and doing it in a way that cannot be judged as coercive or leading, which could damage the prosecution's case.

Another point of comparison with the present study is Hutchby's observation about the image of the counsellor that emerges from practical manuals on counselling. Commenting upon the advice given to counsellors that they should not respond to a child's story in ways that convey evaluation or judgement because this risks the child changing their story to gain approval, he notes:

We find here evidence of the model of the counsellor as a neutral conduit . . . The assumption is that the child is in possession of their 'story' and the role of the counsellor, as an active listener, is to enable that story to emerge in its authenticity, that is, without distortion. (p. 92)

This image of the counsellor as a neutral conduit is the companion to Holstein and Gubrium's (1995) conception of the interviewee in social science research as a *vessel of answers* who, if the interview is done in an unbiased way, will "validly emit what [they] are presumed to hold within them – the unadulterated facts and details of experience under consideration" (p.8). And, as already mentioned, these respective images of a neutral conduit and vessel of answers seem also to have been applied to interviewers and children in the investigative interviewing literature.

Similar to Hutchby (2007) with his child counselling data, the present study also hopes to reveal the practical ways that police investigators, in this instance, achieve their

institutionally defined outcomes, and to show how they navigate the various contingencies presented by children along the way, children who are also playing an active part in shaping the unfolding interaction.

In the next chapter I provide some background to the most relevant conversation analytic concepts as they apply to the analytic chapters that follow.

Chapter 4: Relevant conversation analytic concepts explained

4.1. Introduction

In this brief chapter I detail some of the most relevant conversation analytic concepts that inform the analysis in the following four analytic chapters. This is to enhance readability by avoiding lengthy and distracting explanations within the body of the analysis. The concepts I address here are sequence organisation, preference organisation, progressivity and person reference. For a fuller account of conversation analytic concepts, refer to ten Have (2007) who provides a thorough and accessible introduction.

4.2. Sequence organisation

In these investigative interviews, police interviewers primarily ask questions and children give answers. In conversation analytic terms, interviewers utter *first pair parts* (FPPs) and (ideally) children utter responsive *second pair parts* (SPPs).

FPPs initiate some course of action in conversation and can be typed according to the action they are initiating, such as questions, requests, invitations, announcements and so on. SPPs are responsive to the action of the prior FPP, and thus may include an answer to a prior question, a granting or refusal of a request, an acceptance or declination of invitation amongst others. Extract 1 shows a FPP question and its SPP responsive answer.

	(1)	First Pair Part (FPP) and Second Pair Part (SPP)	
1	I2	do you †think he's done this to anybody †else	← FPP
2		apart from ††you:	
3		(0.3)	
4	C4	°nup°	← SPP

Together, a FPP and a SPP make up an *adjacency pair*, which is the basic unit of sequence construction. The two turns that make up an adjacency pair are spoken by different speakers and are *pair typed*. That means that not just any SPP can follow a FPP: to be relevant a SPP must display its relevance in relation to the action contained within the prior FPP. Thus, in extract 1 above, a relevant SPP response to the interviewer's question is an answer or, alternatively, an account for why an answer cannot be provided.

SPPs are not always contiguous to a FPP however. At times speakers do other activities in-between a *base FPP* and *base SPP*, such as clarifying the action contained within the FPP. When this happens it is called an *insert sequence*, which in itself is ordinarily made up of FPPs and SPPs. Insert sequences are normally involved with working out things that enable the completion of the base FPP/SPP adjacency pair as happens in extract 2 where the child initiates an insert sequence aimed at sorting out what is meant by the weekend before delivering his base SPP response at lines 10-11.

(2) Insert sequence			
1	I2	do you know which day it was on the weekend that	← base FPP
2		this hap,pened	
3	C2	mh mmm (0.8) what ,are the weekends	← insert FPP
4		I forgot (0.3) ah[:m]	
5	I2	[the wee]kends are Saturday and	← insert SPP
6		Sunday.	
7		(1.5)	
8	I2	Saturday's the first day of the weekend; °and	← insert SPP (increment)
9		Sunday's the seco[nd one.°]	
10	C2	[yeah] it would have been	← base SPP
11		S:unday cos I remember sleeping over .h one night	

In addition, speakers can conduct pre-expansion sequences and post-expansion sequences, which, as the names suggest, come prior to, and after base adjacency pairs. I only refer to pre-expansion sequences in the ensuing analytic chapters and so I do not elaborate on post-expansion here. Pre-expansion sequences come before the issuing of a base FPP. As

Liddicoat (2007) notes, in general terms pre-expansion sequences project some specific next activity (e.g. an offer, invitation, request) and are designed to be hearable as preliminary to some other action. Schegloff (2007) makes the point that pre-expansion sequences are usually involved with avoiding problematic responses to a base FPP, such as having a request refused, for example.

Pre-expansion sequences are generally type specific. Thus, a pre-request projects the issuing of a base FPP request or even, in some cases, makes the need to make an explicit request redundant if the recipient hears the pre-request *as* a pre-request and perhaps makes an *offer* in its place⁷.

Type specific pre-expansion sequences, such as a pre-request, tend to function on multiple levels. First, they work to generate the conditions for a *preferred* second pair part (SPP) response when the base first pair part (FPP) is ultimately issued. From a sequence organisation perspective, preferred responses to FPPs are those that further the project or action embodied in the first pair part (Schegloff, 2007). So, for example, an invitation prefers an acceptance to a declination in the responsive second pair part. *Dispreferred* responses are those that fail to further the action embodied in the prior turn and I say more about preference and dispreference below. The second thing that type specific pre-expansion sequences tend to be involved with is determining whether the conditions in fact exist in order to viably make the request, offer, invitation or whatever specific action is intended. Police sometimes initiate pre-expansion sequences in the lead up to asking children to disclose certain details about what has happened to them. This is most relevant

⁷ Schegloff (2007) makes the point that the preferred response to a pre-request is to “pre-empt the need for a request altogether by offering that which is to be requested” (p.90).

to chapter 6 where I consider how police respond to children's discomfort about disclosing sexual details.

A sequence-closing third (SCT) is a turn that comes after a SPP and is normally uttered by the FPP speaker. What defines a SCT is that it does not project any further within-sequence talk beyond itself; that is, it is designed to move for closing the sequence (Schegloff, 2007). Schegloff considers the SCT to be a minimal form of post expansion because it represents just one further turn to a sequence after its SPP, although there are times where the SPP speaker may not collaborate with the FPP speaker to close the sequence.

In the present data set, three-turn sequences comprised of a FPP, SPP, SCT (and then a new FPP from the interviewer, often latched immediately to the end of the SCT) are ubiquitous. Extract 3 is a typical example:

	(3)	Three-turn format – FPP, SPP, SCT (then new FPP)	
1	I5	mnp.h do you:r mum and dad have their mum and dad?	← FPP
2	C8	((nods vigorously))	← SPP
3	I5	oh.	← SCT
4	I5	what are they called.	← FPP

The interviewer's —oh accepts the child's SPP and functions to close off the sequence before issuing a new FPP question at line 4. At other times interviewers' SCTs take the form of —okay" or —alright". This three-turn format seems to be part of what gives this setting its institutional character. Effectively, it works to maintain the interviewers' strict control over the direction of the interaction. Children in the data corpus rarely utter FPPs themselves and when they do it is usually to initiate a topic about things other than the

abuse, like asking what the microphone is for, or when the interview will be over. The other function of this three-turn format is, possibly, to do with giving the interview a friendlier feel since when interviewers leave out the SCT and move straight to a new FPP, it sounds comparably interrogatory, as extract 4 shows.

		(4) Two-turn format – FPP, SPP (then new FPP)	
1	I4	↑wha' ↑do ↑what does humped mean.	← FPP
2		(0.7)	
3	C5	hh li:ke he humps us?	← SPP
4	I4	what does that me:an.	← FPP
5	C5	((shrugs))	← SPP
6	I4	w-w'll can you tell m- explain to me what he did?	← FPP
7		(1.0)	
8	C5	°u:m° (1.5) I for(.)got?	← SPP
9		(4.5)	
10	I4	w'll can you explain to me what humped means.	← FPP
11		(1.8)	

Here, the interviewer leaves out the SCT and this has the effect of seeming not to accept the child's SPP responses, which is arguably where the sense of interrogation comes from.

Two additional concepts belonging to the area of how individual turns are organised and how speaker change takes place so that sequences of talk occur at all, is turn-constructional unit (TCU), and the related concept of transitional relevance place (TRP). A TCU is the part of a speaker's utterance that could comprise a complete turn, after which another speaker could take a turn without it seeming interruptive. Most importantly, as ten Have (2007) notes, what makes a string of sounds into a TCU is ~~its~~ ability to do something, be it proposing, requesting, accepting, showing surprise or whatever" (p. 129). A transition-relevance place (TRP), by contrast, is the precise

moment in a turn at talking where that turn might be complete and another speaker might take over (ten Have, 2007).

4.3. Preference organisation

When considering adjacency pairs, in the vast majority of cases there are alternative responses and, as Schegloff (2007) observes, these responses are non-equivalent in an important way. This is an area of conversation analysis referred to as preference organisation and it becomes relevant when thinking about adjacency pairs that have two possible non-equivalent responses to the action embodied in the FPP. For instance, when a speaker produces an invitation in a FPP, the recipient can accept (a *preferred* response) or decline (a *dispreferred* response).

In the conversation analytic sense, preference does not mean the psychological preference held by the interlocutors for certain kinds of responses over others. Rather, it refers to the structural relationship of sequence parts (Schegloff, 2007). It is more accurate to say that the sequence “prefers” certain responses, rather than the person although, as Schegloff notes, “in any given case the sequential preference and individual leaning may coincide, perhaps in most cases” (p.61). Overall, preference organisation refers to the institutionalised methods speakers use for producing and responding to affiliative and disaffiliative actions in interaction and the aggregate consequences of this *for interaction*, with the main consequence of such practices being “to promote the production of preferred responses and to limit the occasions for, and consequences of, dispreferred responses” (Raymond, 2003, p. 944).

Because sequences are the vehicle through which activities get accomplished in interaction, and because FPPs initiate activities, any response to a FPP that furthers the

accomplishment of that activity is deemed the *preferred* response. Conversely, any response (or lack of response) that delays or foils the accomplishment of the activity is deemed *dispreferred*. In this way, recipients can either align with the action embodied in a FPP or not. For example, in the case of an invitation (“Do you wanna come over Friday night?”), an acceptance (“I’d love to”) represents an alignment or affiliation with the course of action, and a refusal “I’d love to but I’ve made plans with X”, is a misalignment or disaffiliation.

4.4. Progressivity

When interviewers ask questions, children normally do one of two things: they answer the question or they provide some other kind of response that does not answer the question as such but demonstrates awareness that an answer is called for, often by providing an account for not giving an answer.

Stivers and Robinson (2006) examine more generally the issue of questions and answers through the conversation analytic lens of preference organisation. Drawing on Heritage (1984a), they argue that whilst there are two categories of possible second pair part (SPP) responses upon completion of a first pair part (FPP) question (an answer, or a non-answer response that nonetheless addresses the relevance of an answer even if it does not provide one) these two response categories are non-equivalent and answers are preferred over non-answer responses.

An answer represents a preferred response because it is something that furthers the *progress* of the activity projected by the FPP question, rather than something that impedes it. A simple example is given by Stivers and Robinson (2006) here:

[Fish dinner (Stivers and Robinson, 2006)]

1 Boy: What kind of fish is (it)/(this)
2 Mom: .h Halibu

Here the boy's request for information makes relevant an answer, which Mom goes on to provide at line 2. Thus, the activity of requesting information launched by the FPP question is progressed by Mom providing the information in her answer.

A non-answer response, conversely, can do one of two things. First, it can display an orientation to the relevance of an answer but satisfy only the technical two part structure of a sequence. Stivers and Robinson provide this example:

[Trio 2 (Stivers and Robinson, 2006)]

1 Mag: What happened at (.) wo:rk.
2 Mag. At Bullock's this evening.
3 Chr: .hh Wul I don' kno:^::w.

Stivers and Robinson note several things that mark Christina's SPP response at line 3 as dispreferred. However, my focus is on their main point that although ~~I~~don' kno:^::w." technically satisfies the two part structure of the adjacency pair sequence (by providing an account – ~~not~~ knowing" - for not informing) - it does not provide an answer about what happened at work, and therefore does not further the activity of informing. As Stivers and Robinson (2006) state:

Accounts reveal what is potentially problematic about non-answer responses: although they address the relevance of a response to the question, non-answer responses fail to collaborate with promoting the progress of the activity

through the sequence. In this way they satisfy only the technical structural aspect of sequence closure while failing to promote closure of the activity. (p.373)

The second kind of non-answer response observed by Stivers and Robinson is where the response impedes the progress of the sequence by not delivering a second pair part in the relevant turn slot, or ever. Thus, initiating repair at the place where a SPP answer is due effectively delays the answer and holds up the completion of both the sequence and the activity or project that the initial FPP question projected.

Progressivity, therefore, refers to the concept of progressing the activity at hand through the sequence and the way in which interlocutors either collaborate, or fail to collaborate in ways that achieve this in relatively smooth and unproblematic ways.

What is strikingly apparent in these sexual abuse interviews is that when interviewers ask delicate questions surrounding the matter of abuse, children frequently display a great deal of trouble providing answers in the sense outlined by Stivers and Robinson, and this is a focus of analysis in both chapters 5 and 6.

The investigative interviewing literature tends to see the problem (and solution) in these moments as being to do with rapport: a lack of, and need for, better rapport. However, as I discuss in chapters 5 and 6, these moments might be better understood as disturbances to progressivity and progressivity might potentially be at least part of what people mean when they talk about perceiving a sense of rapport between two people in interaction.

In the setting of an investigative interview, person reference at times takes on special significance because interviewers need children to identify the perpetrator by name *and* by relationship to the child, and they need them to do this verbally, out loud, for the record. Thus, even when the child may know that the interviewer knows the person they are talking about (perhaps from a pre-interview), they must still name the person and how that person relates to them. In chapter 5, the way this gets worked out between one interviewer and child illustrates how investigative interviewing guidelines at times conflict with norms in conversation.

Armed with these basic conversation analytic concepts, in chapter 5, the first analytic chapter, I examine moments in the data corpus where interviewers move from the rapport building stage to the substantive part of the interview. I focus particularly on how interviewers deal with the contingencies that children's responses at this point present to them in order to progress the activity at hand, which is to try to elicit some kind of disclosure from the child that provides grounds for going on to question them about the alleged perpetrator and event(s).

Chapter 5: Introducing the topic of abuse: Interviewer's and children's methods for producing disclosures

5.1. Introduction

The nature of a sexual abuse interview means that children are called upon to talk about sexual things and it is apparent from the data corpus that children show signs of discomfort or embarrassment when called upon to do so. This presents interviewers with a challenge. Their institutional obligation is to gather evidence in sufficient detail to permit a prosecution but, at the same time, they need to deal sensitively with the children before them. At certain times these two obligations appear more difficult to manage than at others, particularly when children are being asked to talk about the abuse related things that have happened to them.

The investigative interviewing literature notes that emotions such as embarrassment may impinge on children's ability or willingness to report details about the sexual aspects of the abuse experience (Goldstein, 1999; Lamb & Sternberg, 1998; Lyon 1999; Saywitz, Goodman & Lyon, 2002; Saywitz, Goodman, Nicholas & Moan, 1991; Sternberg, Lamb, Hershkowitz & Yudilevitch, 1997) but has comparatively little to say about how investigators should respond to this, except to advise that specific questions are more successful than free recall questions at getting children to acknowledge embarrassing material (Saywitz et al., 1991; Saywitz et al. 2002) and to emphasise the importance of building rapport so that a child is more likely to feel comfortable enough to disclose embarrassing material (Wilson & Powell, 2001).

Even though rapport is something we seem to know when we see it (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999) or experience it firsthand, consensus on what it is made up of remains elusive. In an attempt to theorise rapport, Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal (1990) propose three elements: mutual attentiveness, positivity, and coordination. *Mutual attentiveness* refers to how two people experiencing rapport express “mutual attention to and involvement with one another” (p. 286). *Positivity* describes how “interactants feeling in rapport with one another feel mutual friendliness and caring” (p.286). *Coordination*, the authors suggest, is the sense of “balance”, “harmony” and “being in sync” (p. 286) that people have when in rapport with one another.

Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal (1990) theorise that there are non-verbal correlates to these three experiential components of rapport, which might enable rapport to be measured. For example, they suggest attentiveness could be correlated with behaviours such as bodily orientation toward the other person and direction of gaze. Positivity might be correlated with behaviours such as smiling and head nodding. Coordination, they argue, is more difficult to measure at a molecular level of behaviour and they suggest *interactional synchrony* as a potential variable for measuring the degree of interactional coordination. Bernieri, Davis, Rosenthal and Knee (1994) define interactional synchrony as *movement synchrony* between the two interactants (i.e. bodily coordination) as well as *posture similarity*, both of which are perceptible to external observers.

Criticisms of Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal’s (1990) attempt to define rapport include concerns about the clarity of concepts such as “coordination” and whether or not observers of an interaction can discern between “positivity” and “coordination”, since people may implicitly perceive a positive interaction as one where people are “in sync” or coordinated (Capella, 1990). Duncan (1990) objects to correlates such as “smiling and

head nodding” being treated as indicators of rapport because it makes the individual “smiler” the focus of analysis, whereas, according to Duncan, actions such as smiling are jointly produced in interaction as each participant simultaneously affects the other.

With no consensus on what rapport is comprised of, unsurprisingly there is a dearth of research on how to develop it. Even experts in the area of investigative interviewing admit that the research on how to develop rapport is scant, in spite of the fact that it is uniformly recommended (Saywitz & Camparo, 2009). This makes it difficult, therefore, to give meaningful guidelines to interviewers on how to develop rapport and, conversely, makes it impossible to say for sure that rapport is the thing responsible for enabling children to disclose embarrassing material more easily.

In this chapter and the next I apply a conversation analytic approach to moments in the interview where children show signs of discomfort within the interaction because, arguably, these are moments where “rapport” might be at issue. However, I adopt the discursive psychology and conversation analytic view that psychological concepts (e.g. attitudes, motives, beliefs) normally viewed as internal dispositions that *precede* interaction, can instead be viewed as the product *of* interaction (Wiggins & Potter, 2008). Thus, I set aside the notion of rapport as something that can be definitively fixed upon and instead focus simply on the fine-grained details of the talk, absence of talk, and body gestures that seem to point to emerging trouble in the interaction, with a particular focus on how interviewers respond to such trouble. Furthermore, instead of talking in terms of a problem with rapport, I locate the trouble with disturbances to progressivity, a concept detailed in chapter 4.

One common moment where children's discomfort shows up in interaction in the form of disturbances to progressivity is when interviewers move from the *rapport building* phase, described in chapter 3, into the substantive phase of the interview focused on the allegation of abuse. That is the subject of this chapter. In chapter 6 I focus on moments within the substantive part of the interview where interviewers are asking children to describe the abuse related details of what was done to them.

5.1.1. Guidelines on introducing the topic of abuse in an investigative interview

In the investigative interviewing literature, there is commonly a distinction made between the rapport building stage of the interview and the substantive or abuse related part of the interview (Faller, 2007a). Faller (2007a) describes the rapport building stage as the time where the interviewer develops a relationship with the child by expressing interest in them and asking questions about friends, family, school and other relatively neutral topics that make up the child's life. The rapport building stage is also promoted as the time when an interviewer should gain a sense of the quantity and quality of information a child is likely to be able to provide in the substantive part of the interview. This includes assessing the child's understanding of concepts such as who, what, where and how, as well as other concepts such as time of day, number of times, the position of clothing and bodies (e.g. on, in, under) and so on (Kuehnle, 1996). In the Step-Wise protocol (Yuille, Hunter, Joffe & Zaparniuk, 1993) interviewers are advised to establish rapport by first discussing neutral topics and then by asking the child about two specific past experiences in order to provide the baseline data on their verbal skills. In addition, this stage is promoted as allowing the interviewer to reinforce the child for talking and also as giving the child practice in responding to open-ended and non-leading questions (Poole & Lamb, 1998).

By contrast, the substantive, or abuse related part of the interview is concerned with gathering evidence about the allegation itself. Making the shift from talking about everyday things to raising the topic of the interview is a necessary but challenging moment. Powell (2003) observes that on the one hand the interviewer needs to avoid vagueness to minimise the chance of obtaining “irrelevant, incoherent or potentially misleading responses from the child” yet at the same time must “try to avoid any reference to the alleged offence in question” (p.259).

Drawing from recommendations set out in several investigative interview protocols (Poole & Lamb, 1998; Yuille et al., 2003), Powell recommends a number of strategies for establishing the purpose of the interview with a child. The first step is to simply ask the child a question such as “tell me what you have come here to talk to me about today”. If the child discloses the alleged offence at this point, then the interviewer is advised to say that it is his or her job to find out about what happened in that event.

Powell (2003) expressly advises against questions such as “Do you know why you are here today?” or “Can you tell me why you are here today?” because they are closed questions and invite a yes/no answer instead of a fuller, more informative response. She adds that children who are reluctant to talk may say “no” even when they do know why they are being interviewed. Powell cites Walker’s (1999) recommendation that “why” questions are best avoided with children.

This interpretation of Walker’s advice needs clarifying. Walker (1999) does in fact recommend asking the child “Do you know why you are here today [child’s name]?” (p. 107) but she does advise discerning between two types of “why” questions when using them with children. She claims that why questions can be objective or subjective. For

instance, “why is the sky blue?” is an objective question and there is a right answer. By contrast, a question such as “why did you do that/say that?” is subjective and can seem accusatory or critical, potentially causing children to perceive a need to justify their actions, rather than simply describe what happened.

Walker (1999) goes further, arguing that even simple subjective questions such as “why did you wait so long to tell anybody?” presents the child with a complex task of metacognitive, cognitive and linguistic operations. They need to self reflect, reason from effect back to cause, understand that one has motivations for doing things, figure out what those motivations were at the time, recall their reasoning, which may have included considering the consequences for someone else of telling, and then put all that into language that encapsulates the reasoning behind the answer.

Yet, as I show later in chapter 8 on children’s moral agency accounts, children do not even need a “why” question to be alert to a call for justification. Moreover, as the next section will show, children do not seem to treat “do you know why you are here today?” type questions as accusatory or as calling for a justification. All of the children orient to the purpose of the question: as the place where they are being called upon to display that they know why they are being interviewed, even if they delay disclosing that knowledge at that precise point.

Returning to Powell’s (2003) advice, she suggests asking a question of the form “tll me what you have come to talk to me about today” (p.259). If children do not state the purpose of the interview at this point, then she advises interviewers to raise details that led to the concern and then, after establishing with the child that these details are true, go

on to ask the child for a narrative account of what happened. A third technique advised by Powell is to ask the child a series of questions about topics or issues that might prompt them to disclose abuse, such as family members and who they most like or least like to be with. She is careful to outline the risks associated with each of these approaches, such as introducing information that could be construed as leading and thus damaging to the evidence or, alternately, so vague that the child may become confused about the purpose of the interview leading to a loss of rapport.

This is commonsense advice, derived from real world practice and research. However, it also suffers from the problem discussed throughout this thesis. In an effort to find generalisable ways to question children that have the most chance of eliciting quality evidence, it by necessity overlooks the particularities that investigators must contend with each time they interview a child. A particular question form cannot guarantee that a particular child will respond in an ideal or predictable way, and when children do not, then interviewers must respond to whatever contingency they are faced with.

In the analysis that follows I examine moments in the data corpus where interviewers move from the rapport building stage to the substantive part. Specifically, I focus on how interviewers deal with the contingencies that children's responses at this particular point present to them in order to progress the activity at hand, which is to firstly elicit some kind of disclosure from the child that provides grounds for going on to question them about the alleged perpetrator and event(s).

First I examine instances where the child names a person, event, or both in the next turn after the interviewer's first pair part (FPP) question regarding whether the child knows the reason for the interview. Then I look at other instances where the child does not disclose a

person or event in the next turn in order to see how interviewers progress the interview to the point where the child *does* make a disclosure, even if only a partial one.

5.2. Analysis

5.2.1. *Introducing the topic of concern with minimal disturbance to progressivity*

At the end of the rapport building stage, investigators often begin the substantive part of the interview by inviting the child to say why they are being interviewed, as happens here in extract 1. Although outlined in chapter 2, I remind the reader at this point that blue frames encase the body movements of the police interviewer, and the red frames those of the child.

(1)	Darren (01:32 video 1)	
27	I3	.hhh c'n you tell: me: why:: you've
28		come to see me today?
29		(0.2)
30	C3	.hhh <(yeah) co:s: Phi:ll::[i:p:] my]>=
31	I3	[ye:s?]
32	C3	=step brother,
33	I3	yep
34		(0.2)
35	C3	um: (0.8) °he sexually abu:sed me°=
36	I3	=he sexually abu:sed you:. okay.
37		(6.5)
38	I3	alri:ght there's a fair bit I'll need to
39		↑find ↑↑out ↑↑won't ↑↑I. [.hh]
40	C3	[mmhh]

27. looking down at notes, hands clasped
 28. looks up at C3, gesturing at own chest with both hands on "see me"
 27-34. looking downward and toward I3's notes, fidgeting hands, ankles crossed and swinging feet out from chair lightly.
 30. turns head back down to look at note pad on table and readies to write
 33-37. writing
 35. wedges hands between knees, still swinging feet
 36-39. still looking towards notes, motionless
 38. lifts pen from page, straightens paper
 39. still looking down at page, pointing pen onto page

When judged against current advice to investigative interviewers, the interviewer's first pair part question "c'n you tell: me: why:: you've come to see me today?" is problematic on two counts. First, it is formatted to invite a "yes/no" response (Faller, 2007b; Powell, 2003). Second, it is a *why* question and, as mentioned above, some experts

argue that *why* questions can seem accusatory or be too cognitively taxing, particularly with young children (Powell 2003; Walker, 1999). However, in this case Darren effectively hears the *action* built into the turn: that this is a request for him to disclose his understanding of the purpose of the interview. He responds to the yes/no *format* of the question with his “yeah”, and he responds to the *action* with his disclosure that his step brother has sexually abused him.

In a sense, Darren’s is an exemplar response. By disclosing both the agent of the abuse (Phillip) and the alleged act (he sexually abused me), the way is now open for the interviewer to try to elicit a *free narrative account* about what happened in greater detail. A free narrative account is an account of what happened in the child’s own words with minimal specific prompting from the interviewer (Powell & Snow, 2007). As Wilson and Powell (2001) note, children’s free narrative accounts are considered the most reliable part of the interview, providing that children have not already experienced leading or suggestive questioning about the events concerned. That is why interviewers are encouraged to try and keep children talking in this form for as long as possible, using open questions that do not give clues to the type of information sought, nor contain information that could be incorporated into the child’s later accounts.

However, children do not always disclose these central details as quickly as Darren does, as I show later. When children do not disclose immediately following these types of questions – which I term *topic initiating questions* henceforth - then the interviewer has to do more interactional work to reach that point in order to go forward with the interview. Otherwise, without some kind of disclosure from the child early on, there is a risk that the interviewer’s persistence with questioning will be viewed as leading or coercive should the case ever go to trial.

In extract 2, Susie also responds to the interviewer's topic initiating question with a disclosure.

(2) Susie (10:51 video 1)		
329	I4	.h °↑↑w'lll° (0.2) Susie c'n you <u>tell me</u>
330		why you've <u>come in to see</u> me today.
331		(0.6)
332	C5	m: °becau:se (.) of Chris°
333		(1.4)
334	I4	because of Chri:s?
335		(1.2)
336	I4	mnp.h okay <u>who's</u> Chris.
337		(0.7)
338	C5	um:: <u>mn.hh</u> Chri::s hh °was my sister's
339		boyfriend before.°
340		(0.5)
341	C5	an:d (.) he: was going to sleep <u>over</u> ?
342		(.)and then °he did stuff to my best
343		friend and me and ((name))°
344		(1.2)

329. right leg crossed over left, notepad on lap, adjusting notepad on lap and looking at it
 329-33. slumped in chair, toying with a paper object, looking at it
 330. tucks left fist under chin as she looks at C5, head tilted to left
 331. straightens head, chin resting on hand, looking at C5
 333. moves to write
 334-7. writing
 335. slight nod
 336-342. continues toying with the paper object, looking at it
 338. looks at C5, then looks back to notes, pen poised to write
 339-44. writing
 344. brings hands up to rest on cheeks.

The interviewer's topic initiating question at lines 329-30 is formatted almost identically to the previous interviewer's: a –ean you tell me why" question. After a delay, Susie responds –m: °becau:se (.) of Chris°" (line 332). In other words, her turn is responsive to the action contained within the interviewer's prior turn: a request for a display of knowing the reason for the interview. The brief particle –m:" may be heard as a minimal form of –yes", which would make it responsive to the *can you tell me* format of the question that invites a yes/no response. This is the same as Darren's –yeah" in extract 1. Also, the particle –m:" functions to briefly defer the substance of Susie's response –°becau:se (.) of Chris°" which, by the drop in volume with which she delivers this part of the turn, is marked as possibly delicate. A similar drop in volume is audible in extract 1 when Darren delivers his disclosure of sexual abuse at line 35. These drops in volume at the point where children are disclosing salient abuse related details are part of

what convey the audible impression that children find these moments uncomfortable, embarrassing or in some way difficult.

Up to this point Susie has disclosed the agent of the abuse – Chris – but has not made it clear who Chris is in relation to her as Darren did in extract 1 by designating Phillip as his stepbrother, and nor has she named the sexual act. After a delay (line 333) during which the interviewer moves to write, the interviewer utters ~~“because of Chris?”~~ delivered with questioning intonation. As Pomerantz and Fehr (1997) observe, one way of querying or challenging what someone has just said is to repeat it with questioning intonation. In this case, the interviewer’s repeat is, potentially, functioning as an *understanding check*: a check that she has correctly heard and understood Susie to have referred to a person named Chris. Susie certainly treats it that way, since she nods in assent (line 335), thus closing the sequence. However, as becomes apparent, the interviewer’s repeated ~~“because of Chris?”~~ at line 333, may in fact have been designed to point up a problem with Susie not giving sufficient information about who Chris is in relation to her and thus to act as a prompt to encourage her to elaborate on that.

Advice to police interviewers at this point would be to ask an open-ended question⁸ such as ~~“what is it about Chris?”~~ to encourage the child to elaborate, and avoid asking a specific question like ~~“who’s Chris?”~~ at least until the child has exhausted their free narrative (Powell & Snow, 2007; State of Michigan, 2004). But this interviewer instead asks the specific question ~~“okay who’s Chris.”~~ Yet, when considered beside the findings on ordinary conversation, this is a very understandable and regular thing for the interviewer to do. The reason is because Susie’s ~~“because (.) of Chris”~~ at line

⁸ Powell and Snow (2007) define open-ended questions as those questions ~~that~~ encourage an elaborate response as well as being fairly broad in their focus (i.e., do not dictate what specific information is required” (p. 59).

332 is not an adequate person reference (see chapter 4 for a description of person reference as it pertains to this section). The problem with Susie's person reference is that she formulates it as a *recognitional* (which assumes the interviewer will recognise who Chris is) instead of a *non-recognitional* (which assumes the opposite) and this creates a problem in the interaction.

By not doing a non-recognitional person reference in the slot where it is called for (e.g. a non-recognitional person reference, such as —because of my sister's ex-boyfriend, Chris”), Susie places the interviewer in a position where the common thing to do in conversation is to initiate repair on the problem person reference. In less technical terms, this means doing something conversationally that lets the other person know there is a problem with what they have said. Thus the interviewer's turn at line 334 →because of Chri:s?” is a first attempt at initiating repair (i.e. encouraging Susie to clear up the problem of understanding her person reference has created) and she does this repair initiation in a form that instead gets treated by Susie as an understanding check. So we have a misunderstanding emerging⁹.

The evidence that the interviewer is initiating repair rather than doing an understanding check is that when her →because of Chri:s?” fails to draw the repair from Susie (e.g. yeah, he's my sister's ex-boyfriend), the interviewer makes the problem of Susie's problematic person reference (the *repairable*) explicit with another repair initiation at line 336: →mnp.h okay who's Chris.”. This time the repair initiation is successful. After a delay, Susie does the repair →m:: mn.hh Chri::s hh °was my sister's boyfriend before.” (lines 338-339).

⁹ Thank you to Stuart Ekberg for helping make sense of this part of the sequence.

At this point, Susie has adequately repaired the problem of her person reference. A critique from experts in investigative interviewing, however, might highlight that the interviewer, by too quickly asking a specific question - “*okay who’s Chris.*” - has missed an opportunity to ask something like “*what is it about Chris?*” back at line 334 and would now have to reintroduce the topic in the slot at line 340, further disturbing the opportunity to elicit an uninterrupted free narrative (Powell & Snow, 2007).

However, it turns out that the interviewer does not need to ask another question to reintroduce the topic. After a brief delay at line 340, while the interviewer is writing notes, Susie extends her turn by adding details that constitute the missing part of the disclosure: the “*what*” (sexual abuse) to add to the “*who*” (Chris). She delivers these additional details in the form of a post-gap increment¹⁰ (Schegloff, 1996b; Walker, 2004).

It is a post-gap increment because her prior turn “*um:: mn.hh Chri::s hh °was my sister’s boyfriend before.*” is syntactically, pragmatically and prosodically complete but the “*and*” at the start of her additional talk at line 341 converts this talk into a grammatically fitted continuation of the prior turn at lines 338-339. Note also that she delivers the allegation component “*and then °he did stuff to my best friend and me and ((name))°*” at a quieter volume to the surrounding speech, as was the case at line 332, and also in extract 1 with Darren’s disclosure.

A point to be drawn from the analysis so far is that some of the advice given to interviewers runs contrary to the norms of conversation: repairing on person reference problems being a clear example. Whilst some experts argue that interviewers must learn *not* to do certain conversational things that ordinarily help a conversation with a child

¹⁰ Walker (2004) defines a post-gap increment as “*a grammatically fitted continuation of a turn at talk following the reaching of a point of possible syntactic, pragmatic, and prosodic completion*” (p. 147).

flow (Powell, Wright & Clark, 2009), the way that extract 2 unfolds shows that, at least in this instance, the interviewer's repair sequence does not throw the interaction off track because Susie herself elaborates on her disclosure without the interviewer needing to ask another specific question.

A second point is that both Darren in extract 1 and Susie in extract 2 hear the interviewer's topic initiating question as a request to disclose their understanding of *why* they are being interviewed. They are not led by the question being formatted as a yes/no interrogative¹¹ into giving a simple yes or no answer. One reason may be that children have had a brief talk with the police interviewer just prior to the interview proper, where presumably they have learned some things about why they are there. Further, most have presumably been told by their caregivers why they are going to the Sexual Crime Investigation Branch to be interviewed. Whatever the reason, contrary to concerns expressed about how this topic initiating question should be done, these two children successfully interpret its action: to elicit some kind of disclosure about the purpose of the interview that is topic relevant (i.e. connected to the topic of the alleged sexual abuse).

Extract 3 from Sarah, the youngest child, is exceptional because her extended response to the topic initiating question is the only example in the data corpus that resembles the desirable free narrative that interviewers are encouraged to try and elicit.

¹¹ In other settings, questions like these would normally be termed "closed questions". Raymond (2003) uses the term yes/no interrogatives (YNIIs) to reflect the fact that the grammatical formulation for YNIIs can be used to accomplish a number of different actions apart from questioning.

(3) Sarah (04:34 video 1)

155	I5	.h so: (1.2) tch.h mum said you	155. sitting at front of chair, from writing scratches side of face with pen, looking at notes, then rests right hand on left wrist 156. looks up at C8 155-159. sitting well back in chair, hands pressed to side of thighs, head tilted to one side (unclear where her gaze is) 160. nods 160-63. nodding in an exaggerated way, starting part way into the 2 second silence 163. tilts head back, smiling 164. tilts chin high, looking at C8 165. appears to raise eyes to look up at ceiling, swinging legs 167. looks to floor and to her right. I5 tilts head to left 169-71. shifts herself back further into seat, lifts head up and looks up at ceiling 169-70. nodding 171-72. places notes on table 173-174. looks back down, swinging legs, starts fidgeting with fingers 173. rests right forearm across knees, rests chin on left hand, attending to C8 175-190. chin still resting on hand but reaches toward note pad and writes, looking at notes 177. brings hands to rest on chair arms, looking toward left hand, starts tapping with both hands 182. taps chair arms, looks sideways to left and up, then taps again and looks toward lap 183. brings hands back to rest on seat beside thighs 186. pressing fists into seat, looks up to ceiling to left, then swinging legs 187. looks down, punching seat with alternate fists, then rests little fingers on each chair arm, looking at left hand
156		come in today to have a bit of a ta:lk	
157		(.) because there's something you wanna	
158		tell me about.	
159		(2.0)	
160		(2.0)	
161	I5	when (0.3) wha' does this mean.	
162		(0.2)	
163	C8	yeah[s:::	
164	I5	[yeah .h so wha' did you wanna tell	
165		me about Sarah?] ((smiling voice))	
166		(3.5)	
167	C8	um (0.5) well when my +mu:m .h was going	
168		to wor:k,	
169		(0.5)	
170	I5	[mmhh	
171	C8	[um (0.5) this da::y	
172	I5	yea↑h	
173	C8	an:d I was going (.) to my uncle	
174		((name's)) hou:↑se	
175	I5	mm: [hh	
176	C8	[when nanna and granddad	
177		were gonna look after u:s:::	
178	I5	ye:ah	
179	C8	cos uncle ((name)) was selling his	
180		hou:↑se	
181	I5	yea[:h	
182	C8	[AND UM (0.6) tch.h th- THEN WE	
183		CLEANED UP SOME WINDOW↑S	
184		(0.2)	
185	I5	yea[:h	
186	C8	[AND THEN (0.2) mnp.h WHE::N HHH .h	
187		MY: NANNA::: WENT IN THE SHOW:E:R:::	
188	I5	yea:h:::	
189	C8	.hhh MY: GRA:NDDA:D SAID (0.5) "COME HERE	
190		SARAH."	

191	C8	.H AND WE WERE IN THE FRONT ROOM	191-5. looking from one arm of chair to other, lifts hands off the chair arms suspended in mid air, looking to left at end
192		AND MY BRUVVA WAS IN THE BACK ROO::M?	191. stops writing and resumes looking at C8, then writes again, looking at notes
193	I5	yea:ih::	192-196. returns to writing, looking at notes
194	C8	AND THE::N (0.6) TCH MY:: (0.2)	196-199. fingers splayed palm up, touching tops of chair arms, looking to left side
195		GRAND+DA:D HHHH	197. stops writing, returning to forearm across knee, chin in hand, looks at C8 and nods
196		(0.2)	200. nods
197	I5	mmhh	200-201. nods
198	C8	MA:DE ME: TOUCH HIS PRI::VATE BITS:.	202. nods
199	I5	did he::?	203. gestures outward from chin and back
200		(0.5)	
201	I5	o:kay, .hh so (0.7) granddad made you	
202		touch his private bits Sarah .h can you	
203		tell me all: about (.) how that	
204		ha:ppen::ed.	

This is the only case where a child provides a narrative that identifies the perpetrator (grandpa), the alleged action (made her touch his private bits), the location (uncle's house), other potential witnesses (her brother and her nanna), and even some topic relevant reporting of what grandpa said to her in the lead up to the abusive action (—eome here Sarah”) without any probing from the interviewer at all.

Something notably different from extracts 1 and 2 above is the pre-expansion sequence at lines 155-58 preceding the base sequence at lines 164-65. As noted in chapter 4, pre-expansion sequences are frequently oriented to avoiding problematic responses to a base first pair part. By beginning with a pre-expansion sequence, the interviewer shows she is orienting to the possibility that, without it, there could be a lack of uptake due to a problem of understanding. —Mum” is recruited as the third party who has told the interviewer something of why Sarah has come in today: because Sarah has something she —wants” to tell. By naming the source (mum) of the —something” it narrows the range of likely somethings that the interviewer wants Sarah to tell about (i.e. to things that mum knows about) without suggesting anything at all about the content.

Sarah's affirming nod at line 160 prompts the insert sequence at lines 161-163 aimed at eliciting an audible response from Sarah. These moments where children nod or shake their heads without uttering anything are interesting because interviewers prefer an audible response for the purpose of the written transcripts made after the interview. Hence, interviewers frequently make explicit that the child has nodded or shaken their head at such moments, some even interrupting the sequence to press the child to make an audible response. When this is cleared up and Sarah has confirmed that her nod means "yes", the interviewer launches the topic initiating base first pair part "so what did you wanna tell me about Sarah? ((smiling voice))".

The first thing to notice are the features of Sarah's talk that show the interviewer that Sarah has not yet finished her turn and which, therefore, make the interviewer's *continuers* ("mmh", "yeah") both relevant and easily available as a response. When a recipient of another speaker's turn at talk utters a continuer, it displays their understanding that an extended turn at talk is still in progress, and at the same time the recipient helps collaborate in the production of that extended turn at talk by passing over the opportunity to take a more substantial turn at talk themselves (Goodwin, 1986; Jefferson, 1983).

Sarah's prosody works together with the grammatical features of her turns to indicate that hers is still an extended turn in progress. For instance, "um (0.5) well when my mum was going to work," is incomplete both in terms of prosody (it has a continuing intonation) and grammar (it is not yet a complete sentence). And this continuing prosody persists along with the incomplete grammatical sentence right up to lines 189-90 where we see both stopping intonation and the end of a single grammatical sentence. In other words, this is the first transition relevance place (TRP) (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson,

1974), where the interviewer could, unproblematically, take a turn at talk aside from the continuers she has restricted herself to up until this point (lines 170, 172, 175, 178, 181, 185, 188).

Without the detail contained within the transcript, it would be simple enough to interpret the sequence up to this point as an ideal product of what happens when interviewers use what are sometimes termed *minimal encouragers* or *minimal responses* (“~~mmh~~”, “~~yeah~~”, “uh-huh”) in counselling contexts (Geldard & Geldard, 2008), or *facilitative prompts* in investigative interviewing contexts, although the terms are sometimes used interchangeably (Hershkowitz, 2002; Powell & Snow, 2007; Wampold & Kim, 1989). In both contexts, counsellors and interviewers are advised to use these to encourage a child to keep talking (Geldard & Geldard, 2008; Munro, Manthei & Small, 1989; Powell & Snow, 2007; Wilson & Powell, 2001). However, the unfolding of this “~~ide~~” sequence in Sarah’s interview is jointly achieved, with Sarah making the interviewer’s continuers easily available and relevant, and the interviewer, by restricting her responses to continuers, ensuring that Sarah does continue her narrative in a smooth fashion.

So whilst a non-conversation analytic take might be to suggest that the interviewer is demonstrating excellent skills in delivering continuers (or *minimal responses* in counselling terms) to keep the child talking, a more detailed analysis of the fine grained features shows that it is both Sarah *and* the interviewer together who achieve the ongoingness of this sequence because it is Sarah who makes the continuers relevant by signalling to the interviewer that her turn is still in progress. And it is the interviewer who does the normative conversational practice of not interrupting a turn in progress until there is an obvious TRP. It is thus a clear example of how interviewers can be seen

working contingently, or “on the fly”, with children’s responses (and children with interviewer’s responses) rather than the more uni-directional understanding that construes interviewers as being in control of the interaction¹².

When there eventually is a TRP at the end of line 190, the interviewer does not take even a minimal turn and this, arguably, is a clear instance of the interviewer orienting to an institutional feature of talk in this setting, where interviewers are encouraged to minimise their own talk and maximise the child’s talk. This is a natural slot for another continuer since it is clear that there is more to the story after grandpa said “COME HERE SARAH.”.

However, she does not do this and Sarah then extends her turn by adding another

increment “H AND WE WERE IN THE FRONT ROOM AND MY BRUVVA WAS IN THE BACK ROOM: :M?”. Again, the continuing prosody indicates that there is more to come right up

until the next TRP at the end of line 198. Just before that, at lines 194-96, Sarah starts to display some trouble, indicated by the way she starts to draw out her utterances, the two inter-turn gaps, her loud exhalation at the end of line 195 and then another brief gap, all of which work to delay announcing granddad’s abusive action.

The interviewer’s continuer (line 197) after Sarah’s gap at this precise point is both responsive to this trouble and also works as a resource that creates an obligation for Sarah to continue her turn. It is responsive because it displays a noticing of the hesitation (it would have been unnecessary if Sarah had continued talking fluently without gaps or signs of hesitation). And it works to generate obligation on Sarah to continue because it shows Sarah that the interviewer is not taking any more turn space than this continuer and

¹² Though note that Wampold and Kim, 1989, make the same observation using the language of behaviour theory, stating that minimal encouragers increase the probability of client description, and that counsellor minimal encouragers are contingent on client descriptions.

is turning the conversational floor straight back to Sarah, which Sarah takes up and completes her turn.

Arguably, this is a more complete account than the kind found in counselling or investigative interviewing guides (Geldard & Geldard, 2008; Wilson & Powell, 2001) of how continuers (or minimal responses) function in conversation. Clearly they can work to create an obligation to keep talking by virtue of their position in a sequence but their occurrence is, mostly, also contingent upon, or made relevant by the child's prior utterance. This contrasts with the more psychological explanations found in counselling texts in particular, which focus primarily on how minimal responses are a way of demonstrating to a person that they are being listened to and understood by the counsellor/interviewer (Geldard & Geldard, 2008). Of course minimal responses may indeed have such an effect, and "feeling heard" may account for why a client/interviewee continues to speak after an interviewer utters them. However, subjective psychological states such as "feeling heard" are not directly accessible to the outside observer. Observing people's talk-in-interaction and being privy to the same interactional cues the interlocutors themselves are responding to is a more empirical basis for understanding how utterances such as continuers function to progress an interaction.

In this case, we see that Sarah completes her disclosure of what grandpa did *MA:DE ME: TOUCH HIS PRI::VATE BITS:.* thus ending her turn and creating a TRP. And now the interviewer takes her first FPP turn since Sarah began her extended narrative: an understanding check *did he::?* to which Sarah nods her assent. Then the interviewer moves into a new sequence with a new FPP question.

In summary, extracts 1-3 can be loosely cast as unproblematic openings into the substantive part of the interview. In all three cases the children disclose the identity of the perpetrator early on in the sequence and something about the alleged abusive act soon after, with minimal or no prompting from the interviewer. The analysis showed how this is a jointly achieved product between the child and the interviewer. Contrary to research interpretations that emphasise the extent to which interviewer's questions are responsible for the quality of children's responses, we saw how children are capable of hearing and responding to the actions embedded in interviewer's turns even when those turns might be formatted so as to make a more minimal response (such as yes or no) acceptable. This was the case with Darren in extract 1, who responded to the yes/no format but then continued with an account of his understanding for why he was being interviewed. In extract 2, Susie went on to disclose the alleged abusive action of the perpetrator even though she could have satisfied the interviewer's question "who's Chris?" by identifying him and then leaving it to the interviewer to ask more questions to ascertain what exactly he did. In extract 3, Sarah's intonational and grammatical cues that her turn is ongoing and not yet complete contribute to the ease with which the interviewer can continue to utter continuers such as "mmh" and "yeah". This contrasts with the more common perspective which might see this as only skilful on the interviewer's part, without acknowledging how the child is contributing to the smoothness of this particular interactional sequence.

These topic initiating sequences do not always unfold as smoothly as happens in extracts 1-3 though. In the next section, I examine the openings of other children's interviews to show how interviewers work with children who are not so forthcoming with topic relevant talk.

5.2.2. *Topic initiating sequences with greater disturbance to progressivity*

Extract 4a is from Harriet's first interview. The interviewer does a different kind of topic initiation to the three interviewers in section 5.2.1 and yet she still elicits a partial disclosure: the identity of the perpetrator.

(4a)	Harriet 1 (01:33 video 1)	
29		(0.8)
30	I2	<u>nhohw</u> (0.2) >d'you know what my job is
31		↑here<
32		(1.2)
33	C4	°to interview people?°
34	I2	that's ri:ght and um (0.2) mpf I don't
35		just interview ↑kids I interview: (.)
36		adults ↑too
37		but I talk to .hh anybody that's got any
38		problems or worries.
39		(0.5)
40	I2	al↑ri:ght=so I was wondering if you had
41		any problems or worries.
42		(4.5)
43	I2	y're nodding your head?
44		(1.0)
45	I2	>have you got a problem=would you like to
46		tell me about ↑it<
47		(1.6)
48	C4	°um it's about grandpa.°
49		(1.0)
50	I2	°alright° an' what about grandpa.
51		(13.0)
52	I2	can you ↑tell ↑me
53		(6.0)

29-30. from writing, sits back in chair looking at C4, hands resting in lap and holding pen.

29-36. sitting on hands, appears to be looking toward table

34-6. reaches toward table and moves papers around, brings note paper from table to lap, looking at C4 at end.

37. lifts chin and shakes hair out of face

39-40. nods slightly several times

42. flexing feet, then nods slightly at end of silence, appears to be looking at I2

43. nods several times

44. slight nod, eyes appear cast down

45-46. looks down, adjusts notes on lap and shifts in chair, looking up at end

48. eyes still cast down, not looking at I2

49. looks down at notes, prepares to write, pen on page, looking up at end

50. glances down, then up at C4

51-3. picks up paper from table and brings it to top of notes on lap, writes for a few seconds and then stops, looking up at C4 and waiting. C4 still sitting on hands, eyes cast down.

As in extract 3 above, here we see another pre-expansion sequence preceding the base sequence, with the base sequence not beginning until line 40. As stated earlier, Schegloff (2007) notes that pre-expansion sequences usually orient to avoiding problematic

responses to a base first pair part, such as rejection of an invitation, or non-uptakes due to problems of hearing or understanding.

Here the interviewer uses the pre-expansion sequence to establish Harriet's understanding of the usual kind of things that this interviewer does in this setting (i.e. talks to anybody who's got problems or worries) so that her topic initiating base FPP question at lines 40-41, ~~so~~ "I was wondering if you had any problems or worries.", is less likely to fall victim to problems of understanding. Importantly, this display of mutual understanding is built audibly and visibly in a collaborative way. The interviewer could have used this sequence to simply state her role and the kinds of things she does, before launching her topic initiating question. Instead, she sets up the sequence in a way that invites displays of knowledge and understanding from Harriet. Her initial question: ~~hohw~~ (0.2) ">d'you know what my job is †here<" invites Harriet to display her knowledge (or lack of knowledge) of the usual kinds of things this interviewer does. Harriet's response ~~to interview people?~~" delivered with upward intonation, giving it a questioning or *try-marked* (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979) character, invites the interviewer to confirm Harriet's candidate knowledge display, which she does at line 34 with ~~that's ri:ght~~" before rushing through to deliver her upshot: that she talks to anybody who's got problems or worries. Harriet begins to nod before and throughout the interviewer's understanding check (~~al†ri:ght~~" line 40) demonstrating that she has heard the prior turn as an informing that calls for some demonstration of having understood, which her nodding achieves.

Now the interviewer issues the base FPP ~~so~~ "I was wondering if you had any problems or worries." and is initially met with silence. Towards the end of the silence Harriet nods slightly. Thus, in contrast to Darren and Susie in extracts 1 and 2, Harriet's

nod treats the base FPP as though it were merely a yes/no interrogative, rather than an invitation to tell about those problems or worries, and in this way she defers having to tell.

The interviewer's next utterance, *→'re nodding your head?*", is treated by Harriet as an understanding check with her confirming nod (line 44). But from the interviewer's perspective, it is potentially aimed at eliciting an audible response from Harriet for the future written record and also as a prompt to Harriet to unpack the *→problems or worries*", since the interviewer's next turn at lines 45-46 goes on to make this request more explicit. However, none of these possible projects succeeds, with Harriet treating the interviewer's turn simply as an understanding check.

In her next turn at lines 45-46, the interviewer begins with *→have you got a problem*" but then rushes through with a reformulated version *→would you like to tell me about ↑it<*", as though she recognises midway that since she has already ascertained that Harriet has a problem, she is merely inviting more head nodding with the first formulation. By repairing to *→would you like to tell me about ↑it<*" she sets a new trajectory that assumes there *is* a problem and invites Harriet to tell. Although formatted as a yes/no interrogative (i.e. *→would you like to . . .*"), Harriet treats it as a request or invitation to tell because after a delay she utters *→um it's about grandpa. °*" (line 48).

The interviewer now has a reference to a possible perpetrator – it is something about grandpa – but no reference to an abusive act and her attempts at lines 50 and 52 to elicit something about the abusive act are met with silence from Harriet.

In extract 4b we see how the interviewer works to restore progressivity to this sequence and elicit some reference to an abuse type action linked to grandpa.

(4b) Harriet 1 (02:22 video 1)		
54	I2	>r'member my< it's my job to help pe ^o ple. (0.6) need to find out .h what's happened so then I can try and help them.=and .h
55		
56		
57		not just help (0.5) <u>the kids</u> or the adults
58		it's also to help their friends and family
59		too.
60		(2.0)
61	I2	so (0.2) .hh hh
62		what it is <u>about grandpa.</u>
63	(?)	hhhhh ((pen click))
64		(1.0)
65	C4	°°mh°°
66		(2.3)
67	I2	Harri↑↑et
68		(0.8)
69	I2	can you ↑tell ↑↑me=
70	C4	=°I don' know how to <u>put it°.</u>
71	I2	.hh <u>well you just put it</u> in your own
72		words.=° <u>it doesn't have to be</u> fancy
73		words.°
74		(2.3)
75	C4	°I don't know how to put it (.) in words
76		like I <u>know</u> how to but (0.2) don't know
77		how to (0.6) (b_____)
78		(1.5)
79	I2	mnp well <u>what's happened.</u>
80		(4.0)
81	C4	°um:°
82		(24.0)
83	I2	°something <u>good</u> or is it something ba:d.°
84	C4	°°some°° °thing bad.°
85		(0.5)
86	I2	<u>okay</u>

54-56. looking at C4, notepad on lap, hands on notepad,
54-69. C4 still sitting on hands, eyes cast down.
57. gestures toward C4 with open palms

60. very slight nods
61. looks down at notes, pulls chins in toward chest, straightening up in chair
62. looks up at C4

66. looks down at notes at beginning of silence, lifts paper, turns pages, places a piece back on table, looks back up at C4, waiting.
70. looks up at I2
71. shakes head, looking at C4
72. shakes head again

74-84. lowers eyes again

85-86. nods several times

The pre-expansion sequence at lines 54-59 is projected by the immediately prior trouble at the end of extract 4a, where the interviewer's FPP questions about what happened are met with no response. This pre-expansion sequence thus appears designed to increase the interactional obligation on Harriet to provide a response when the FPP question

eventually gets re-issued at line 62. The pre-expansion sequence takes the form of an account for why the interviewer ~~needs~~” to find out what happened: without finding out what happened, she cannot provide the help that it is her job to provide. Notably, she proposes others, apart from the abused ~~kids~~”, as being reliant on this help. In this way, she makes a strong moral appeal to Harriet that there is some obligation to tell for the sake of others, and not just for herself as the direct victim.

With the pre-expansion sequence working to generate a greater sense of obligation on Harriet to respond, the interviewer re-issues a re-formulated, slightly muddled FPP: ~~what~~ *it is about grandpa.*” (line 62). But this also fails to progress her project of getting Harriet to disclose grandpa’s abusive actions. Harriet makes a brief ~~—°mh°~~” at line 65 as if to start her turn but then a full 23 seconds pass without any further talk. The interviewer prompts at line 67 with ~~Harriet~~”, a reminder to Harriet that it is still her turn to talk and that the obligation is still current since a responsive SPP has not yet been produced, and then follows this up with a request ~~can you tell me=~~” (line 69).

Now Harriet responds, but her response still lacks the content sought by the interviewer. Instead, Harriet provides an account for not providing the content: ~~—°I don’ know how to put it°~~.” (line 70). Once more, this ends her immediate obligation to respond any further. She has provided a SPP response (in the form of an account for *not* providing what is sought) and the onus is back on the interviewer to take another turn. This is what Stivers and Robinson (2006) term a *dispreferred non-answer response*. Harriet’s response technically satisfies the two part structure of the adjacency sequence, but does not provide an answer to progress the activity of telling what happened (see chapter 4, section 4.4).

The interviewer's next turn withholds any form of acceptance or sequence closing third turn, such as —~~ok~~y” or —~~a~~right” and instead continues to hold Harriet to the obligation to respond within the current sequence to the request to tell what happened: —hh well you just put it in your own words.=°it doesn't have to be fancy words.°” In this sense, it is a strong action. She is not letting Harriet off the hook here as she could by closing off the sequence and trying another line of questioning.

But Harriet, after another delay, gives a response that again defers a substantive answer. This turn, however, contains a more explicit clue that the reason she is not responding as the interviewer wants is because it is uncomfortable or embarrassing: —~~l~~ike I know how to but (0.2) don't know how to”. This counters the interviewer's previous candidate diagnosis and solution— that the problem is that Harriet cannot find the right words and she merely needs to say it plainly, in her own words. Instead, Harriet re-specifies the problem: she does know the words but cannot say them because it is uncomfortable or embarrassing, so saying it in any way at all is the problem. Harriet has her eyes dropped again at this point, her body gestures aligned with her talk to convey an impression of discomfort.

The interviewer tries a short, directive request: —well what's happened.” (line 79), which again fails to draw a response. Then, after a hesitating start by Harriet (—°um: °”) and a lengthy 24 second silence, the interviewer tries a forced choice question: —°something good or is it something ba:d.°” (line 83). Harriet responds quietly and without delay: —°some °° °thing bad.°” and the interviewer now has something substantial. She has established that it is something about grandpa (a possible perpetrator) and that it is something bad (a bad action of some kind). She now has grounds to continue questioning without being seen to be unnecessarily leading.

Forced choice questions are discouraged in interviewing practice because children can feel obligated to choose one of the alternatives (Poole & Lamb, 1998). Yet this sequence suggests that interviewers may use them judiciously to restore progressivity when an interaction has stalled because a child seems uncomfortable and unwilling to talk. Harriet is conversationally skilful in the sense that she remains minimally responsive to the interviewer's turns. That is, she accounts for not answering (lines 70, 75-77) but also resists being pressured into disclosing what it is that the interviewer is asking for. She does this in the face of the interviewer's own conversational skill at leaving long gaps at precisely the places where it is Harriet's obligation to talk in the turn taking organization of the sequence (lines 64, 66, 68, 74, 80, 82). From a sequential perspective, the silences most likely to be effective at creating obligation to talk are those where the silence belongs to the person whose turn it is to talk, and there are signs that Harriet, as a competent conversationalist, is cognisant of this conversational norm. Her small starts at lines 64 and 81 suggest she knows that it is her turn to talk, even though she does not go on to take a full turn in the form of either an answer or non-answer response (Stivers & Robinson, 2006).

The important analytic point to be made here is the importance of looking at the use of forced choice questions in their sequential context rather than in a frequentist fashion, where more are bad and none are best. There is nothing hasty about the interviewer's use of a forced choice question in this section of her interview with Harriet. She makes multiple attempts at eliciting an account using open-ended questions and by leaving lengthy silences, before she eventually issues the forced choice question. When looking at a detailed transcript such as this, which gives a sense of the audible and visible displays of Harriet's discomfort, it could even be argued that issuing a forced choice question slightly

earlier in the sequence might have been a more sensitive and ethical thing to do instead of pushing on with trying to get Harriet to describe her experience in free narrative form when she is giving clear indications that such a form of telling is very difficult and probably embarrassing.

Extract 5a from Robert’s interview is different in the sense that the interviewer does detect and respond to Robert’s discomfort early in the sequence.

(5a)		Robert (9:44 video 1)	
142	I4	.h so Robert	
143	C7	m:	
144	I4	mpf tell me why’ve you come in to see me	
145		today.	
146		(2.3)	
147	C7	mh.	
148		(9.0)	
149	C7	°I dunno.°	
150		(7.0)	
151	I4	.hh °so you said that you don’t know why	142-45. shifting in chair, moving right hand ready to write, left elbow resting on chair, possibly looking at C7
152		but you ↓know it’s because [of°	142-158. sitting on edge of seat, looking down into lap, fidgeting hands, pulling at fingers
153	C7	[we:ll I do	
154		know.	
155		(0.5)	
156	I4	you do know?	
157		(1.0)	151. shifts to rest head into cupped hand (left), leaning to the left, elbow on chair arm
158	I4	c’n you tell ↑me	152. small head shakes
159		(6.5)	157. moves pen to point on to page, ready to write
160	I4	is it hard to say	159-60. shakes head slightly
161		(0.5)	161. nods once
162	I4	°o:kay° (0.3) .hh ↑that’s o:kay alri:ght	162-68. continues looking into lap, still fidgeting with hands
163		↑then (0.2) ↑well ↑what ↑if I say to you	162. looks away to right, brushes left hand over her hair
164		(0.2) um::	163. looks back toward C7, brings left hand back to grasp side of note pad
165		(2.5)	164-66. looking down to notes
166	I4	°m:m::° (0.3) mnp.hh (0.8) do you know	166. lands her right hand onto middle of her notepad on her lap (audibly), looks up
167		the difference between a good touch and a	169-70. three strong nods, still looking down into lap and fidgeting with hands
168		bad touch.	170. one big nod, brushes side of hair with left hand
169		(0.6)	
170	I4	ya D:0. (.) that’s good. (0.3) o:kay. .h	172. brings head to rest in left hand, elbow on chair arm
171		can you te:ll me what an example of a good	
172		touch ↑is	
173		(1.0)	
174	C7	ah:: (0.4) we::ll (.) holding han::d	

The interviewer's topic initiating question runs into trouble at the outset. The long gaps at lines 146 and 148 indicate trouble before Robert finally produces his softly spoken SPP —I dunno.°” at line 149. The interviewer permits these gaps to stand without interruption, leaving a full 7 seconds at line 150 before issuing her challenge to Robert's claim that he does not know the reason. As observed in the analysis of Harriet's topic initiating sequence above, from a sequential perspective, the silences most likely to be effective at creating pressure to talk are those where the silence belongs to the person whose turn it is to talk. Thus, the silences at lines 146 and 148 belong to Robert since it is his turn to talk and, by not speaking, it is an accountable matter for him. As we see, he ultimately does utter something, both at lines 147 and 149. However, the silence at line 150 belongs to the interviewer. Whilst she may be leaving this silence to give Robert the chance to elaborate, sequentially it is her turn to talk, since his SPP obligation ended with —I dunno.°”, which is another dispreferred non-answer response (Stivers & Robinson, 2006) that fails to progress the activity of the sequence.

This is an occasion where an interviewer does not take a child's claim to not know something at face value, a topic examined in chapter 7. She begins to challenge Robert's claim to not know why he is being interviewed, but he interrupts at precisely the point where she is about to state the reason with —we:11 I do know.”, thus reversing his prior claim. Yet this response still defers providing either a substantive abuse related reason, or even an account for why he is not telling, as Harriet did in extract 4b.

This places the onus back on the interviewer to take the next turn and she does this with —you do know?” (line 156), which could potentially be heard by Robert as a prompt to tell the reason or, more minimally, as an understanding check inviting a yes or no

response. Robert treats it as neither and remains silent and the interviewer then prompts with a more direct request to tell the reason: *—e' n you tell me*" (line 158). Here, again, it is Robert's turn at talk and the lengthy 6.5 second gap therefore belongs to him, which the interviewer skillfully leaves until right at the end when Robert shakes his head and she almost simultaneously utters *—is it hard to say*" (line 160).

The interviewer's utterance *—is it hard to say*" is a candidate interpretation of Robert's apparent trouble with stating the reason why he is being interviewed, and invites Robert to either confirm or deny. And this time he nods immediately following her turn. She effectively, in collaboration with Robert, re-frames his claim that he *can't* tell (communicated by his head shake at line 159, which creates a potential impasse) into a claim that it is *—hard*" to tell but not necessarily impossible. By creating this new interpretation she conveys, for the record, that Robert does have something to tell and her questions from here on are therefore less vulnerable to accusations of leading Robert into disclosing something that may not have happened. But she also displays sensitivity, clearly conveying to Robert that she sees and hears his discomfort.

As a further indication that she is responsive to Robert's discomfort, she changes the topic to an exploration of good and bad touches. Interviewers are advised to use these good/bad touch questions as a lead up to possible disclosures by ultimately asking a child about any *—bad touch*" experiences they may have had (Powell, 2003). The sequence is long and is not looked at here but Robert responds appropriately, showing his knowledge of the kinds of touches that are good and those that are bad. In extract 5b we take up the interaction where the interviewer asks Robert if he has ever had any bad touches.

	(5b)	Robert (12:25 video 1)	
234	I4	<code>.h u:m (.) o:kay. so the:n (0.6) has</code>	<i>234-35. sitting, looking down at hands, toying with fingers</i> <i>234-37. leaning heavily to left of chair, left elbow resting on chair arm, left hand on forehead/crown, right hand resting on notepad on lap, holding pen.</i> <i>236. nods several times across silence</i> <i>237-251. continues looking down at hands, toying with fingers</i> <i>238. moves to write, left hand gripping edge of note pad</i> <i>239. sits more upright, shakes hair from face</i> <i>241. leans to left, moves to write.</i> <i>242-248. writes, stopping at end, pen still on page</i> <i>250-51. adjusting pages on lap</i>
235		<code>anyone ever (.) given you a bad touch.</code>	
236		<code>(1.6)</code>	
237	C7	<code>mmhh</code>	
238		<code>(1.4)</code>	
239	I4	<code>who gave you a bad touch.</code>	
240		<code>(0.6)</code>	
241	C7	<code>mum's bro<u>th</u>er?</code>	
242		<code>(3.4)</code>	
243	I4	<code>.hh what's <u>h</u>is name.</code>	
244	C7	<code>Pa<u>u</u>l?</code>	
245		<code>(1.0)</code>	
246	I4	<code>Paul.</code>	
247		<code>(1.0)</code>	
248	C7	<code>mmhh.</code>	
249	I4	<code>°+o:kay.°</code>	
250		<code>(2.8)</code>	
251	I4	<code>can you tell me about that.</code>	

Robert begins to nod immediately following the interviewer's question `—h u:m (.) o:kay. so the:n (0.6) has anyone ever (.) given you a bad touch.`”, and then he utters a verbal assent `—mmhh`”. Hence, Robert treats the interviewer's question as a yes/no interrogative and does not, at this point, identify the person who gave the bad touch. This contrasts with other occasions where children respond to these ostensible yes/no interrogatives with more information that demonstrates they hear the additional action embedded in the turn (see chapter 8 on children's moral agency accounts). The interviewer now has to do additional work and ask directly `—who gave you a bad touch.`” and, after a brief delay, Robert makes a person reference `—mum's brother?`”. In a mundane conversational setting where there is less hinging on precise identification, this would be a perfectly adequate non-recognitional person reference. By not referencing the person by name, Robert is showing that he does not expect the interviewer to know this person. However, in this institutional setting, the interviewer needs both the person's name and their relationship to the child and so she takes the additional turn (`—hh what's`

his name.” line 243) to establish this and Robert responds by naming him without hesitation.

An important point to take from this analysis is the difference it makes to the progressivity of the interaction when the interviewer sensitively responds to Robert’s interactional signs of discomfort and moves to a more specific questioning style. The long delays in extract 5a at lines 146, 148, 157 and 159 disappear in extract 5b, with Robert responding more promptly in lines 236, 241 and 244 following the interviewer’s specific questions.

The literature on children’s eyewitness testimony emphasises the importance of asking open ended questions early in the interview, and withholding specific questions until the child has exhausted their free narrative (Poole & Lamb, 1998; Powell & Snow, 2007). This is sometimes termed the “funnel” approach to interviewing¹³ and an interviewer’s skilfulness is questioned if they are drawn too early into asking specific questions (Powell, Fisher & Wright, 2005; Sternberg, Lamb, Davies & Westcott, 2001). Yet the responsiveness this interviewer shows to Robert’s signs of discomfort, and the effectiveness of her specific questions in eliciting the two most basic details upon which the whole interview is premised – an acknowledgement that something sexual happened to the child, and the identity of the agent of that sexual act – suggests that formulaic advice to interviewers to adopt a funnel approach to interviewing may need re-thinking.

Extract 6a comes from Ben’s interview and it illustrates how hard the interviewer has to work, interactionally, to redirect Ben to topic relevant talk.

¹³ This is the advice to move from more open-ended questions through to specific questions.

(6a) Ben (04:40 video 1)		
149	I2	ALRIGHT +w'ill (0.4) CAN +YOU TELL ME WHY:
150		you've come into the p'lice station
151		t'day.
152		(2.8)
153	C2	play station? ((smiling voice))
154	I2	°this is a police station ye:s°
155		(0.8)
156	I2	why've you come to [talk to me today.]
157	C2	[oh I thought you]
158	I2	said play s: sta:[tion]
159	I2	[no] police
160		station.=why've you come here today.=d'ya
161		+know
162		(3.5)
163	C2	s:orta and sorta no:t.
164		(0.2)
165	I2	alri:ght well you tell me what you think.
166		(1.0)
167	C2	um: (1.2) a ki:d (.)
168		pushed me on the bed an' (0.2) forced me
169		ta (0.2)°have sex° with him?

149. notes on lap, chin in right hand, briefly moves hand away and back, then moves head to left and back, looking at C2
 149-55. looking at I2, touching chin with hand
 153. smiling
 154. points downward toward table 3 times quickly and brings hand back to side of head, still looking at C2
 158. moves hand away from chin, then back. I2 lifts chin up, then down
 163-65. starts to spin the nearby swivel chair with right foot
 165. eyes cast down
 167. cocks left ear slightly toward C2
 167-69. spinning the swivel chair back and forth with right foot, looking at it, moves hand away from mouth at "the bed"

The interviewer's topic initiating base first pair part (lines 149-151) runs into immediate trouble with what turns out to be a mishearing on Ben's part. The lengthy delay at line 152 where Ben's responsive second pair part (SPP) is due indicates trouble and he points to the source of that trouble in his questioning "play station?" at line 153. This turn of Ben's is the first pair part of an insert sequence (Schegloff, 2007). It defers his obligation to provide a responsive second pair part answer to the interviewer's initial base first pair part question at lines 149-151 and thus derails the progress of that sequence. It also constitutes a repair initiation in the form of an understanding check on Ben's part. The action is to check that he has heard "play station? ((smiling voice))" correctly and his smiling voice suggests he detects something unusual about this.

The interviewer's next turn compounds this problem, since she appears to then mishear Ben and re-states for him that he is indeed in a police station rather than repairing his mishearing. After another delay, she re-launches her original base FPP question, reformulating it to: *—why've you come to [talk to me today.]*". But this is interrupted mid-turn by Ben who is still attending to the previous insert sequence. His *—oh* I thought you] said *pla:y s: sta:[tion]*" commences with a change of state token *—oh*" (Heritage 1984b), which displays to the interviewer he now *—realises*" he misheard her earlier turn (he thought she said play station but now realises she said police station), such that he is now in a new state of knowing in relation to that error. And the interviewer overlaps Ben's turn with her *—no] police station."* displaying for him that she now recognises the trouble source before rushing through to once again re-issue her original base FPP in a newly formulated, more abbreviated way: *—why've you come here today.=*", which she then tags with *—d'ya ↑know*".

So up to this point, the interviewer has made three attempts at launching the base FPP designed to elicit Ben's understanding of why he is being interviewed and as yet has no disclosure of either alleged perpetrator or reference to the act of abuse. Adding the tag *—d'ya ↑know*" to the end of her *—why've you come here today."* makes yes or no an available response for Ben and in this case Ben hedges with his *—s:orta and sorta no:t*", which further delays disclosing abuse related information. This remains non-informative for the interviewer and she is now back in the position of needing to issue another FPP to progress the interaction and try and derive some abuse related information.

Her solution to this impasse is to conduct a kind of epistemic downgrade on what she is asking Ben to do. By previously asking *—why've you come here today.= d'ya*

↑know” she invites Ben to give a definitive knowledge display of *why he is here* when there could be reasons for being there that he is potentially unaware of. By contrast, her new formulation, →al:right well you tell me what you think” (line 165), lowers the epistemic demand and permits Ben to just give his own understanding of why he is being interviewed and, in this way, makes imperfect understanding acceptable. After a delay, Ben does disclose some information about the act of abuse, though as yet not the identity of the perpetrator.

Extract 6b shows how the interviewer gains the missing piece of information.

(6b) Ben (05:11 video 1)		
170		(0.5)
171	I2	oka:y
172		(1.5)
173		so a kid (.) pushed you on the be:d and
174		forced you to have sex with him.
175	C2	°yeah°
176		(0.2)
177	I2	can I just make a few ↑notes is that
178		al:right
179		(0.5)
180	C2	y::ea:h
181	I2	I'm listening to yo:u (.) oka:y?
182		so (0.2) a ki:d (1.5) pushed you on the
183		be:d (2.0) °a:nd° forced
184		(13.0)
185	I2	now who's this kid °that we're talking
186		about that did this to you.°
187		(0.4)
188	C2	I think his name's Peter.
189		(1.0)
190	I2	°Peter.°
191	C2	I think
192		(1.0)
193	C2	°°it's Peter°°
194	I2	an' how ol:d's Peter.

170-182. still spinning the swivel chair with right foot, hand near mouth, looking toward table, drops foot at "pushed you"

170-71. looks down to notes, picks up paper from lap

173-74. lays paper back down on lap, brushes it with hand

177-181. poised to write, pen touching page

181. nodding, looking down

182-85. writing

186. stops writing, looks up at C2, writing hand resting palm down on note page. C2 shifts hand from mouth and moves it to the chair arm, eyes follow movement

188-93. shifts hand away from mouth, gently taps hand on arm of chair x 10, ends by bringing hand back up to mouth.

189-190. looks down, poised to write

191-94. writes

194. looks up, pen poised on page

After repeating Ben’s disclosure about what happened and writing some notes (lines 170-184), the interviewer launches the next relevant question aimed at the perpetrator —*now* who’s this *kid* °that we’re talking about that did this to you.°” (lines 185-186). Ben responds with a hedged claim to know his name, Peter, and, as I explore later in chapter 7, reasserts that this is a tentative knowledge claim (line 191). But as was the case with Susie earlier in extract 2, this is not a fully adequate person reference, since it neglects to identify who Peter is in relation to Ben.

In extract 2 with Susie, we saw how an inadequate person reference invited a repair initiation (—*who’s* Chris?”). But here the interviewer asks a different sort of question —*an’ how ol:d’s* Peter.” (line 194). Arguably, this is one way of narrowing down who Peter is in relation to Ben: by first establishing whether he is a child or adult. But consider what Ben does next in extract 6c.

(6c) Ben (video 1)			
195	C2	.hh um:: about (0.2) s:::	195-200. look away, moves hand slightly away from mouth, pushes at the swivel chair with foot, bringing hand back to mouth at end.
196		te:n:	
197		(0.5)	196-97. looks down to notes, poised to write
198	I2	ten	
199		(0.5)	200-205. writes
200	C2	.hh and he lives (.) with	
201		((name))? she’s (my so-)	202-204. moves hand away from mouth, holding it out to side of head, still pushing at swivel chair with foot.
202		(.) (social) worker	
203		(0.7)	
204	C2	well she <i>isn’t</i> she’s just	
205		(.) a: respite for nan	

Ben provides the immediately relevant and responsive SPP, Peter’s age, at lines 195-96, but then goes on to also make a fully adequate person reference for Peter: he lives with Ben’s social worker/respite worker. In other words, in spite of the interviewer’s —*an’ how ol:d’s* Peter.” question, Ben is not led off track by this and shows that he is still attending to making an adequate person reference for Peter. And, as Susie did in extract 2,

he does this in the form of a post-gap increment (Schegloff, 1996b), marked by the “and” at the start of line 200. In other words, he converts an essentially complete turn at line 196 into an ongoing turn that shows his competency in making adequate person references in conversation.

Thus, an important analytic point to take from Ben’s topic initiating sequence is that children often demonstrate their awareness of conversational norms, such as making adequate person references, and they can maintain this sense of conversational obligation even when the interviewer inserts an ostensibly new sequence, as interviewer 2 does in extract 6c when she asks how old Peter is. This challenges the view which places the entire obligation on the interviewer to ask carefully worded and precisely located questions, thereby obscuring children’s own competencies as conversationalists that permit them to comprehend and respond to imperfect questioning: competencies such as being able to hear the embedded actions within ostensibly yes/no interrogatives, for instance, or being able to orchestrate a complete person reference even where the interviewer has begun a new sequence.

5.3. Conclusions and implications

This chapter has explored some ways that children and interviewers navigate a stage in the investigative interview that is frequently delicate: establishing, for the record, that the child understands the reason they are being interviewed and eliciting from the child an identification of the alleged perpetrator, and some reference to an abusive act(s), these being the two most basic premises that justify initiating, and continuing with the interview.

In line with the main argument of this thesis, the analysis showed that reaching the point where children name a perpetrator and refer to an abusive act is not due only to the interviewer's skilful articulation and placement of questions. Children, as co-interlocutors, collaborate (or do not collaborate, as the case may be) with interviewers to progress a sequence through to a point where the activity of the sequence is ultimately fulfilled and the child has provided, for the record, these basic details.

As the analysis showed, this point can be reached relatively quickly and smoothly in an interactional sense, as was the case with extracts 1-3, or it can be reached laboriously, with many signs of discomfort on the part of the child, as happened in extracts 4-6. However, in all cases, the child did eventually provide the relevant details to allow the interview to progress.

It should be clear by now that there is nothing formulaic interviewers can generically do to make these topic initiating sequences run off quickly and smoothly. Each interview with each child is a fresh interaction with its own set of contingencies that unfold turn-by-turn.

Yet this does not negate the value of examining how children and interviewers collaboratively work out this important moment in the interview on a case by case basis. From the interviewer's perspective, coming to understand that much of what happens in these interviews corresponds with practices that are also found in ordinary conversational settings can only be helpful both in terms of showing that things do, in fact, get worked out via these practices, even if interviewers do not faithfully follow the strictures of investigative interviewing guidelines.

For example, in the case of Susie's topic initiating sequence, we saw the interviewer initiate a repair on Susie's inadequate person reference, a normal thing to do in ordinary conversation to try to maintain ongoing mutual comprehension of "what's going on" at any point in an interaction. In Ben's topic initiating sequence, the converse occurred and we observed *him* orienting to the fact that he had not done a complete person reference by completing it. He did this even after the interviewer inserted another FPP question about the perpetrator's age, which could have released Ben from the obligation to say who Peter was in relation to him and forced the interviewer to initiate a new sequence to get that particular detail. Thus, we have evidence of both interviewers and children orienting to this particular conversational practice of doing adequate person reference.

Moreover, in Susie's case, she went on, with no prompting from the interviewer, to fill in the missing part of her disclosure: what the perpetrator purportedly did to her and her best friend. This further supports the argument that interviewers' efforts are not the only factor at play when producing desirable responses from children in investigative interviews. It suggests that children, as competent conversationalists, play their own part in producing cohesive narratives even in the absence of perfect questioning from the interviewer.

Harriet's topic initiating sequence (extracts 4a and 4b) showed the judicious use of a forced choice question after a long and unsuccessful attempt by the interviewer to elicit some reference to what happened in the face of many signs of discomfort on Harriet's part. Although this kind of question is explicitly discouraged in interview protocols (Poole & Lamb, 1998) because of its potential to be viewed as leading, this example suggests that examining the use of such questions in a sequential context within an investigative interview might allow some useful discernment between when they are used

too quickly and carelessly, and when they are used from necessity in order to progress an interaction that has stalled because the child is too embarrassed to articulate the sexual content of what has happened to them.

Similarly, after significant signs of Robert's discomfort with telling what happened to him, the interviewer ultimately reverts to closed questions about whether he has received a bad touch and who perpetrated that touch, a move that successfully progresses the interaction to a point where she can move on and explore the surrounding details.

Having considered some features of children's and interviewers' competencies in navigating these topic initiating sequences, which are ostensibly aimed at getting children to reference a sexual act or some kind of bad act (possibly sexual abuse) and the identity of the person who perpetrated that act, in the next chapter I turn to another apparent problem area in investigative interviews. I examine how interviewers respond to children's signs of discomfort when trying to establish in greater detail what has been done to the child, or what the child has been made to do to the perpetrator. How do interviewers balance their institutional task of gathering relevant details about the allegation of abuse with the more human task of responding sensitively to an obviously uncomfortable child?