



'JUST SAY IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS'

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

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Chapter 7: The epistemic work of children's claims to know and remember

7.1. Introduction

The substantive point of the investigative interview is to find out what children remember about what has happened to them, what they know about themselves, their own experiences and those of other people in their lives who are connected to the incident/s under investigation, and to encourage them to articulate all of this in as much detail as possible. A simultaneous objective is to avoid questioning children in ways that are leading or suggestive, or to move too quickly into specific questioning styles that limit the opportunity for children to provide details unprompted because this casts doubt upon the veracity of what children say (Malloy & Quas, 2009; Poole & Lamb, 1998; Powell, Fisher & Wright, 2005; Wilson & Powell, 2001).

Because the child victim is frequently the only source of information in child sexual abuse cases (Brown & Lamb, 2009; Malloy & Quas, 2009), interviewers need to find out not just *what* children know or remember but *how* they know or remember it. For instance, in the current data if a child claims to know some detail in response to a question, interviewers frequently check whether that was something they saw, heard or felt using their own senses, or whether they heard it second hand from someone else. Or if a child claims to remember a detail such as the date when something happened, the interviewer may ask how they remember it was at that time.

This chapter is focused on 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 begin by looking at those cases where children claim to know or remember things in an unhedged way, with no account given for how they know. From there, the analysis moves along a continuum from children claiming to know things and accounting for how they know, to marking their claims as uncertain in some way, right through to disclaiming knowing or remembering altogether.

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. For instance, there are very few examples in the corpus of children making claims to know or remember significant details without either accounting for *how they know* or, conversely, in some way marking the claim in ways that make it hearable as hedged or uncertain. This is significant because parts of the investigative interviewing literature put great emphasis on how poor interviewing practices can cause children to be led into overstating their certainty about knowing or remembering details, inventing details or even reporting entirely false events (Malloy & Quas, 2009). To the contrary, what this analysis aims to show is that even when interviewers do inadvertently ask potentially leading questions, children can still be seen responding in ways that orient to being precise about what they do and do not know or remember, rather than being passively led into admitting to details that such questions may imply.

7.2. Analysis

7.2.1. Unmarked claims to know or remember

At times children do respond to questions about what they remember or know in simple, unmarked ways that contain no signs of uncertainty or tentativeness. Questions about their personal details such as name, age and address are typically responded to in this way, as happens here with Sarah:

(1) Sarah (1:17 video 1)		
25	I5	heh heh .h †Sarah how †old are you::.
26	→ C8	seven.
27	I5	ya seve:n.
28		(0.2)
29	I5	.hh do you know when yer going to be
30		†ei††ght
31		(0.6)
32	→ C8	mnp.hh ((month)) the ((date)).

25-26. sitting forward on edge of seat, left elbow on left knee, head resting against left fist, right forearm layed across knees, looking toward child

25. C8 sitting in chair, right arm resting on arm, looking toward I3, wipes at nose with left hand, then rests left arm on chair arm.

27. nods. C8 brings arms to rest beside legs on chair seat.

28. presses on chair seat with hands, lifting shoulders closer to ear, dips chin (possibly a nod)

29-30. moves to pick biro up from table, and brings both forearms to rest along thighs, holding biro with fingers.

32. looks slightly away to right, breaking eye contact.

At line 26, Sarah immediately responds with “seven.” without hesitation. Then, at line 32 after a brief delay, she delivers another unmarked response¹⁸ (“mnp.hh ((month)) the ((date)).”) to a “do you know” question that requests she display her knowledge (or lack of knowledge) of her birthdate.

Harriet also utters an unmarked claim to know the current day’s date in extract 2:

¹⁸ The birth date is anonymised here for ethical reasons.

(2) Harriet (3:31 video 1)

77 I2 d'you know what the date is today?
 78 → C4 the ((date)).
 79 I2 that's ri:ght=d'ya wanna put that on
 80 there †too

C4 has been marking crosses where her grandfather has "done things" to her on a picture outline of a girl that is on the table. I2 has been leaning forward writing her name on the page. 77-80. sitting on edge of chair, leaning forward, resting biro on the page on table. I2 leaning forward, writing throughout with left hand resting on the page, hesitating for a moment before C4 says the date.

In extract 3, Belinda makes a series of unmarked claims to know her age and address.

(3) Belinda (1:12 video 1)

40 I1 oka:y,= so how old are you Belinda?
 41 (0.2)
 42 → C1 ni::ne=turning ten in ((month))
 43 ((date))?
 44 I1 wo::w [so,]
 45 C1 [on] a ((day))?
 46 (0.2)
 47 I1 tch so >date of birth<
 48 ((date)) of ((month)) nineteen ninety
 49 four,=.hh †what's your home address
 50 Belinda
 51 (0.3)
 52 → C1 u:m (1.0) ((street address and suburb))
 53 (0.4)
 54 I1 ve:ry good.= d'ya know some nine
 55 year olds can't say their address so I'm
 56 very impressed.
 57 (0.6)
 58 mf that's good.
 59 I1 .hhh now [Beli-]
 60 C1 [>((postcode))].<
 61 (1.0)
 62 I1 Can't fool you can we:
 63 C1 °no:pe°

40-47. sitting on chair, wearing police hat, looking in direction of I1, swinging legs, holding paper cup between hands
 40. looking down at notes on table, holding the edges of page with both hands, pen in right hand
 42-4. leans more forward over page, brings pen so that both hands are holding it and starts twirling it between fingers
 46-47. big nod, still looking downward
 48. looks right toward the wall (where there's a row of power outlets, microphone outlets etc.)
 49. looks back toward I1's notes, still swinging legs.
 54. looks up at child, still toying with pen using both hands and leaning forward over table
 55. shaking head slightly
 57. one big nod,
 58. looks down to notes
 60. big shake of head, ending with looking up at child
 61-62. looking at child, smiling
 63. shakes head

At lines 42-43, Belinda responds to the interviewer's "how old are you" question with her age and latches on her birth date. She then overlaps the interviewer's attempt to start a new turn at line 44 with a further display of knowledge on the same topic: the day of the week her birthday falls upon.

Belinda responds to a request that she display her knowledge of her home address with some delay both in the inter-turn gap at line 51 and in her turn holding "m" together with the 1 second intra-turn gap at line 52 but then delivers an unhesitating and complete response, with no markers of uncertainty. As in her previous turn, she again interrupts the interviewer's turn at line 60 to add the further detail of the postcode.

Another topic area where children in this data set rarely seem to display uncertainty is when responding to questions about what they or the perpetrator were wearing at the time that a specific alleged abusive act took place, as in this example from Susie:

(4) Susie (16:48 video 1)			
538	I4	°okay° well <u>let's just say</u> .h we've (.)	538-542. sitting in chair, leaning forward slightly, hands held above lap, rubbing fingers together lightly, looking in direction of I4 538. notepad on lap, writing, lifting pen at end and lifting head slightly but still looking at notepad, pushes note pad higher up on folder 539-40. lifts left hand up to head and runs hand through fringe and back through pony tail, bringing hand back to rest on note pad 543. leans back in chair, rests elbows on chair arms, looks away to left slightly, then looks down at hands, still rubbing fingers together. 544. appears to look up in direction of I4 547. looks down at hands, starts to manipulate a piece of material on the front of her top 543-48. writing 549-551. not writing, but pen poised on page and still looking at notes. 551. looks back up in direction of I4
539		I've got you lying down <u>on the blanket in</u>	
540		<u>yer tent and it's about midnight?=<u>what</u></u>	
541		were you wearing.	
542		(0.8)	
543	→ C5	um:: (0.4) <u>mpf</u> (0.6) <a Christmas <u>top.</u> >	
544		a::nd (1.0) som:e (.) <u>blue</u> shorts:,	
545		(0.8)	
546	I4	mn.h >so you were wearing a< Christmas	
547		<u>to:p</u> (0.8) blue sho:rts?	
548		(3.4)	
549	I4	mmhh what else were you wearing.	
550		(0.8)	
551	C5	u:m= <u>that</u> 's all.	

Susie starts her response at line 543 with a turn holding *um::*. There are several delays on lines 543 and 544 before Susie delivers the substantive detail of what she was wearing. Importantly, these delays that occur following questions that ask children to display their *memory* of certain details are not treated as problematic by this interviewer, nor by other interviewers in the data set. It appears that such delays are treated as an expected and normal part of *doing remembering*. Our focus for the moment, though, is on the way that Susie displays her knowledge or memory of what she was wearing without any of the markers of uncertainty that we see in later examples.

Likewise, in extract 5 Darren responds with no markers of uncertainty to questions about what he and the perpetrator were wearing during a game they played. The game involved Darren having to turn the lights off and on, while the perpetrator had to try and pull his jocks down and up before the lights came back on.

(5) Darren (12:55 video 1)		
367	I3	<u>what w's he::: wea:ring.</u> (0.6)
368		
369	→ C3	nuth ^o ing. ^o (0.2)
370		
371	I3	^o kay ^o (10.0)
372		
373	I3	Phillip was wearing <u>nothing.</u> (1.8)
374		
375	I3	what were <u>you</u> <u>wearing.</u> (0.5)
376		
377	→ C3	u:m: <u>(1.0) jocks and a tee shirt.</u> (8.5)
378		

367-68. sitting in chair, leaning to his right with right elbow on chair arm and chin resting in hand, looking in direction of I3
367. sitting in chair, looking down at notes, then looks up at C3 and gestures a forward rolling motion with both hands.
369. jerks head to right, chin still resting in hand.
370-71. nods and looks back down to page
372-375. writing
375. rubs nose
376-77. pauses in writing, pen still on page and looking down to page
377. shifts in chair so that oriented straight ahead (not facing investigator) and brings both hands to right knee before returning right forearm to rest on chair arm. Looking straight ahead at table.
378. writing.

Darren makes unmarked claims to know or remember what the perpetrator was wearing (“nuth^oing.^o” line 369) and what he himself was wearing (“jocks and a tee shirt.” line 377). As was the case with Susie, the inter-turn and intra-turn gaps before Darren utters his substantive responses are not treated as problematic by the interviewer. Here, the interviewer receipts Darren’s “nuth^oing.^o” with an observable nod and “okay^o” at line 371. And at line 378 she begins writing, which is a visually observable receipt of his “jocks and a tee shirt.” response.

In extract 6, Harriet displays her knowledge of what grandpa was wearing during a particular incident.

(6) Harriet 2 (14:35 video 3)		
2426	(2.3)	2426-27. sitting in chair, looking down into lap, left arm resting along left chair arm, right arm resting alongside right thigh. 2428. lifts head slightly, but not so high as to look at I2. 2426-31. sitting forward, chin resting on right hand, left forearm resting on left knee, looking directly at C4. Moves to write at "on", looking down to notes on lap. 2432-34. writing 2433. circles right foot, brings left hand up so that head is briefly resting against it, left elbow resting on chair arm 2435. resumes previous position, looking at C4, chin resting on left hand. 2435. flicks hair out with fingers of left hand, then rubs face with left hand 2436-7. stretching arms up and arching backwards, as when yawning and stretching. 2437. writing, looking up at end of silence, chin resting in both hands.
2427	I2 so was grandpa (0.5) did he have his	
2428	clothes †on or his clothes †off	
2429	°>>d'ya=†know<<°	
2430	(0.5)	
2431 →	C4 he had only a pair of boxers on.	
2432	I2 °had a pair of boxers on.°	
2433	(2.5)	
2434	I2 >and d'ya know what you were wear†ing<	
2435 →	C4 nHHHH my nigh:die an' a .h	
2436	pair of boxers.	
2437	(5.0)	

The most notable thing about Harriet's response at line 2431 is that she is responding to what ordinarily would be deemed a leading question. At line 2427, the interviewer starts her question one way and then repairs it to a different formulation: *did he have his clothes †on or his clothes †off °>>d'ya=†know<<°*. This is potentially leading because it is formulated as a forced choice question, with two options only (Faller, 2007b). But Harriet bypasses the interactional pressure to answer either *on* or *off* and instead claims that grandpa's state of undress lay somewhere between these two options: *he had only a pair of boxers on.* (line 2431). This is important because it shows that Harriet is not led into making a false claim by this leading question. Instead, she constructs her answer to convey what she recalls of what he was actually wearing and does so with no indications of uncertainty. Likewise, in response to the question at line 2434 about what she herself was wearing, she makes an unmarked claim to know that she was wearing her nightie and a pair of boxer shorts.

There are also examples of children responding in unmarked ways to other contextual questions about the abuse, such as when and where certain acts of abuse took place, how many times acts occurred, what age the child was at the time and other such details. In extract 7, Darren responds to a question about how many times he was made to perform oral sex on the perpetrator.

		(7)	Darren (1:38 video 2)	
1829	I3	↑how	↑many ti:mes (1.4)	has ah::: (1.0)
1830		°he: u:m° (2.3)	put his °uh::°	do:pdle
1831		°into your mou:th.°		
1832		(0.2)		
1833	→ C3	°o:nce.°		
1834		(0.8)		
1835	I3	°once°		
1836		(4.5)		
1837	I3	°al:right°		

1829. sitting in chair, left ankle resting on right thigh, leaning heavily to his right, elbow hooked over edge of chair arm, head resting in hand, then moves head from hand and looks at hand, ending with nibbling at nails. I3 stops writing and brings pen to point toward note pad on table, looking at note pad, then starts wagging pen. 1830. still wagging pen, then looks up at C3. 1831. tilts head to his left, drops right hand to lap. 1832. looks back down to notes 1835-37. drops left leg to floor and adjusts long shorts by pulling them to cover his knees, looking in direction of I3's notes on table. I3 writes.

The interviewer displays some difficulty in articulating her question, evidenced by the lengthy intra-turn gaps and turn holding –ah:::”, –u:m” and –uh:::”. (lines 1829-1830).

Nonetheless, once she completes her turn, Darren utters an unmarked response:

–o:nce.°”

Extract 8 is interesting because of the way that Robert initiates a small insert sequence before uttering his unmarked claim to know when a certain act of abuse took place.

(8) Robert (1:58 video 2)

758	I4	°do you remember <u>when</u> it was then.°	758-770. sitting straight backed toward front of seat, looking down towards hands, toying with fingers 758-770. leaning to left of chair, head resting on hand, pen poised on notepad on lap.
759		(1.0)	
760	C7	whaddya <u>mean</u> like what <u>day</u> ? (0.2) or	
761		what <u>ti:me</u> .	
762	I4	or=w'll even what <u>ye::ar</u> ? or what <u>month</u> ?	
763	→ C7	>this year.<	
764		(1.0)	
765	I4	°as in two thousand and <u>fou:r</u> ?°	
766	C7	two fousand and um (.) <u>free</u> I mean.	
767	I4	° <u>o:ka:y</u> °	
768		(.)	
769	C7	haven't really got used to two thousand	
770		and four yet,	

Before delivering his unmarked claim to know when the event took place →this year.<” (line 763), Robert first initiates an insert sequence designed to ascertain what kind of time category the interviewer is seeking: day, or time of day. She responds with more options, →or=w'll even what ye::ar? or what month?”. Notably, Robert selects the broadest time category offered by the interviewer (year), which also permits him to claim the greatest degree of certainty and he utters it immediately and quickly at the end of her turn. Perhaps since Robert has mixed up the years 2003 and 2004 earlier in the interview, the interviewer initiates repair here with her FPP question →as in two thousand and fou:r?°” and Robert completes the repair at line 766¹⁹. He follows her accepting SCT →o:ka:y°” (line 767) with an account for his mistake →haven't really got used to two thousand and four yet,”. This effort to account for getting a detail wrong is further evidence that it seems to matter to children that they are seen to be accurate and reliable reporters.

¹⁹ This is called other-initiated self repair because the interviewer initiates repair upon Robert's turn and then Robert repairs his own prior turn by correcting the nominated year (Schegloff, 2007).

7.2.2. *Claims to know or remember with accompanying accounts*

Having considered occasions where children provide unmarked, unelaborated claims to know things, I now look at another type of epistemic claim: where children add additional talk to their claims to know or remember things. Specifically, I examine instances where the additional talk is involved with accounting for *how* the child knows or remembers whatever it is they are claiming. The fact that children do this kind of accounting at all suggests that they are engaged with the socially motivated matter of conveying their status as reliable, accurate reporters of the things that have happened to them as opposed to being disinterested conveyors of facts.

One interesting way that children deliver these accounts is to offer pieces of remembered information to do with co-occurring events surrounding the knowledge or memory claim. Children's proffering of these co-occurring remembered events seems to be bound up with the work of bolstering the veracity of their initial knowledge claim. This resembles Edwards' and Potter's (1992) observation about vivid description and its capacity to boost apparent factuality by implying that the speaker is perceptually re-experiencing the event they speak about.

Extract 9 from Harriet's second interview provides a good illustration.

		(9) Harriet (16:28 video 1)		
588	I2	°alri:ght° so:: when (0.2) how long have		588-590. hands folded in lap, ankles crossed, looking downward, lowers head further part way into silence 588. writing, left leg crossed over right 589. looks up at C4, brings right hand to rest over left wrist. 591. appears to glance up at I2 592. looks down, writes 593. appears to glance up, pen still pointed on page 594. several slight nods part way into silence 595. slight nod, looks back down to page, underlining several times, then looks up at C4, brings right hand to rest over left wrist 599. slight nod, looks back down and writes 601. looks up, pen still poised on page 606. tucks hands between knees, tilts head to side as she shrugs shoulders 607. nods 608. looks down at page, circles the pen over the page twice, then points on page 609. looks up at C4, brings right hand to rest over left wrist
589		you been living in the <u>new</u> house for.		
590		(7.7)		
591	C4	since about (0.2) in ((month))?		
592		(3.0)		
593	I2	((month)) this yea:r?		
594		(1.2)		
595	I2	w'll that's: (.) not that lo:ing. how many		
596		month:s (.) °would <u>that</u> be,°		
597		(0.5)		
598	C4	about two?		
599		(1.0)		
600	I2	>so you've only been living in the new		
601		house for about two months °is that		
602		↑right°<		
603		(0.4)		
604	→ C4	y:eah. .h just about:t. cos we moved in		
605		there just before uncle ((name)) had his		
606		operation.		
607		(0.4)		
608	I2	°o:kay° so (.) and before that		
609		you were living at ((address)).		

In response to the interviewer's question about how long Harriet has been living in her current house, she responds with a tentative knowledge claim —since about (0.2) in ((month))?". The interviewer's next two turns (lines 593-95) suggest she may have some problem with the brevity of time Harriet is nominating. At lines 600-602 the interviewer asks a question designed to elicit Harriet's confirmation that —about two months" is an accurate estimate of the length of time she has been living in the new house and Harriet provides the confirmation with her —y:eah." (line 604). She then reinforces that this was an estimate with —just about:t".

In itself, this constitutes a satisfactory response to the action embodied in the interviewer's confirmation seeking question (lines 600-602). Yet Harriet goes on to add "cos we moved in there just before uncle ((name)) had his operation." (lines 604-606). This reported memory of another event that happened just before moving to the new house works to build the veracity of Harriet's claim to know that it was "about two months" ago. Notably, she builds in this report of remembering a co-occurring event at the end of a sequence where the interviewer's prior talk suggests something amiss with Harriet's initial knowledge claim at line 591. This is what seems to prompt Harriet to report the memory of a co-occurring event. She is accounting for *how* she remembers because she detects some indicator of doubt or disbelief in the interviewer's prior talk.

Ben also reports remembering a co-occurring event in a way that works to verify his claim to know how long it was after he arrived home that he told his nanna about the abuse, as seen in extract 10.

(10) Ben (2:08 video 2)			
1439	I2	[SO? (1.0)]	
1440		HOW LONG WAS IT after you came home that	1439. shifts in chair, brings right hand to side of face, looks up toward ceiling
1441		you told nanna?	1439-43. kneeling on floor in front of I2, tossing hat slightly, catching on rim, drops at end
1442		(3.4)	1440. lowers eyes to look at C2
1443	C2	whe::n I got um	1444. retrieves hat, looks in direction of door/camera
1444		(woof:::)	1445-50. looking at hat, jiggling it up and down, but not releasing it, drops at end
1445	I2	was it the same da:y or was it a couple	1448. moves to write
1446		of days later or what [was it]	1449. looks at C2, pen poised on page
1447	C2	[sa:me] da:y,	
1448		(0.5)	
1449	I2	>are you sure [about +that<]	
1450	→ C2	[I went]	
1451		I went ho:me	1451-53. writing
1452		that da:y.	1452. retrieves hat
1453		(1.6)	
1454	I2	o:kay.°	1454. underlines on page, C2 jiggling hat as before.
1455		(4.2)	1455. runs pen along a line as though reading

The interviewer revises her open question from lines 1440-1441 to a forced choice style question at lines 1445-1446 after Ben shows some trouble responding, indicated by the long gap at line 1442 and the hesitating turn at lines 1443-44. Ben then overlaps her not yet complete forced choice question with his response \rightarrow sa:me da:y". Then, after a brief delay, the interviewer issues a confirmation seeking question, \rightarrow are you sure [about †that<]" (line 1449) but Ben responds before she completes her turn with an account for how he remembers \rightarrow went ho:me that da:y". Notably, he does not respond with \rightarrow yes" to her \rightarrow are you sure [about †that<>". Instead, like Harriet, he reports a co-occurring remembered event – going home that day – in the SPP slot and this works as an account for how it is he remembers that he told nanna the same day he got home.

Extract 11 is an even plainer instance of Ben accounting for a knowledge claim by reporting another remembered event.

(11)	Ben (19:16 video 1)		
791	I2	<u>um</u> (0.8) tch now you know you said <u>this</u>	791-805. for whole extract, C2 is sitting in chair, knees up, feet up on chair, holding police hat. 791. looks up slightly, brings right hand to rest on left wrist, then swings head to right side, bringing it to rest against hand. 791-2. possibly looks up under brow. 792. slight shake of head 795-7. looks up at I2 798. looks back down to hat, head tilted to one side 800-03. lifts hat up toward face, lowering it between knees at end 804-5. writing
792		was on a weeke:nd; do you know <u>which</u> day	
793		it was on the weekend that this happened	
794	C2	mh- mm:: (0.8) <u>what</u> †are the week <u>ends</u> ?	
795		I forgot. (0.4) ah[:m:]	
796	I2	[the wee]kends are	
797		Saturday and Sunday.	
798		(1.5)	
799	I2	Saturday's the first day of the week <u>end</u> ;	
800		°and Sunday's the second [one.°]	
801	→ C2	[yeah] it	
802		woulda been S:unday cos I remember	
803		sleeping over .h <u>one</u> night.	
804	I2	°[kay.°]	
805	C2	°[so it] would've °°bin°° Sunday°	

Ben initiates an insert sequence at line 794 to clarify what weekends are, ostensibly delaying his relevant SPP to the interviewer's FPP question \rightarrow do you know which day

it was on the weekend that this happened". With the insert sequence completed, he delivers the SPP to her initial FPP: ~~y~~eah it woulda been S:unday cos I remember sleeping over .h one night." (lines 801-803). As in the previous two examples, he uses another co-occurring remembered event (sleeping over one night at his respite worker's house) to account for how he knows it was Sunday when the abusive incident happened. The difference from the previous two examples is that Ben more explicitly formulates his knowledge as the product of a piece of deductive reasoning. The reason he knows it ~~w~~oulda been S:unday" that the abusive incident occurred is because he remembers sleeping over one night only, presumably Saturday. He makes explicit that it is this remembering of the other event (sleeping over just one night) that tells him it must have been Sunday. Interestingly, he is not claiming direct access to the ~~m~~emory" of it happening on a Sunday but, rather, is making plain that he is deducing this fact from the co-occurring remembered event.

By contrast, in extracts 9 and 10 above, Harriet and Ben both make their initial knowledge claims with no accompanying account and only when it appears there is some problem do they add the account in the form of another remembered event to support the veracity of their initial claim. Nonetheless, their responses can also be heard as *doing deductive reasoning* because they nominate the other remembered events in a way that implies they are relying on them to account for their initial knowledge claim, though this is more ambiguous when compared to Ben in extract 11. The important difference is that they do their co-occurring remembered event report *post hoc*, when there appears to be some indication that the interviewer has some problem with their initial knowledge claim. In other words, they more explicitly reveal how children are attending to the way their knowledge claims are received and, where necessary, making sophisticated adjustments in situ in ways that work to bolster the veracity of those claims.

In extract 12 Richard also uses another remembered event to bolster a knowledge claim. This part of the interview is focused on determining whether the perpetrator has abused other children apart from Richard. Richard has just claimed that two other boys, Alain and Andrew, have also been abused.

	(12)	Richard (3:19 video 2)	
1222	I3	°so and Al- Alain.° †do †you †know	1222-1227. sitting forward in chair, legs crossed, writing on notepad which is resting on the table 1222-1223. sitting toward front of chair, ankles crossed, hands together in lap. 1224-25. nods three times 1226. shifts left arm to rest along left chair arm, brings right hand to left hand, looking at own arm, away from I3. 1228. looks up at C9, pen still pointed on page 1229. looks back toward I3
1223		†Al††ain	
1224	C9	mnp yep	
1225		(1.5)	
1226	→ C9	he came over last wee:k.	
1227		(0.6)	
1228	I3	oka:y and what about Andrew	
1229		d'you know Andrew?	

The interviewer utters her information soliciting “†do †you †know †Al††ain” question in a yes/no interrogative (YNI) form that could be minimally satisfied by either a yes or no response. And Richard gives a “yep” at line 1224 accompanied by nodding. Then, after a gap, he adds “he came over last wee:k” (line 1226). This expansion on his SPP takes the form of a reported memory of an event: Alain coming over last week. And its sequential positioning means that it works here as a kind of verification that Richard does in fact know Alain.

Extracts 9-12 showed children accounting for knowledge/memory claims about their own direct experience of events. As a way of identifying potential witnesses to the abuse, interviewers in the current data set sometimes ask children questions about what another person may have seen or heard in connection to an abusive incident as well. In other words, children are sometimes asked what *they know* about *someone else's state of knowing*. Claiming to have access to someone else's state of knowing is a difficult claim

to make interactionally and children show an orientation to this in the way they account for it.

In extract 13, the interviewer is following up on Lisa's allegation about a game the perpetrator once played with Lisa and her siblings, which involved him casting Lisa in the role of sick patient and then trying to have sex with her. Just before extract 13, Lisa has quoted verbatim what he purportedly said to her to encourage her to play the game.

	(13)	Lisa (20:24 video 1)	
636	I5	<u>oka:y</u> (0.3) <u>so d'ya ↑know</u> (.) <u>did ya</u>	636. sitting in chair body turned toward C6 but looking at notes on table. C6 sitting with hands between knees, looking downward, then looks up at I5 637. looks at C6 639-41. shaking head continuously 641. looks back to notes on table, then looks back at C6 642-43. shaking head 643. looking downward towards notes, then lifts chin and looks ahead (not at I5) 643. leans forward slightly, directing ear toward C6 as though to hear better, then looks at notes 645. moves hand to page ready to write, then nods, possibly glancing at C6 646-48. writing 647. looks toward I5's notes on table
637		<u>sister hear</u> ↑that	
638		(1.0)	
639	I5	<u>°d'ya remember?°</u>	
640		(0.3)	
641	I5	<u>no:.</u> .h > <u>what</u> <u>about</u> yer brother.<	
642		(1.0)	
643	→ C6	<u>mnp.h</u> <u>cos um:</u> <u>tch</u> <u>they were</u> in a	
644		different room.	
645	I5	<u>tch oh:</u> <u>okay</u> =so this was <u>said</u> to you	
646		(0.5)	
647	C6	<u>°°yep°°</u>	
648	I5	<u>o:kay.</u>	

At line 636 to 637, the interviewer asks “so d'ya ↑know (.) did ya sister hear ↑that”, to elicit Lisa's knowledge about whether her sister overheard the perpetrator talking to Lisa about the game. It is, in other words, asking Lisa to either claim or deny knowing her sister's perceptual experience of *hearing* the conversation, which would give her sister firsthand knowledge and make her a potential witness. After the 1 second gap at line 638, Lisa begins shaking her head, visibly conveying her claim to know that her sister did not hear the conversation. She goes on to claim that her brother did not hear the conversation either, again by shaking her head at lines 642-43. Immediately following

this head shake she issues the account for how she knows they did not hear: “they were in a different room.”. She uses a logical reason – the physical, sound insulating quality of walls in houses - to verify her claim to know that her siblings could not have heard and, thus, could not know firsthand what Martin, the perpetrator, said to her. Similar to Ben in extract 11, this implicitly draws on commonsense understandings of deductive reasoning: people in different rooms cannot hear conversations through walls; therefore they cannot have heard the conversation.

Harriet does a similar thing in extract 14. The topic of talk is how Harriet’s uncle once almost arrived home to find Harriet and her grandfather during a sexual act except that they first saw him passing by the window giving them time to hide.

(14)	Harriet 2 (13:56 video 3)	
2395	I2	°alright did-° so did he: was: could he
2396		see ↑in
2397		(1.5)
2398	C4	no:.
2399		(1.4)
2400	I2	but you could see him.
2401		(0.5)
2402	C4	mnp.h yeah he didn't see anythink through
2403		the loungeroom window, [.hh]
2404	I2	[mnp] al[right,]
2405	C4	[cos]
2406		there's a curtain there.
2407		(0.4)

2395-2407. sitting in chair, left arm resting along chair arm, right hand resting on right thigh, looking down into lap.
 2395. starts wagging right foot to and fro and continues until line 2402.
 2395-2407. leaning forward out of chair, writing on notepad which is on the table.
 2400. looks up at C4, pen still pointed onto page
 2403. looks back down at notes, then underlines
 2404. brings right hand (writing hand) up and rests chin on it, looking at C4.

After several repairs at the beginning of her turn at line 2395, the interviewer issues her question “could he see ↑in?”. As in the previous extract, this is asking Harriet to claim (or disclaim) knowledge about another’s state of knowing: whether or not her uncle saw through the window and, implicitly, whether he specifically saw Harriet and her

grandfather and thus may be a witness to the incident. After a 1.5 second gap, Harriet utters an unqualified “no.”, which is followed by another significant gap at line 2399, suggesting no account is forthcoming.

Then the interviewer, who up until now has been writing, looks up as she utters “but you could see him.” at line 2400, with an emphasis on “you”. Once again, this could be minimally satisfied by a confirmatory “yes”. However, Harriet appears to hear this as a call for an account. First, she confirms that she could see him with her “yeah” at line 2402. Then she reiterates that he didn’t see anything through the window and, finally, in overlap with the interviewer’s “alright,” which is potentially a move to close the sequence in readiness for a new one, Harriet gives an account for how she knows that Uncle didn’t see anything through the window “cos there’s a curtain there.” (lines 2405-06). As with Lisa in the previous extract, Harriet offers a physical barrier – this time a curtain – to justify her claim to know that her uncle did not see anything. By using the curtain as the substance of her account she is implicitly, like Lisa, drawing upon shared understandings about deductive reasoning. People cannot see through curtains, therefore he cannot have seen through a window with a curtain.

7.2.3. *When children don’t account, interviewers prompt them*

Sometimes when children neglect to account for how they know the things they report – whether that be about things directly experienced or the experiences of others – interviewers directly ask them how they know that particular thing. The fact that interviewers do this shows how vital it is from an evidentiary perspective that children do give accounts for how they know or remember things. Some children in the corpus appear to be less forthcoming than others in providing these accounts unless prompted by the

interviewer and so in these interviews more “how do you know that” type questions get asked. Belinda is one child who rarely accounts for her knowledge claims without prompting, as extracts 15 and 16 show.

Extract 15 immediately follows 8 seconds of silence during which the interviewer has been writing. Before that Belinda was reporting how she watched the perpetrator abusing her sister Hannah by putting his ~~penis~~ in her butt’.

(15)		Belinda (10:49 video 1)	
357	I1	↑what does he sa:y when he does that.	357. after writing for 8.5 seconds, sits back, leans forward, elbows on knees and hands clasped, looks at C1 359. shakes head, looking toward I1 360-61. looks down, nodding, starts to write 364. looks up at C1, then back to notes poised to write 370. nods for emphasis 371. elbows on knees, nods, looking at C1 373. circular gestures with arms (holding cup) 374. possibly gestures toward own genital area with cup 372-8. motionless, looking at C1 380. slight nod, then moves head to one side
358		(1.0)	
359	C1	nothing.	
360		(0.5)	
361	I1	°o[kay°]	
362	C1	[b'cause] he's got a problem?	
363		(0.8)	
364	I1	wh't- what kind of problem.	
365	C1	with (.) um: he wasn't (.) properly developed?	
366			
367		(1.3)	
368	I1	alri:ght. can- can he spe:ak?	
369		(0.4)	
370	C1	yeah.	
371	I1	.hh °oh okay.°	
372		(0.4)	
373	C1	um: he's got everything except (.)um(0.3)	
374		°a half a° penis and it helps ↑him. .h	
375		°when he does it°	
376		(0.8)	
377	→ I1	how do you know that.	
378	C1	he told us.	
379		(0.7)	
380	I1	°alright° .hh [So j'st-]	

This extract begins with a “what did he say/did he say anything” type question, which I explore in the next chapter on children’s accounts of moral agency. The emerging confusion is perceptible as the interviewer tries to determine if the perpetrator’s

“problem” (line 362) relates to an inability to speak (line 368). But the present focus is on the account giving sequence toward the end of the extract. In response to Belinda’s report of exactly what the perpetrator’s problem is —um: he’s got everythink except (.)um(0.3) °a half a° penis”, and that it somehow —helps †him.” to perform this particular sexual act on Belinda’s sister Hannah, the interviewer asks —how do you know that.”. And Belinda makes the claim that she knows because the perpetrator told her and Hannah first hand.

To summarise, the fact that Belinda neglects to give an account for her initial knowledge claim at lines 373-375 appears to make relevant the interviewer’s overt request for that account at line 377, which in turn makes relevant the giving of that account at line 378, which Belinda successfully does.

However, things do not always run so smoothly, even when interviewers explicitly prompt children to account for their knowledge claims. Leading up to extract 16, the interviewer has been trying to establish precisely *when* the perpetrator has abused Belinda because Belinda has mainly been talking about times when things have happened to her sister, Hannah, rather than to her. In extract 16 the talk has arisen from Belinda’s claim that the reason the perpetrator does not abuse her anymore is —because I told him: (.) not to touch me again otherwise .h I’ll hit you.” The extract follows on from that claim.

(16) Belinda (15:18 video 1)		
516		(6.0)
517	I1	tch †do you know how
518		long ago that †was that you said that to
519		†him
520		(0.5)
521	C1	u::m: (0.6) somewhere in ((month)) or ((month))
522	→ I1	what makes you think that.
523		(1.2)
524	C1	uh:: (0.8) but he did it to Hannah:::
525		.hhh HHHH ((lips pursed on out breath))
526		(0.6)
527		when he touched >Hannah in the rude part
528		about< (0.2) three weeks ago.
529		(0.8)
530	I1	°alright°
531	C1	if you call Hannah in: no:w .hh sh:: um:
532		the- she can tell you:,
533	I1	°yeah I think she told ((other
534		investigator))°
535		(3.0)

513-517. writing

518. looks up at C1, chin in hand

519. looks back to page

521. looks toward ceiling, then shakes head as she looks back at I1 (head resting against right hand throughout)

521-23. I1 writing.

524. looks up at C1, chin in hand. C1 brushes hair behind right ear, looks toward left wall, and back to I1.

525-26. looks up toward ceiling,

527. looks down, gestures with cup

528. looks toward ceiling

529-35. looks down at notes, writes, chin in hand

531. looks toward I1

Belinda claims to have told the perpetrator not to touch her again “somewhere in ((month)) or ((month))” (line 521) but gives no account for how she knows it was this particular time. This makes relevant the interviewer’s call for an account at line 522: “what makes you think that.”. After a 1.2 second gap, Belinda appears to be preparing to give her account with her turn holding “uh:::” but then bypasses this obligation to account and instead makes a new knowledge claim: that she knows he touched *Hannah* in the rude part about three weeks ago (lines 527-28).

The fact that her new claim has a time component (three weeks ago) suggests she is trying to make some relevant connection between the interviewer’s initial turn in this sequence “do you know how long ago that †was that you said that to †him” and her responsive SPP. But, in effect, she successfully evades the obligation to account for her first knowledge claim about her own experience, as evidenced by the interviewer moving

to close the sequence with her —*alri:ght*°” at line 530. However, immediately following this possible sequence closing move by the interviewer, Belinda immediately presents a means of verifying her second knowledge claim about Hannah’s experience when she says, —*if you call Hannah in: no:w .hh sh:: um: the- she can tell you:*”. In other words, she shows that she is attentive to the requirement in this setting to be able to verify one’s claims to know or remember things because although she fails to account for her first knowledge claim, that she knows it was in ((month)) or ((month)) when she told the perpetrator to leave her alone, she does offer a means of verification (bringing Hannah in to tell) for her second knowledge claim, that he touched Hannah in the rude part about three weeks ago.

In extract 17, the interviewer requests Sarah, the youngest child in the set of interviews, to account for how she knows her hand went on Granddad’s —*private*” if she didn’t see it.

(17) Sarah (9:13 video 1)			
319	I5	.hh so: (0.4) tch he’s grabbed you- he’s sat on your left si:de? (.) on the cou:ch? and he’s grabbed your ha:nd? (0.4) >on the wrist< and put it on his private. .H (1.2) could you see his private? (1.8)	319-325. Sitting in chair, hands pressed to side of thighs, feet not touching the ground, chin dropped but possibly looking at I5 319. Sitting at front of chair, hands clasped in lap, looking in direction of C8 320. pats the air to the left of her body with left hand 321. moves left hand to pat right wrist 322. holds right wrist with left hand and lifts it and places it on left thigh, looking at C8 326. shakes head 327. seems to look straight ahead, away from C8 329. looks at C8 331-32. looks down to her right 332. rests chin in right hand. C8 sits back in chair, brings both hands up and brushes hair behind ears, looking toward I5, elbows come to rest on chair arms 333. lifts hands up to play with hair, dips chin, still looking toward I5 334. lifts chin off hand, possibly a nod
326	C8	mh mh	
327	I5	mh mh	
328		(0.2)	
329	→ I5	ho:w do you know your hand went on his private if you couldn’t see it. (0.3)	
332	C8	.h it’s because .h GRANDDAD WAS (1.0) POINTING it in the ri:ght spot.	
334	I5	.h °oh†:†:°	

In the first part of the extract, the interviewer is summarising what Sarah has told her thus far before asking “could you see his private?” at line 323. Sarah denies that she saw Granddad’s private, which prompts the interviewer at line 329 to ask Sarah to account for how she knows her hand went on his private if she did not see it. This is a difficult account to provide, particularly for a young child like Sarah. Presumably, to confirm the veracity of Sarah’s claim the interviewer needs some other kind of sensory account apart from sight, such as “I know because it *felt* like a private”, though this could easily lead to more account eliciting questions, such as “how do you know what a private *feels* like?”

Sarah’s next turn shows she has some trouble responding, perhaps due to not being able to work out what the interviewer might be seeking in terms of an adequate account. First, there is a 0.3 second gap before she starts her response. Then she starts her turn proper at line 332 with “it’s because” showing that she does understand she is being asked to provide a causal link between *what* she claims to know and *how* she knows it. She then delivers her explanation with a lengthy gap between “h GRANDDAD WAS” and the remainder of the account, suggesting some difficulty articulating her reasoning. Notably, she ends up using a weak form of evidence to account for her knowledge claim, in essence relying on the idea that she knows because *grandad knew what he was doing* and he intended to put her hand on his private part. By comparison, older children in the corpus almost always use some kind of sensory account, such as seeing it, hearing it, or feeling it, showing awareness that first hand witnessing is the strongest form of evidence in this setting.

Often when children give accounts like Sarah’s that fail to adequately provide the kind of evidence interviewers need children to give in order to verify their claim to know or

remember something, interviewers tend not to pursue it with the child, simply accepting the account given, as happens with Belinda and Sarah in extracts 16 and 17.

Alternatively, when interviewers do pursue the account, they normally do so in a way that preserves a sense of the child's prior response as having been adequate, perhaps even taking ownership of any confusion or inadequacy themselves. Extract 18 from Susie's interview is an exception as the interviewer pursues Susie to better account for her knowledge claim in spite of audible and visible signs of discomfort.

(18)		Susie (8:20 video 2)	
1420	→ I4	>how do'ya know he was wearing jocks.<	1420. sitting in chair, right leg crossed over right, notepad resting on lap. Looks up from notepad at C5. 1420-1421. pushing self up out of chair so that bottom lifted off seat, looking downward 1422. drops onto seat, looks up at I4, then brings elbows to rest on chair arms 1425. lifts right hand up toward face, looks straight ahead, not at I4 1426. points out to right with right hand, forearm resting on chair arm, looks at I4 on "actually" 1427. brings right hand to mouth, dips chin. 1431-32. moving right hand away from and back to mouth 1433. shaking head, looking downward 1434. nods, then brings left hand to forehead and looks down to notes, then brings left hand to hold side of note pad and starts writing. C5 looks up as I3 laughs out loud, then turns head to right and covers part of face with right hand. 1435. shakes head slightly 1435-1442. writing 1440. turns head more to front, but head dropped and hand still covering right side of face. 1441. briefly glances up at C5 and back down. C5 rubs at right eye with right hand.
1421		(0.3)	
1422	C5	becau:se (0.4) he ↓told me?	
1423		(0.6)	
1424	→ I4	when did he tell y(h)o(h)u th <u>at</u> .	
1425		(1.5)	
1426	C5	.hh um: when he (.) actually first came	
1427		(0.3) °in the house.°	
1428		(0.2)	
1429	→ I4	what did'e say to you.	
1430		(0.4)	
1431	C5	he just said (0.2) °°uh°° °I'm j'st I'm	
1432		wearing jocks an' then (.) go:: (0.2)	
1433		(well I can use em) later.°	
1434	I4	Ih °°h ^h h ^h h ^h h ^h °° heh beh °h ^h h ^h h ^h °	
1435		(1.5)	
1436	→ I4	.hhh °h ^h ° w-↑w(h)hy wo(h)uld he te(h)ll	
1437		you th(h)at.	
1438	C5	mm:mm ((like "I dunno" without the	
1439		words))	
1440		(1.7)	
1441	C5	he's just wei:rd.	
1442		(4.0)	

Here the trouble appears to start with the interviewer treating Susie's account for how she knows Chris, the perpetrator, was wearing jocks (→becau:se (0.4) he ↓told me?") as inadequate in some way, evident in the way she continues questioning the account.

Arguably, the interviewer's laughter during her next turn ~~w~~hen did he tell y(h)o(h)u that." (line 1424) implies that she finds something odd or implausible (and certainly humorous) in the idea that Chris would announce that he is wearing jocks. After Susie responds to the ~~w~~hen" question at line 1424, the interviewer follows up with a ~~w~~hat" question: ~~w~~hat did'e say to you." at line 1429 and Susie answers using direct reported speech (Holt, 1996) although the quietness of her speech here, suggestive of some discomfort on her part, also makes it difficult to hear what she says at line 1433.

Whatever Susie says prompts loud, explosive laughter from the interviewer, followed by quieter laughter. Susie looks up when the interviewer first laughs aloud and then turns her head and covers part of her face, strongly suggestive of some discomfort or embarrassment on her part as her responses are being received in ways that could be heard as disbelief, particularly when contrasted with the more common third turn receipts that interviewers regularly use to accept the child's SPP, such as ~~o~~ky" or ~~o~~h, okay" before going on to issue a new FPP question (see chapter 4 on sequence closing thirds).

After the laughter, the interviewer's ongoing turn at lines 1436-1437 still neglects to accept Susie's prior turn in the more usual form of an ~~o~~kay" or some other type of sequence closing third, which would demonstrate that the response has been both heard and accepted. Instead, she issues a new question, also containing laughter particles ~~h~~hh °h^h° w-~~↑~~w(h)hy wo(h)uld he te(h)ll you th(h)at." (lines 1436-37). This is asking Susie to display her knowledge of another's motive for their action and Susie justifiably disclaims knowing the perpetrator's mental state with the verbal shrug ~~m~~:m" which sounds like ~~I~~don't know" without proper articulation. But after a gap, Susie goes on to offer a dispositional account for the perpetrator's motivation: ~~h~~e's just

weɪ:rd.” (line 1441). This is a sophisticated response because it suggests Susie is cognisant that the interviewer has treated her claim that the perpetrator told her he was wearing jocks as implausible, and is thus accounting for such an unusual happening by locating the cause of the implausibility with the perpetrator, specifically his weirdness.

This shows one kind of trajectory that may occur when an interviewer finds something inadequate in a child's account of how they know something they claim to know.

Fortunately there are very few examples of this kind of pursuing of a child's logic, devoid of the more polite closing third turns that accept and acknowledge a child's response before digging further to try and make the child account for how they know or remember something.

At other times, children themselves seem to pick up on the inadequacy of their own accounts and repair them to something more fitted to the evidentiary requirements in this setting. Richard does this in extract 19.

(19) Richard (7:14 video 2)			
1390	I3	mpf.yea:h and it- you think it might	<p>1390-95. perched on left edge of chair, half standing, left arm resting along chair arm, looking at I3.</p> <p>1390-1393. Sitting toward left of her chair, left elbow rested on chair arm and left hand resting over right wrist, looking at C9</p> <p>1394. hands out in front gesturing as though holding a ball and moving it left to right, holding still at end.</p> <p>1396. C9 looks toward camera. I3 clasps hands together over knee (legs crossed)</p> <p>1397. looks back to I3</p> <p>1398. tilts head to left</p> <p>1400. looks toward table. I3 looks down to table and reaches for pen, looks back up at C9</p> <p>1401. turns page of note pad, poised to write, looking down at note pad</p> <p>1404. points with both hands to her head, still looking down</p> <p>1405-9. writing, possibly looks up at "um" but keeps writing, stops at end but keeps pen on page</p> <p>1410-11. wagging index finger toward wall for emphasis, looking toward table and wall, not at I3</p> <p>1411. looks down and writes</p> <p>1412. stops writing and looks up, then looks down and writes again.</p> <p>1413. stops writing and looks up. C9 looking toward camera, then looks back at I3</p> <p>1414. looks downward</p> <p>1415. looks up at I3</p> <p>1415-18. tilts left ear toward C9 and reaches down to scratch her left ankle</p> <p>1416. nod</p> <p>1416-18. briefly pokes right hand in jeans pocket then moves hand through the air and follows it with his eyes</p>
1391		have started when you were about (.) six	
1392		or seven.	
1393	C9	ye:ah.=	
1394	I9	=but you can't remember exactly when	
1395		it started?	
1396	C9	we:ll I've I think .h (0.8) I: I remember	
1397		when it happened. (0.3) six.	
1398	I3	oh[:.]	
1399	C9	[I was] six.	
1400	I3	well show do you remember you were:	
1401		when you were six. what happened.	
1402		(0.2)	
1403	C9	[(_ _)]	
1404	I3	[to make] you rem-	
1405		what what was that.	
1406		(0.8)	
1407	C9	my:: my brain [um] told me.	
1408	I3	[yea:h?]	
1409		(0.3)	
1410	C9	because .hh um (0.4) because (1.0) it was	
1411		my birth ^d day ^d .h a:nd um: (0.4) only	
1412		be:>fore my birthday< .hh a:nd an:d	
1413		(0.8) it's h (1.0) it happened (0.5)	
1414		before my birthday and a::fter.	
1415	I3	oh=so before your sixth birthday	
1416	C9	y:up	
1417	I3	and a:fter your sixth birthday	
1418	C9	y:up	

Up to this point in the interview, Richard has claimed not to remember exactly when his step brother first began abusing him. At the start of extract 19, the interviewer is summarising the story thus far. However, at line 1394-95, the upward intonation at the end of “but you can’t remember exactly when it started?” more explicitly alters it from a summary of what the child has earlier reported, into a more ambiguous turn constructional unit (TCU). The upward intonation makes it hearable either as a request for confirmation that this earlier claim not to remember when the abuse started still stands or,

alternatively, as a prompt to have another try at remembering more precisely when the abuse began. Richard appears to hear the second alternative since he claims to now remember he was six when it happened.

The interviewer is now faced with the contingency of needing to establish, for the record, *how* Richard is now able to remember his exact age, when before he was only able to give a range of ages. Her first turn at line 1400, ~~w~~ell ↑how ↑do ↑you ↑remember ↑you ↑were: ↑when ↑you ↑were six. what happened.”, prompts the start of a response from Richard that is not audible and which she does not appear to hear either, since she overlaps it with her increment ~~[to make] you rem-~~ what what was that”. She alters course from what seems projected to become ~~w~~ell ↑how ↑do ↑you ↑remember ↑you ↑were: ↑when ↑you ↑were six. *what happened to make you remember that*”, by abandoning ~~remember~~” mid-word and repairing the whole turn into a new formulation ~~w~~ell ↑how ↑do ↑you ↑remember ↑you ↑were: ↑when ↑you ↑were six. what happened. what what was that”. The second formulation is a more open form of question focused on eliciting some kind of co-occurring remembered event that accounts for how Richard now remembers his precise age. The initial formulation, conversely, was more explicitly heading down the path of asking Richard to account for what changed between earlier in the interview when he claimed not to remember an exact age and now, when he does. In that form it would have been more obviously hearable as a challenge to Richard’s honesty or reliability as a witness.

Body gestures are informative here. At the point where she utters her abandoned clause, ~~[to make] you rem-~~” at line 1404, the interviewer simultaneously points to her head with both hands, physically gesturing to where remembering is commonly understood to take place: in the brain or mind. And after a 0.8 second gap, Richard responds hesitantly

with ~~my~~: my brai::n [um] told me.” (line 1407). Because this is such a unique happening it is not possible to say with certainty that there is a link between the interviewer's physical gesture and Richard's next turn. But it seems plausible that Richard uses the interviewer's physical act of pointing to her head as a clue to the kind of account she may be looking for because he follows immediately from her gesturing toward her head, with an account of how his ~~brain~~” was responsible for his revision to a more precise claim to know what age he was when the abuse started (see Broaders, 2004, for an account of how interviewer gestures may have suggestibility effects).

However, after a brief 0.3 second gap he again revises his account to a form normally treated as a more acceptable means of verifying how one knows or remembers something. He puts forward another reported memory event – his birthday – in the same way that Harriet, Ben and he himself also did in extracts 9 - 12 at the start of this section. And the interviewer receipts this revision without challenge, using a change of state token ~~Oh~~” (Heritage, 1984b) and a repeat of Richard's account that works to elicit Richard's confirming ~~y~~:up”s, even though it in effect means that Richard was 5 years old when it first started, not 6.

This is important because it suggests that whilst interviewers do (and must) challenge children's contradictory details when children neglect to account for these contradictions themselves, interviewers are less likely to challenge when the child has anchored their claim to know some particular fact to a plausible account for how they know. Presumably this is because interviewers' institutional task is to elicit children's knowledge/memory claims along with children's accounts for how they know these things to be true. Their task is *not* to preclude children from altering details in their claims, so long as children

can also provide plausible verbal accounts for such alterations of the kind that serve to satisfy investigating detectives, defence lawyers, judges and juries that the children are reliable witnesses.

7.2.4. *Marking claims to know or remember as tentative*

So far we have examined children's claims to know or remember things in unaccounted for, unelaborated ways, and also looked at occasions where children make knowledge/memory claims with accompanying accounts for how they know or remember whatever it is they claim. Moving along the continuum of claiming to disclaiming knowledge or memory, we now turn to examine those times where children mark their claims to know things as tentative. This is important because, as the analysis will show, sometimes children quite noticeably resist an interviewer's attempt to transform their tentative knowledge claim into something more certain. This is more evidence that children are not disinterested conveyors of bits of information, unconcerned with social-moral matters such as being perceived as honest, accurate, reliable witnesses. To the contrary, just as the previous section showed children bolstering their claims to know and remember things with concurrent memory claims, this section of analysis will show children marking their knowledge claims as tentative and, on some occasions, explicitly correcting interviewers when they upgrade children's epistemically downgraded claims into something more certain.

*"I think": a device for epistemic downgrading*²⁰

Several people have noted how the phrase "I think" can sometimes work in conversation as a kind of epistemic downgrade, modifying the degree of certainty the person is

²⁰ I borrow the term epistemic downgrading from Heritage and Raymond (2005) although that work was concerned with how speakers establish epistemic authority in assessment sequences, not with "I think" as a possible device for epistemic downgrading.

claiming about whatever it is they are stating (Kärkkäinen, 2003; Sidnell, 2010; Sidnell, in press).

In the current data set, children use “I think” as a preface to a knowledge or memory claim in a way that appears to do some work to downgrade the certainty of that particular claim, as happens in extract 20.

(20)		Richard (18:18 video 1)	
604	I3	alright so you got undressed (0.2) .hhh	604-606. leaning back in chair, ankles crossed, forearms resting on chair arms, looking toward I3 or her notes. 604-5. leaning forward in chair, bent over notes on table, writing 606. looks up at C9, folds hand in together 608. possibly looks up toward ceiling, then brings right hand to forehead and taps forehead with fingers 608. looks down to notes, then appears to sketch a rectangle on the page, then looks up at C9 again 609. brings right hand to cheek and rests against it. I3 looks down to notes 610-15. writing 611. glances up to ceiling 612-615. moves hand to mouth, brushing lips with fingers
605		(0.8) d'you remember what you were	
606		wearing that day?	
607		(0.8)	
608	→ C9	I thi:nk °tshhhh° (0.8) uh (1.4) m:y:	
609		(0.4) .hh (0.6) my: soccer shirt?	
610	I3	soccer shirt? yeah?	
611	C9	and some shorts.	
612		(0.6)	
613	I3	°and some shorts.°	
614		(1.0)	
615	I3	.h o:kay?	

The topic of conversation is what Richard was wearing on the last occasion when his stepbrother abused him and the interviewer's FPP question at line 605-606 is a recurrent type of question across interviews. After a 0.8 second gap, Richard starts his turn with a slightly drawn out “I think” before asserting his recollection that he was wearing his soccer shirt. However, the delivery of this claim is hesitant and filled with several intra-turn gaps, as well as fillers such as the “tshhhh”, the “uh” and the drawn out “m:y:” on line 608. Body gestures are informative here. At line 608, at the point where, Richard

utters his ~~uh~~” followed by the 1.4 second gap, he brings his hand to his forehead and taps it, in the way that people sometimes do when trying to ~~bring~~ something to mind”. In other words, by tapping at his head this way, at this precise moment, he does what might be viewed as a visible display of ~~thinking~~” or ~~recollecting~~”. The body gestures together with the hesitating character of the talk work together to generate the impression that the time being taken is purposeful, concerned with the action of remembering a detail from a time in the past, a highly relevant activity in this setting²¹. Importantly, by not interrupting, the interviewer also treats the child’s dysfluency not as a problem in need of repair (as if, for instance, the child has not understood her request), but as a turn still in progress.

When considered together with these other verbal and visible displays of ~~doing~~ remembering”, Richard’s ~~I think~~” preface seems to be doing some work to downgrade the certainty of his claim to remember what he was wearing. In this context specifically, ~~I think~~” appears to convey the idea that the memory of wearing of a soccer shirt and shorts is highly tentative and may be inaccurate. From a functional point of view, using ~~I think~~” to construct tentative claims to know or remember something is one way that children can ensure that they are not made to account for their knowledge, although this is not to suggest intentionality. As we saw in the previous section, strong claims to know or remember things are frequently followed by accounts, sometimes unprompted and at other times prompted by the interviewer. By contrast, tentative claims to know things are by their nature difficult to challenge on the grounds of veracity because the children themselves are making it plain that the knowledge/memory claim should be treated as uncertain.

²¹ But see Stevanoni and Salmon (2005) for a more cognitive account of the role of gesture and its potential benefits in enhancing recall.

Sarah uses an “I think” preface in the same way in extract 21.

(21)		Sarah (6:59 video 1)		
237	I5	so mnp.hh (0.4)	which one of your hands	237. sitting slumped in chair, feet not touching ground, looking at I5, palms upward and fingers of both hands lightly touching the arms of the chair. I5 sitting to front of chair, looking at child, shifts from holding right wrist with left hand (had been mirroring C8's demonstration of how grandpa held her wrist), to bringing forearms to rest across knees. 238-41. looks down to right hand, opens out the palm slightly during the 3 second gap. 242. looks up at I5 and lifts right hand up, bringing it down to rest on chair arm at "hand". I5 starts lifting right hand up, mirroring C8's (now absent) hand action. 243. right hand raised, fingers spread. C8 nods slightly 246. arches back and stretches back into chair. I5 nods 248. nods again, and pushes her still raised hand forward with emphasis, then lowers begins lowering hand
238			did he put on his private bits.	
239		(3.0)		
240	C8	u:[m:		
241	I5	[do you know:↑w		
242	→ C8		I think it was this hand.	
243	I5		that hand .h d'you know: if that's the	
244			right hand or the left hand.	
245		(0.4)		
246	→ C8		<think it's the right.>	
247		(0.6)		
248	I5		right. (.) >okay<=.hh and . . .	

There is a lengthy gap following the interviewer's FPP question: “which one of your hands did he put on his private bits”. But during the gap Sarah quite clearly turns her head and looks down toward her right hand, which is resting against the arm of the chair, and opens out the palm of her hand briefly. She then starts her turn with “u:[m:”, which is overlapped by the interviewer's “do you know:↑w” prompt, and then Sarah delivers her “I think” prefaced memory claim “I think it was this hand.”, raising the hand in a visible demonstration of which hand it was. Similar to Richard, her hesitation in responding coincides with a visible display – looking down at her hand – which seems to imply an attempt at recollecting whether that was the same hand that

grandpa put on his private bits. However, this time the interviewer does prompt with a “do you know?” just as Sarah has begun her turn, which may be due to the lengthy 3 second gap before Sarah starts to utter any verbal response at all. Once again, “I think” seems to work here to mark the tentative nature of this knowledge claim: it may have been this hand, but then again it may not. And once again the interviewer’s next turn is not involved with verifying this claim. Rather, she asks a question to establish Sarah’s conceptual understanding of left and right (lines 243-244). Sarah then responds with an abbreviated “I think” prefaced knowledge claim (“I think it’s the right.”), which she delivers slowly, giving the impression that she is indeed having to make some effort to work out whether it is the left or right hand. Once again, “I think” emphasises that the claim is tentative.

But there is an important difference to note between these two “I think” prefaced claims. In the first instance, Sarah is being asked to recall a detail from an event in the past, which the interviewer was not present for and therefore cannot challenge on the grounds of accuracy. Conversely, the second instance is falsifiable. The interviewer can observe whether Sarah is correct or not in claiming it is the “right hand”. This latter example is akin to an instance of what Sidnell (in press) refers to as an epistemic downgrade that emerges from children’s interactional cautiousness in talking to an adult. In his analysis of talk between young children and an adult in a play situation, he argues that what we see in this kind of instance is “children’s orientation to their status *as* children, as persons who typically *know* less than an adult, and perhaps have restricted rights to know relative to an adult” (p.11)²². Sidnell notes how some children in his data use “I think” prefaced assertions as part of checking the accuracy of an object they identify during their

²² Note, this quote is taken from an unreferenced conference paper on which Sidnell (in press) based the cited chapter in an edited book. I have not yet seen the book since it was in press at the time of writing but Sidnell asked me to cite that chapter.

interaction with an adult and that this implies deference to the epistemic authority of the adult. Sarah's second "I think" prefaced knowledge claim in extract 21 appears to be a case of this kind.

However, the first instance, which is not falsifiable on the grounds of accuracy because the interviewer was not a witness, is arguably functioning in the same way that Richard's "I think" prefaced knowledge claim also was: as a means of marking the tentative nature of the claim to remember that particular thing. Marking the claim as tentative in this way makes it robust to challenge on the grounds of accuracy because Sarah has already marked the claim as potentially inaccurate.

In this next example from Belinda's interview, "I think" is tagged to the end of her turn and yet it functions in the same way: to downgrade the certainty of the claim she is making. The difference is that it transforms a more certain knowledge/memory claim into a less certain knowledge/memory claim post hoc.

(22)		Belinda (12:05 video 1)	
404	I1	.hhh >an I †just †wanna go back to something you said before< 'cause I didn't quite understand what you said .h you said something about how he's got a bit of a proble:m: .hh a::nd it helps †him (0.4)	404-410. sitting forward in chair, ankles crossed, hands folded on belly, looking at I1 405. sits back from writing and wags finger at C1, looking at her briefly 405-6. leans forward on knees, brings hands together 409. looks at C1, tilting head to one side 411. nods 412. forward rolling gesture with hand 413. moves both arms up, then down 419. forward rolling gesture with hand 422. nods for emphasis 423. nods, looks down and writes
411	C1	yea:h	
412	I1	explai:n that to me. I don't know if I understood what you said then.	
414	C1	um (0.6) he's got .hh ev'rything's got °it° except for he's got a ha:l f a penis? (.)	
417	I1	[h-]	
418	→ C1	[I]thi:nk .hh	
419	I1	have you see:n it >or is this what< he's to:ld you. (0.5)	
422	C1	.hh umm (0.4) h:e told us:.	
423	I1	oh o:kay.	

In this example, the interviewer is returning to a topic from an earlier part of the interview just a few turns back (see extract 15 above). Here the interviewer asks Belinda to clarify what she said earlier and Belinda repeats what she said, only this time she tags “I think .hh” at the end, after a very brief gap (line 418). In other words, she downgrades what was previously articulated as a more confident claim to know something, to something more tentative. In extracts 20 and 21 above, interviewers did not request accounts, or issue challenges when children made these tentative claims but this time the interviewer does request an account (lines 419-420), even though Belinda has already accounted for how she knows about the “half a penis” problem, seen earlier in extract 15.

Perhaps when children move from being more certain to less certain at different points in the interview about the same piece of claimed memory or knowledge, the institutional

requirement to try and derive consistent accounts from children (Perona, Bottoms & Sorenson 2005) usurps the norm of not seeking a “how do you know that” type account when children mark a particular claim as tentative from the start. And perhaps this need to resolve inconsistencies arises not only when children make apparent alterations to substantive details at different points in the interview but also, as happens with Belinda, when they make alterations to the degree of epistemic certainty surrounding any one claim. This appears to be a unique instance in the data set, however, and more data are needed to support this interpretation.

In support of the notion that children are doing active work to produce their tentative claims to know or remember things *as* tentative, there are times when children repair on an interviewer's prior turn in the next turn space if the interviewer has restated a child's tentative claim with a greater degree of certainty. This happens in extract 23. The interviewer is trying to establish details about the perpetrator who abused Ben.

(23)		Ben (5:45 video 1)	
182	I2	an ↑who's this kid that we're talking	182-3. leaning back into chair, left elbow resting on left chair arm and hand near mouth, appears to be looking toward the floor. 182. writing 183. stops writing, looks up at C2 184-5. shifts hand away from mouth, gently taps hand on arm of chair x 10, watching hand, and ends by bringing hand back up to mouth. 186-7. looks down, poised to write 188-9. writes, then looks up at end 189. looks toward I2
183		about that did this to you.	
184		(0.6)	
185	C2	I think his name's Peter.	
186		(1.0)	
187	I2	"Peter"	
188	→ C2	I think (1.0) "it's Peter"	
189	I2	and how old's Peter.	

At line 185, Ben responds to the interviewer's request for the perpetrator's identity with “I think his name's Peter”. She readies herself to write and quietly repeats the name

—^oPeter^o” in the third slot at line 187. Ben immediately responds with —[†] think”, emphasising —think”, and after a 1 second gap adds the increment —^oit’s Peter^o”. In other words, when the interviewer repeats the name —^oPeter^o” in the third slot of the initial sequence, she is not seeking confirmation from Ben that Peter is indeed the correct name, judging by her quietness and her withdrawal of eye contact in order to write. However, Ben appears to hear it as an upgrade to the epistemic certainty of his own, more tentative claim uttered earlier at line 185 because he immediately responds by restating that tentativeness with —[†] think”.

Darren does a similar thing in extract 24. It is toward the end of the interview and the interviewer is summarising what Darren has told her.

(24) Darren (9:31 video 3)

2099	I3	(0.5) and you weren't kicking it that	2099-2108. arms resting along chair arms, chin dropped to chest, looking down to floor. 2099-2100. looking down at notes on table, scratching head with left hand. 2100. lowers left hand to page, rests fingers on it as she reads from notes 2103-4. nod 2104. nod 2108. turns to look at C3 2107. looks back down to notes
2100		ha:rd. (1.0) °and then ah° Phillip was	
2101		laughing. (0.7) °a:nd a[h:°]	
2102	→ C3	[I] <u>think</u> °he	
2103		was laugh[ing] anyway.°	
2104	I3	[°yi°] <u>think</u> he was	
2105		laughing (0.6) °and then he:: <u>uh°</u> pull ^{ed}	
2106		it back.	
2107		(0.4)	
2108	C3	°m°	

Here, the contested fact is Darren’s certainty as to whether the perpetrator, Phillip, was laughing after Darren was kicking at Phillip’s penis, which Phillip had poked down the side of the bunk bed shared with Darren. The interviewer is summarising the story so far at lines 2099-2101 when Darren overlaps her turn in progress with —[I] think °he was laugh[ing] anyway.°”. In fact, Darren twice claimed earlier in the interview that Phillip was laughing, without any markers of tentativeness, and so the interviewer is not

upgrading his original claim as was the case with Ben in extract 23 above. Nonetheless, at this point, when Darren hears the interviewer summarise his earlier claim, he downgrades the epistemic certainty of the claim with “I think”.

In this final example from Robert's interview, he reduces the certainty of his claim within the space of one turn.

(25) Robert (1:48 video 2)

751	I4	so <u>you</u> were on your way to a restaurant	751-761. From writing, leans to left and rests head against left hand, right hand holding pen and resting on note pad on lap. 751-761. sitting up straight on front of chair, knees together, looking downward, toying with fingers. 757. slight head shake 759. lifts head and eyes briefly and drops them again
752		in ((town))?	
753		(0.8)	
754	→ C7	yeah I <u>thi:nk</u> it was there. ah:: <u>maybe</u>	
755		not.	
756		(1.8)	
757	→ C7	m:: <u>I</u> dunno where it was?	
758		(1.5)	
759	I4	°o:kay.°	
760		(1.2)	
761	I4	°do you remember <u>when</u> it was then.°	

The interviewer is asking questions about an occasion when Robert's uncle touched Robert's penis in the back seat of a car during a car trip. Just a few turns earlier, Robert has claimed that they were travelling “to a restaurant in um ((town)) or some place like that”, and the interviewer is re-introducing this topic at line 751-752. After a gap, Robert responds with “yeah” and then immediately follows with an “I think” prefaced claim “I thi:nk it was there.” with final contour intonation, marking the memory claim as uncertain. As soon as that TCU is complete, however, Robert utters a turn holding “ah::” and then downgrades his epistemic certainty to know the name of the town they were travelling to even further with “maybe not.”. After an extended gap, where the interviewer has not uttered any response, nor started writing, Robert utters “m::

I dunno where it was?”. In the space of a turn, Robert shifts from making a tentative claim to know where they were travelling to, through to denying knowledge altogether.

This section has illustrated how children's “I think” prefaced claims function to downgrade the epistemic certainty of their knowledge/memory claims. One possible function of this is that it makes children's claims robust to challenge or further probing: if they themselves mark their claims as tentative, then interviewers are less likely to ask follow-up questions that seek a child's justification for how they know or remember that particular thing.

In addition, the examples of children repairing when interviewers overstate the solidity of what was presented by the child as possible, but not certain, suggest that children are highly attuned to ensuring that the degree of certainty/uncertainty they mean to convey gets heard and represented. Once again this suggests that children are not disinterested conveyors of facts. And it also runs counter to the idea that children are at risk of overstating their certainty about the things they report, particularly in the face of poor questioning methods. The analysis has shown that children may be just as likely to understate their certainty at times and that they are capable of speaking up when their own precisely constructed epistemic claims are misrepresented by the interviewer.

7.2.5. *Disclaiming knowing or remembering with accounts for why*

Next I look at how children disclaim knowing or remembering. Continuing with the idea of a continuum of epistemic certainty through to uncertainty, we start by looking at those occasions where children provide accounts for why they do not know or do not remember something.

In extract 26, the interviewer is eliciting an account from Belinda about an occasion where her step brother Shaun abused her. Up to this point, Belinda has recounted how he ~~massaged~~ [her] with his dick”.

(26) Belinda (18:10 video 1)		
605		(6.5)
606	I1	and then what did he do.
607		(1.4)
608	C1	um: (1.6) hhhh (1.5) then he went
609		to the toi:let?
610	I1	yea:p?
611		(2.5)
612	C1	a:nd it (5.0)
613	→	I can't remembah
614		[hh=
615	I1	[that's [alright]
616	→	=[it was labout (0.4) .h
617		two years ago,
618	I1	was it? .hh
619	C1	[(uh hahh)
620	I1	[so whereabouts in the house did this
621		happen.

605-06. leaning forward out of chair, writing on notepad which is on the table, lifts pen off at end, and then poised ready to write
 608-12. sitting cross legged in chair, arms folded across knees, looking toward I1's notes on table
 608-14. writes
 613. shakes head
 615. stops writing, sits back
 616. continues shaking head, looks up to ceiling. I1 looks at C1.
 617. brings forehead to rest against hand and looks back to I1
 618. looks back down to notes on table

At line 612, Belinda appears to be struggling to come up with more to report about what Shaun did next, evidenced by the drawn out ~~a:nd~~” followed by the long 5 second gap after ~~it~~”. She accounts for this trouble via her claim, ~~I can't remembah~~”, and the interviewer begins to accept this account with ~~that's alright~~” but is overlapped by Belinda further accounting for *why* she can't remember: ~~it was about (0.4) .h two years ago,~~” (lines 616-617). Thus, Belinda does not treat it as sufficient to simply claim an inability to remember. By adding ~~it was about (0.4) .h two years ago~~” she implies an understandable decrement in memory over such a length of time. And this suggests she is concerned to make it known that her claim to not remember is a genuine claim and not, for example, a shortcut out of that particular topic, or a sign of not being a

competent witness, or some other unfavourable interpretation that might be made by the interviewer.

Robert also accounts for why he is unable to remember the date that a particular incident occurred in extract 27.

(27) Robert (1:13 video 2)			
736	I4	do you remember the <u>date</u> ? (0.2) when	736-7. Sitting straight backed at front of chair, hands resting on knees, looking downwards 736. from writing, lifts pen from page, and possibly look at C7 738. slight head shake 742-50. toying with fingers, still looking downwards 741. turns head to left, brushes hair from forehead, then turns back to face C7 742. appears to look down to notes, then up 743. leans left side of head against left hand 746. shifts in readiness to write 748-50. writing, leaning head against left hand
737		that happened?	
738		(0.3)	
739	→ C7	no I don't really keep track of that sort	
740		of thing,	
741	I4	°I know: but do you think that (.) um°	
742		(1.0) with (0.8) the one in the car: .h	
743		like were you going somewhere special::	
744		or,	
745	C7	ah: to a restaurant in: (0.8) um (1.0)	
746		((town)) or some place like that,	
747		(1.6)	
748	C7	uh (0.6) ((name)) ((na::me)) me and mum	
749		went to some place where (2.4) mum would	
750		know if I told her,	

The interviewer's question at lines 736-737 is formatted to project either a yes (plus knowledge claim) response, or a "no" response. At line 738 Robert disclaims remembering with an initial shake of the head before uttering "no I don't really keep track of that sort of thing," (lines 739-740). Similar to Belinda, rather than simply disclaiming remembering, which "no" would have achieved, he goes further and provides an account "I don't really keep track of that sort of thing,". This is a dispositional account. It suggests that the reason he does not remember is because he is not the type of person to pay attention to details such as the precise date when something happened. This is reminiscent of Drew's (1992) analysis of courtroom

talk between a defence lawyer and a woman alleging rape. He notes how the witness claims not to recall certain mundane details about events leading up to the rape function by inference to produce her as unsuspecting and in no way complicit. Similarly, Robert produces himself as *not the kind of person to note the date when something bad happened to him*. Had he done so, it might imply an overly pedantic or even punitive character: perhaps someone who knew he might have the chance to use such precise recall to incriminate the perpetrator at some future time.

This is not to imply that Robert is being strategic but aims to draw attention to the kind of work that dispositional accounts can perform in making some inferences easily available, and countering other possible inferences. By adding his dispositional account precisely here, though, Robert displays that he does not consider a bare claim not to remember as sufficient in itself. And when considered beside other children's examples of the same phenomenon, it begins to build a case for suggesting that children are attentive to being seen as competent witnesses who can provide sound reasons for why they do not know or remember certain things.

In extract 28, Steven also provides an account for his claim not to know something. Here the interviewer is questioning him about his earlier description of what he saw when he found his mother dead, having been strangled by her de-facto partner.

(28) Steven (27:49 video 1)

1061	I1	so: you said to me th't (3.5) that her	1061. sitting, right foot resting on table, left foot resting on right thigh, right elbow resting on arm of chair, looking off slightly to his right, paper cup near his mouth, then looks toward I1's notes, tapping cup against his head
1062		face was purple and shes had this thing	1061. leaning forward out of chair, looking at notebook on table, fingers on page, then turns back one page and looks at that page
1063		really tight around her neck with	1062. turns forward a page and sits back, then brings her fingers to her throat, simulating the rope/cord around the neck and looks at C10
1064		[knots] in it.=	1063. leans head back on chair, cup near mouth
1065	C10	[yep]	1063-66. still holding fingers at throat, releasing hands so that chin resting on thumbs at end
1066	I1	=is that ri:ght?	1067. nodding, releases chin from thumbs, brings chin to rest on clasped hands
1067		(0.6)	1070. opens out right arm that's holding cup so it is draped over the chair arm, looking toward I1.
1068	I1	°alri:ght°	1072. nods, still looking at C10
1069		(.)	1073. brings left foot from resting on right thigh, to rest on table
1070	→ C10	I don't know if there was knots in it,	1075-76. drops chin and puts both hands behind neck simulating the noose, releasing hands back to lap on "up"
1071		.h	1077-78. starts toying with the cup again, looking at it.
1072	I1	oh [kay.]	
1073	C10	[cos	
1074		(1.0)	
1075	C10	it was (0.2) that stuff was behind her	
1076		neck an' (.) up	
1077		(1.4)	
1078	I1	°alri:ght°	

At line 1065 Steven's overlapping *—yep* confirms that the interviewer's summary of what he said earlier is accurate. Notably, he overlaps at the same time as she utters *—knots*, suggesting that he is responding to her last possible turn completion point at the end of *—neck* on line 1063. And there is evidence for this interpretation in the way the sequence unfolds. First, Steven fails to respond to the interviewer's *—is that ri:ght?* on line 1066 and nor does he show any visible body gesture, such as a nod. However, the interviewer presumably takes Steven's *—yep* as a slightly early but responsive SPP and

moves to close the sequence with her soft spoken *“alright”*. But then, at line 1070, Steven repairs on her misunderstanding, clarifying that he does not know if there were knots in the thing tied around his mum's neck. Once again, the interviewer moves to accept with her *“oh [kay.”* at line 1072, but Steven's turn is not yet complete, indicated by the continuing intonation at the end of *“knots in it,”* at line 1070 and the in-breath. When the additional talk does come, it is an account for *why* Steven does not know whether there were knots in the thing around his mum's neck, and he demonstrates with his body gestures how he couldn't tell because, if there were knots, then they were out of sight behind her neck.

In this final example, Ben gives an account for his claim not to know what sex is. Just prior to this sequence, when asked what the perpetrator said to him, Ben has claimed that the perpetrator said *“oh (2.0) sex me”* and that Ben said *“no”* in response.

(29) Ben (11:49 video 1)

441	I4	and <u>what</u> did you: think sex me me:ant.	441-43. slumped in chair, left hand touching nose, right hand holding police hat by his side. looks down and to right at "I dunno"
442		(0.8)	
443	C2	um::: (4.0) "t- t- (.) t-" I dunno?	441. notepad in lap, writing, stops and looks up at "meant"
444		(1.5)	443-44. looks down and writes
445	I2	o <u>ka</u> :y.	444. drops hand from mouth area to hit the rim of the police hat.
446	C2	I watch (0.3) I watch movies. that (.)	445-6. stops writing, looks up, moves right hand to side of face and brushes hair behind ear, ends with chin resting on fingers, looking at C2
447		"yeah and yea:h" (1.6) "I watch a lot of	446-51. slumped in chair, toying with police hat and looking at it
448		movie::: wis (0.2) with (.) um they say	449. looks down at notes, then up again
449		um (.) yeah" (0.5) sex but they don't	452. lifts chin, looking at C2, folds both hands on top of notes
450		"really do it"	453. shakes head, still slumped in chair and still looking at police hat
451	I2	.hh "o <u>ka</u> :y" so do you know	457. glances at I2, and back to hat. I2 drops chin, possibly looking at notes.
452		what sex really i:s or n[ot]	458. possibly looks back up at C2
453	C2	[y:]:: no	459-60. rocks forward in chair, ends by sitting on edge of seat
454		(0.4)	461. looks up at I2
455	I2	it's o <u>ka</u> y if you do: it's: we don't	462. look back at hat, pulls at its center
456		normally talk about that but in here it's	
457		okay because I'm asking you	
458		(1.5)	
459	I2	do you [know what sex is?]	
460	C2	[no:: I (.)] don't have a	
461		cl <u>u</u> :e (0.2) "can you tell me	
462		(1.0)	

At line 443, Ben displays some trouble responding to the interviewer's question "and what did you: think sex me me:ant.". There is a delay before he begins his turn holding "um:::" and then a full 4 second delay before making a hesitating start, then disclaiming knowing with "I dunno?". As we saw in the other extracts, the interviewer accepts this with her "oka:y." and also looks down and writes, visibly not pursuing any further response from Ben. However, he immediately comes in with his account for not knowing what sex is at lines 446-450: he watches a lot of movies where they say the word sex but they don't really do it, thus accounting for his ignorance. The interviewer's pursuit of this over the rest of the sequence takes a surprising turn when Steven asks her to tell him what sex is at line 461, perhaps the only humorous moment in the data corpus.

As these last four extracts have shown, when children disclaim knowing or remembering they also tend to give accounts for why they do not know or remember. By doing this, they arguably demonstrate that not knowing or not remembering is an accountable matter: it needs explaining. This seems to suggest that children care to be seen as cooperative and competent participants in this setting, doing their best to remember and report their knowledge but, when they cannot, then in many cases going to the extra effort to lay their reasons bare. In extracts 26 - 29, each account given by the children can be seen as attending to possible inferences about them as people. Belinda's account implies that her inability to remember is not a personal failing but understandable in light of how much time has passed since the event in question. Robert's account presents him as a relaxed kind of boy and certainly not the kind of pedantic or gloomy person who would commit to memory the precise date when something bad was done to him. Steven's account presents him as a precise and accurate observer who simply could not physically see whether there were knots because of the point of view he had when he walked in the room and found his mother dead. And Ben's account implies that he is not blameworthy for his ignorance about what sex is: despite his close attention to movies where they talk about sex, as yet no-one has demonstrated it, thus leaving him in the dark.

7.2.6. *Unmarked disclaiming of knowing and remembering*

There are instances in the data where children do disclaim knowing and remembering without accounts and I now look at these instances and how they differ from those occasions where children account for not remembering or not knowing.

One context that makes it structurally easy for children to disclaim knowing from the perspective of preference organisation (see chapter 4) is where the interviewer includes

the turn constructional unit (TCU) “do you know” within their question, either in turn initial position, or as a tag on the end of a question. In extract 30, the topic of talk has been a smell that Sarah reported trying to wash from her hands after her grandfather made her touch his “private bits”.

(30)		Sarah (12:23 video 2)		
1338	I3	d'you know whe:re	the smell	come from
1339		(1.5)		
1340	C8	um my	gramp- my:	um: grandad's:
1341		(1.0) u:m	pri:va:te bits.	
1342	I3	°o:kay.°		
1343	→ I3	.hh d'you know what was ma:king the	↑smell	
1344		(1.7)		
1345	C8	mh↓mh		
1346	I3	↓'st the private bits.		
1347		(0.2)		
1348	I3	mn.hh	°°oka:y°°	

1338-1339. sitting forward on edge of chair, forearms crossed over knees, looking at C8. Tilts head lightly to left half way through 1.5 second silence.

1338. sitting forward on chair, hands tucked under thighs, looking toward I3, then looks downward slightly

1340. swinging legs, dips chin down, then points chin up towards ceiling, then looking ahead but eyes appear lifted to ceiling

1341. drops head down and to her right, looking away from I3.

1342. reorients face toward I3

1343. shifts in chair, but no change of position.

1345. shakes head

1347-8. two big nods, ends with looking away to her right. I3 nodding and looking away to her left

In the first question answer sequence (lines 1338-1342), Sarah displays in a halting fashion that she does know where the smell came from. But in the second sequence, starting with the interviewer's question “d'you know what was ma:king the ↑smell” at line 1343, Sarah denies knowing (“mh↓mh”), her verbal utterance coordinated with a visible shake of the head. Perhaps recognising the difficulty of the question (presumably the interviewer is probing for whether his semen was the source of the smell), and that Sarah's answer to the first question could also have stood as an adequate answer to the second question at line 1343, the interviewer offers “↓'st the private bits.” as a

candidate response, which both Sarah and the interviewer then collaboratively assent to with coordinated nods and gaze direction.

In extract 31, Susie also disclaims knowing in an unaccounted for way, this time with only the visual display of shaking her head.

(31)		Susie (1:05 video 2)	
894	I4	.h d'ya know the proper word for a fanny	894-96. slumped back in chair, hands tucked under thighs, looking toward I4 894. moves from looking down and writing, to looking at C5, pen poised on notepad on lap, then looks back down to page. 897. slow head shake, starting 2.8 seconds into silence 898-97. writing 898. looks toward C5, wipes hair off right side of face with left hand. C5 slight, fast head shakes. 900. brings chin to rest on left fist, looking at C5
895		(1.6)	
896	C5	°°m:°°	
897		(3.8)	
898	I4	no?	
899		(0.5)	
900	I4	o:kay .h and what do girls use a fanny	
901		for,	

As discussed in chapter 6, checking that children's terms for body parts correspond with the common understanding of what that body part is and what it does is an important part of checking children's knowledge in the investigative interview, which is the topic of the sequence in extract 31. Speculatively, the interviewer's use of "the proper word" at line 894 might create some difficulty for Susie, possibly implying a deficit in her knowledge should she not be able to display "the proper word" of vagina. After a gap at line 895 Susie utters "°°m:°°", which sounds similar to a turn holding token such as "—um?" and gives the sense of doing thinking or remembering described earlier. However, after a further delay, Susie gives a slow head shake at line 897, disclaiming knowing the proper word for a "fanny". The interviewer issues another check with her questioning "no?" at

line 898 and is presumably able to see Susie's simultaneous slight head shakes confirming that she does not know.

In extract 32, from Harriet's first interview, the topic of talk has been how grandpa would put his penis on Harriet's vagina, with the interviewer first establishing that Harriet knows the difference between *-in*" and *-on*".

	(32)	Harriet 1 (19:33 video 2)	
610		(0.8)	610-14. sitting to left side of chair (her left), left forearm resting along chair, hands folded together on chair arm, looking toward I2 610. holding notes on lap with left hand, looking down at them, chin resting in right hand 611. looks up at C4 612. shakes head 614. shakes head 617. looks down at notes
611	I2	>and it <u>what</u> <	
612		do you know what it's <u>called</u> what he <u>was</u>	
613		(0.2) do <u>ing</u> to ↑you	
614		(2.8)	
615	→ C4	n:o.	
616		(0.4)	
617	I2	°°okay.°°	
618		(0.2)	

The interviewer falters with her turn beginning at line 611, seemingly changing tack from *-and it*" to *-what*" first of all, in what looks set to become a formulation that lacks the *-do you know*" TCU, possibly something such as *-what was it called what he was doing to you?*". The upward intonation on the *-what*" together with it not following logically from *-and it*" is evidence that this constitutes two abandoned attempts at starting the turn before the final restart with the *-do you know*" formulation at line 612.

After a 2.8 second gap, Harriet issues her disclaiming *-n:o.*" accompanied by a shake of the head and the interviewer accepts this with her softly spoken *-°°okay.°°*".

In this final extract, the *-do you know*" TCU is tagged as a post gap increment to the end of the interviewer's turn.

	(33)	Harriet 2 (21:03 video 1)	
684	I2	how long do you reckon you were at	684. moving in chair so that head comes to rest on left fist, left elbow on chair arm, probably looking at C5 684-85. sitting in chair, adjusting jacket, brings elbows to rest on chair arms at end, looking slightly away to her right. 687. moves head so looking left and downward 688. lifts head up, rests chin against hand, looking at C4 689-90. shakes head, starting at end of silence on 689 691-92. looks down towards notes, side of head resting against hand.
685		((Name)) Avenue for.	
686		(4.0)	
687	C4	((blowing out [air between lips]))	
688	I2	[d'you know?	
689		(2.2)	
690	→ C4	n:ɔ	
691		(0.6)	
692	I2	°o:kay.° (0.2) °that's alright.°	

Here, what starts out as a more interrogatory question without the increment and that would, without the increment, make ~~no~~ an inappropriate, nonsensical answer, is transformed into the same kind of formulation as those where ~~do you know?~~ is located at the start of the turn. Thus it also makes ~~no~~ one possible, relevant response. In this case, the long gap of 4 seconds, and Harriet's audible blowing out air, appears to prompt the interviewer to produce the ~~do you know?~~ increment, which is arguably a less pressured form of the question because it contains within it the possibility that the child might not know. After another delay, Harriet disclaims knowing with her ~~n:ɔ~~ coordinated with shaking her head, and the interviewer delivers a two part sequence closing third (SCT) comprised of an information receipt ~~o:kay.°~~ and an assessment of Harriet's denying knowing as an acceptable response.

So far, I have shown that including the TCU ~~do you know?~~ as part of formulating a knowledge eliciting question allows for the possibility that the child might not know. And children do at times disclaim knowing in these sequences with utterances such as ~~n:ɔ~~, ~~mh ↓ mh~~ or visible displays of ~~no~~ such as head shakes. ~~no~~ appears to be a

preferentially available answer when ~~do~~ you know" is included in the question formulation. I have also shown that children typically leave a significant gap before disclaiming knowing and sometimes, as with Susie, utter tokens that imply the child is ~~doing~~ thinking", thus explicitly accounting for the gap.

The extracts examined also show that interviewers do not typically interrupt children during these gaps, suggesting that they treat such gaps as though ~~thinking~~" or ~~remembering~~" is going on, highly valid activities for a witness to be engaged in within the institutional setting of an investigative interview. They do not normally treat such gaps as some sign of a problem in the interaction in need of repair. Extract 33 was the exception but the problem solution the interviewer produces – a ~~do~~ you know" tag – implies that she may be hearing the problem as one of her own making: an initial question that created a more interrogatory environment and which lacked the explicit acknowledgement ~~do~~ you know" build into knowledge eliciting questions that children may not know, which in turn gives children an easily available option for disclaiming knowing and ending their obligation in the sequence.

7.2.7. *"I don't know" with no account*

When interviewers omit the ~~do~~ you know" TCU in their knowledge eliciting questions, then ~~no~~" is unavailable as a responsive SPP. Instead, children are constrained to either responding with a display of their substantive knowledge, or disclaiming knowing with ~~I~~ don't know". In section 7.2.1 I examined examples of children making unmarked claims to know things in response to such questions. In this section I show examples of when children use ~~I~~ don't know" (or ~~I~~ dunno") with no account given for not knowing.

As it happens, this is not a common occurrence when compared to other uses of “I don’t know” to be examined later. In the corpus, three interviews did not contain any stand-alone “I don’t know” utterances (Lisa, Sarah and Susie). Of the remainder, six of them only contained a stand alone “I don’t know” between one and four times (Belinda, Ben, Harriet – both interviews, Robert and Richard), while two contained nine instances each (Darren and Steven). In these last two cases, the stand-alone “I don’t know” cluster at the end of the interview together with some visible and audible signs that the children are tired and disengaged from the interview.

When interviewers ask children questions designed to elicit the child’s knowledge, the forms of knowledge sought can loosely be divided into things which we might expect most children to know, things which children could probably be expected to know because it relates to their own direct experience, and things that they are less likely to know because it relates to someone else’s experience. For example, as will become apparent by the way interviewers treat children’s “I don’t know responses” in the data corpus, most children in this setting are presumed to know why they are at the interview, their age, their birthday, who is in their family and things of that nature. Knowledge that appears to be less obviously presumed includes things like whether a child can recall details about the abuse, such as how many times a particular thing happened, where it occurred and when. Things that children seem not to be presumed to know but interviewers sometimes ask about include what the perpetrator was doing before a particular abusive incident, where other potential witnesses were located at the time, and why a third person became suspicious and asked the child whether anything was going on.

Children utter “I don't know” in response to knowledge eliciting questions from all three of these loosely bounded categories. However, interviewers treat children's “I don't know” responses differently depending on the degree to which a child might reasonably be expected to possess the knowledge.

First I consider some examples where children give “I don't know” responses to questions relating to things the child would expectably know, paying special attention to how these responses get treated by the interviewer.

Steven was a witness to his mother's murder by her de-facto partner. He has already reported going into her bedroom the morning before and finding her strangled in bed.

Extract 34 comes toward the end of the interview.

	(34)	Steven (27:34 video 1)	
1046	I1	[where was] mum when you found her then.	
1047		(1.0)	
1048	→ C10	u:m: (0.3) I=dunno.	
1049		(2.0)	
1050	I1	mpf what room of the house was she in.	
1051		(1.2)	
1052	C10	ah: (2.0) in my r::: her room.	
1053	I1	in he[r room?	
1054	C10	[cos she stayed .h in her room ev'ry	
1055		(.) all ni:ght.	

1046. elbows resting on knees, hands folded together over note pad on table, possible looking at C10. C10 slumped in chair, right leg bent up and foot resting on coffee table, left ankle resting over right thigh, looking down to lap.
 1047-48. Wiping at nose with a tissue, then drops hand with tissue down to lap.
 1048. looks down to note pad, lifts hands up to look, then moves to write
 1049. looks up
 1050. lifts right hand to face, holding pen. C10 jiggling the hand with the tissue up and, looks up at “in”
 1052. lifts right hand to face, then drops it and hangs arm over right chair arm, looking that direction.
 1053-54. looks down and moves to write

The interviewer's question “[where was] mum when you found her then.” is one where it is reasonable to expect that Steven knows the answer. After a 1 second gap he

responds with a turn holding \neg : m : :

”, a short delay and then \neg = dunno.” Thus, he disclaims knowing where he found his mum. The interviewer moves as though to write but then after a 2 second delay, looks up and utters \neg pf what room of the house was she in.” In effect, by reformulating her question to be more specific about what she means by \neg where”, she treats Steven’s \neg = dunno.” not as a genuine disclaiming of knowing, but as a problem of understanding, be that through inattention or through not understanding what kind of information her \neg where” question was seeking. Then Steven responds with the expected display of knowledge: he found her in her room. A sign that Steven is not completely attentive is his repaired person reference on line 1052 from what looks like it might become \neg my mum’s room” but is repaired to \neg ~~h~~ room”.

Another interviewer does a similar question reformulation in response to Ben’s stand alone \neg I don’t know” in extract 35. In this part of the interview, the interviewer is questioning Ben about the main alleged incident: the rape perpetrated on him by his respite worker’s son.

(35)	Ben (15:40 video 1)	
606	I2	.hhh SO (0.2) †what were you †wearing
607		when he did that to you.
608		(0.6)
609	→ C2	u:::m I don't know
610		(2.0)
611	I2	do you know [what]=
612	C2	[()]
613	I2	=clothes you had †on or you didn't
614		have any clothes †on
615		(1.2)
616	C2	prob'ly: wearing:: these †pants
617		coz I wear these a †lot .hh
618		[at ((n)ame))'s?= [°okay°?]
619	I2	

606. stops writing, sits back into chair, bringing hands together in lap, holding pen, then looks at C2
606-8. moves forward in chair to perch on edge of seat, looking toward I2, holding hat down low toward ground
609. looks to the right away from I2 toward wall and starts smiling, then "I don't know" said with smiling voice.
610-11. lowers head
611-12. lowers chin all the way to chest
614. chin still on chest, uses right hand to lift windcheater up slightly
615-16. drops police hat on floor, swaps to left hand to hold windcheater up, and pulls t-shirt down from hem with right hand, then places left hand on left thigh, bending down lower
617-18. still bent low, stretches left leg out, in, and out again at end

The interviewer asks —SO (0.2) †what were you †wearing when he did that to you.” After a short gap Ben responds with a turn holding —u:::m” coinciding with looking away from the interviewer towards the wall as though doing thinking/remembering and smiling towards the end of the utterance. He then utters —I don't know” with a smiling voice before looking down toward his chest. The interviewer allows a 2 second gap to elapse and then reformulates her question to —do you know [what] clothes you had †on or you didn't have any clothes †on”. This second formulation, unlike the first, makes explicit the possibility that Ben did not have any clothes on and it is phrased in a way that would permit Ben to confirm the more embarrassing option that he had no clothes on with a simple utterance such as —no clothes”, or something like that. Ben in fact goes on to speculate about what he was *probably* wearing with an account for why that is plausible but that is not the focus of the present analysis. Once again, the interviewer shows that she has not heard Ben's —I don't know” as a disclaimer of knowledge. Rather, she appears to have detected some interactional trouble, possibly located in Ben's discomfort or embarrassment as suggested

by his smiling voice. Her explicit reformulation to include the possibility that he did not have clothes on suggests that she interprets the trouble as perhaps being to do with Ben's difficulty in disclosing that at some point he was not wearing anything on his bottom for the abuse to occur. That this was the case is, in fact, worked out over the ensuing turns.

Before children enter the investigative interview, they have a briefing session with the police interviewer who explains what will happen and what they are going to talk about. Thus, when the interview is underway and the interviewer asks the standard question along the lines of “tell me why you've come in to see me today”, it is usual that children respond with something that confirms their understanding that they are there to talk about the alleged abuse. In extract 36, Robert does not respond in the expected fashion.

	(36)	Robert (9:44 video 1)	
142	I4	.h so Robert	142-45. shifting in chair, moving right hand ready to write, left elbow resting on chair, possibly looking at C7 142-146. sitting on edge of seat, looking down into lap, fidgeting hands, pulling at fingers 147-158. continues looking into lap, more fidgeting with hands 151. shifts to rest head into cupped hand (left), leaning to the left, elbow on chair arm 152. small head shakes 157. moves pen to point on to page, ready to write
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	
152		but you know it's because [of°	
153	C7	[we:ll I do	
154		know.	
155		(0.5)	
156	I4	you do know?	
157		(1.0)	
158	I4	c'n you tell me	

After the interviewer asks “tell me why've you come in to see me today.” there is a 2.3 second gap before Robert utters a brief “mh.” with stopping intonation, which sounds like a minimal but hearable denial of knowledge, like an audible shrug of the

shoulders. But then a very long 9 second silence elapses before he utters an explicit “uh dunno”. His fidgeting hands give the visible impression of being agitated or uneasy.

The interviewer allows another 7 seconds to elapse and then initiates a repair on Robert's *I don't know* response in the prior turn. She highlights the problem with his prior turn, which is his improbable denial of knowledge “uh so you said that you don't know why” (line 151), and then she starts to formulate the expected response herself for him to confirm as the reason for him being there: “but you know it's because [of]” (line 152). However, Robert interrupts before she can utter the reason with a repair solution of his own - a reversal – so that now he claims that he does in fact know why he's there: “well I do know.” (lines 153-154). It is not a complete repair solution though because as yet he has not displayed the reason and thus the interviewer has to do more work to try and get Robert to display his knowledge, first with her questioning “you do know?” (line 156) and, when that fails to elicit the reason, her explicit “can you tell me?” (line 158).

Once again, we see that when children give unelaborated *I don't know* responses to questions where there is a reasonable expectation that they possess the knowledge, interviewers show in their next turns that they have not understood the *I don't know* as a genuine denial of knowledge but rather as some sign of interactional trouble. In this instance, Robert is possibly embarrassed to talk about what has happened but whatever the explanation, the interviewer's next turn displays that she is not treating it as a genuine instance of “not knowing”.

Children also sometimes give unelaborated “I don't know” responses to questions that relate to their direct experiences but where it is plausible that they may not know, or be

able to recall the details. In these cases, interviewers most often treat the child's "I don't know" as a genuine denial of knowledge, either by dropping the line of inquiry, or by trying to get at the information another way. The difference between these instances and those just considered is that there is no indication in the interviewer's talk that they are treating the child's denial of knowledge as problematic, or as indicative of embarrassment, discomfort, distraction or some other apparent barrier to disclosing what they know to be true.

In extract 37, the interviewer is trying to establish how old Steven was when he first met Grant who is suspected of murdering Steven's mother the day before the interview.

(37) Steven (5:20 video 2)		
1343	I1	so if you were ni:ne (0.4) ;no:;w (1.4)
1344		tell me how old you were
1345		when you first knew Grant.
1346		(0.5)
1347	C10	m:: (4.6) I sink I was si:x?
1348		(0.5)
1349	I1	think you were ;six
1350		(5.2)
1351	I1	what grade were you in at school when you
1352		first knew Grant.
1353		(2.2)
1354	C10	hhh ((sounds like air being pushed out of
1355		his lungs, from having chest on table))
1356		(2.6)
1357	C10	I don' kno::w.
1358	I1	okaiy?
1359	C10	(tchoo, tchoo, tchoo)
1360	I1	have you always lived at your house at
1361		((street address))? or have you lived
1362		anywhere else.

1343-44. gets out of chair, and goes to sit in swivel chair to his right. Adjusts himself. Rests left leg on the former chair. Holds right hand near mouth. Looks toward I1 at end.

1343. looks down to note book, turns a page back, then turns back to current page

1344. looks at C10, brings hands together, elbows resting on knees

1345. slightly swiveling the chair, looks toward the wall he is facing

1347. looks left, so that now looking at wall normally behind him. Brings right leg onto former chair, crosses ankles.

1349. looks down to note pad, moves it slightly with right hand.

1350-59. writing.

1350. looks toward I1's notes at beginning of silence. Gets out of chair and comes to kneel at table, leaning chest on table, and putting his face right over her notes (upside down to him).

1357-59. moves back to sit in swivel chair, looks backwards towards computer desk.

1360-62. turns a slow circle in the chair.

After Steven gives a tentative response to the interviewer's direct question about his age (—m: (4.6) I sink I was si:x?), she asks a follow-up question about Steven's grade at school at the time he met Grant in order to establish a more definite time point. After a 2.6 second delay he responds with —ɪ dɒn' kno:w. She then accepts his response with her —əka:y? and moves on to a new line of inquiry about the houses Steven has lived in, which he perceptively understands to be a question about the house he was living in when he first knew Grant (not shown here). The fact that the interviewer stops pursuing the age question suggests that she treats Steven's —ɪ dɒn' kno:w. as a legitimate denial of knowledge about something that may plausibly be known by some children but cannot be assumed to be.

One class of questions that commonly draws unelaborated —ɪ dɒn't know responses from children are those aimed at finding out how long a sexual act was performed on them for or, in cases of chronic abuse, how many times a particular thing was done to them. Again, these are questions that, since children directly experience them, could plausibly be known but typically interviewers do not treat them as such by pressing children to try and recall.

Extract 38 from Darren's interview is a typical example of a question aimed at determining how long a sexual act went on for.

	(38)	Darren (00:56 video 3)	
1802	I3	a::nd (0.2) how long do you reckon his doodle was in your mouth for.	1802-05. right foot resting on table, knee bent up, looking at foot and toying with shoe 1802. looking down at notes on table, hands hovering over page, then moving hands in forward, alternate circular motion 1803. looks at C3, joins hands together, elbows resting on knees 1806. looks up at I3 1808. looks back down to shoe, still toying with it 1810. nods, looks back to notes, moves to write
1803			
1804		(1.0)	
1805	→ C3	°I dunno:°	
1806		(0.4)	
1807	I3	°okɑ:y° a::nd then you said you:: wha'd you do a:fter that.	
1808			
1809	C3	°(I went) straight to the bathroo:m and washed my mouth out with°	
1810			
1811		(°°tooth[paste°°])	

After a 1 second delay, Darren responds to the interviewer's question with a softly spoken —°I dunno:°" at line 1805. He then looks up at the interviewer and she accepts his denial of knowing with a quiet —°okɑ:y°". She then immediately shifts to a new topic: what Darren did after that sexual act was finished.

The same pattern is observable in extract 39 from Harriet's first interview.

(39) Harriet 1 (22:20 video 1)

725	I2	so when did he um: tch put his willy <u>on</u>	725-45. sitting to left of chair, left elbow resting on chair arm, looking down at cup she holds in her left hand, touching it with right hand/fingers
726		y'r vagina.	
727		(1.5)	
728	I2	'fore or <u>a</u> fter he was kissing you.	728-31. sitting, right leg crossed over right, hands folded on stomach, notepad on lap, looking at C4
729		(0.2)	
730	C4	after	
731		(0.2)	
732	I2	mpf ''after'' (0.5) ° (a) fter o:kay.	732. looks down to notes, then one nod, forward and back
733		(1.5)	733. several nods, looking at C4
734	I2	>and how long do ya reckon he <u>k</u> issed you	
735		for.<	
736		(1.6)	
737	→ C4	I <u>d</u> unno.	
738		(0.7)	738. slight nods
739	I2	° 'kay°	
740		(0.4)	
741	I2	.hhh ↑and ↑um	741. glances down at notes
742		did anything ↑else ↑↑happen apart from	742. looks up at C4, gesturing outward with hands, then brings hands back to lap, toying with pen
743		him kissing you on your ↑face (0.3) and	
744		um (0.5) >putting his willy< on your	
745		vagi:na	
746		(1.7)	746. nods, still looking at cup, touching it with fingers
747	I2	did anything ↑else ↑↑happen=	
748	C4	=yep	

After establishing the order in which sexual acts took place on a particular occasion, at line 734 the interviewer asks a duration question about how long Harriet's grandfather kissed her for. After a 1.6 second gap, Harriet utters "I dunno." The interviewer accepts the response with her nod and "'kay'" at lines 738-39 and shifts topic to ask whether other things happened in addition to the two sexual acts already disclosed, thus indicating that she is treating Harriet's denial of knowing as genuine. It is notable that Harriet is not making eye contact at all throughout this sequence, which, along with her brief responses, adds to the impression that this is an embarrassing or uncomfortable topic for her.

Extract 40 from Harriet's second interview appears different in the way that the interviewer presses her after her "don't know" responses.

(40) Harriet 1 (10:47 video 2)

1594	I2	>how many times <u>do you reckon</u> he's <u>sucked</u>	1594. from writing, looks up at C4
1595		(.) your <u>nipples</u> .	1594-6. circling feet in the air, looking toward floor, bringing feet to rest on floor at end
1596		(2.8)	1597. shakes head slightly, still looking toward floor
1597	→ C4	<u>"don't know."</u>	1598-600. looks down, writes
1598		(1.0)	1601. looks up
1599	I2	<u>"okay"</u>	1600-02. presses down on seat with palms and shifts forward in seat, nodding at end of silence
1600		(0.5)	1603-05. drops head, scratches head, shakes head back at end, looking toward I2
1601	I2	more than <u>↑ONCE</u>	1603. looks down, pen pointed on page
1602		(1.0)	1604. looks up and right, toward child's pictures on table
1603	C4	<u>yup=</u>	1605. looks at C4
1604	I2	=MPF.h how many times <u><have you had to></u>	1606-11. pulling on sleeves
1605		what have you had to do to <u>his willy</u>	1607. looks toward table
1606		(1.0)	1608-9. looks down, writes, then looks up
1607	C4	<u>"suck it"</u>	1610. shrugs
1608		(0.6)	1612. looks down, writes
1609	I2	<u>"suck it" (.) "and how many times</u> have	1613. writing. C4 shakes head
1610		you had to do <u>that do you reckon.</u> (.)	1614. looks up
1611		just a guess.	1614-15. presses palms on seats, shifts further forward, still looking toward table
1612		(2.8)	1615. sways head to left, then right
1613	→ C4	<u>"don't know"</u>	1616. shakes hair back
1614		(0.8)	1617. nods, looking toward I2, pushes hands between knees
1615	I2	<u>lots of ti::mes</u> or just <u>one ti::me</u> or (.)	1618-19. looks down and writes
1616		<u>"more than one time"</u>	
1617	C2	<u>"more than one time"</u>	
1618	I2	<u>("okay") "more than one."</u>	
1619		(2.0)	

Harriet denies knowing how many times grandpa sucked her nipples with her "don't know." at line 1597 and the interviewer demonstrates acceptance by visibly looking down and writing, followed by a very quiet "okay" after a 1 second gap. But then the interviewer presses with the follow-up question "more than ↑ONCE" (line 1601).

Although she presses for more detail, her follow up question is not challenging Harriet's legitimate claim not to know how many times grandpa performed that particular act on her. In other parts of the corpus, interviewers utter things such as "are you sure?" or "have a little think" which function as genuine challenges to a child's claim not to know something. By contrast, what the interviewer does here is accept that Harriet may

legitimately not know the precise number of times but, by presenting her with a very broad range in which to estimate, tries to get Harriet to assent to some degree of knowing on the topic of how many times grandpa has done that particular thing. In this case, Harriet assents at line 1603 to the interviewer's proffering of ~~more~~ [↑]more than [↑]ONCE" as a candidate estimate.

At line 1609, the interviewer starts another ~~how many times~~" question but this time tags ~~just a guess.~~" at the end, which appears designed to head off another ~~don't know~~" by making explicit that estimates are acceptable. After a long delay, Harriet shakes her head as she utters ~~don't know~~" (line 1613). The interviewer then offers three estimates for Harriet to take up and Harriet takes up one of the options ~~more than one time~~" (line 1617). Even though this interviewer presses beyond Harriet's initial denial of knowing, her pursuit is done by showing that it is acceptable to estimate and by offering examples of estimates for Harriet to take up. Her follow up questions do not imply a challenge to Harriet's legitimate claim not to know the number of times grandpa perpetrated these sexual acts. This is further evidence that interviewers discern between the kinds of knowledge they expect children will be able to report and that which children cannot be presumed to know. Arguably, this explains why they respond differently to children's unelaborated ~~don't know~~". The data suggests that it may depend on the degree to which it seems probable that the child would or would not possess the knowledge in question.

Next I examine instances where children give ~~don't know~~" responses to questions that are centred on other people's experiences, or details about other people, with a focus on how interviewers treat these responses.

Extract 41 is part of a sequence where the interviewer is establishing the names and ages of all the people who came to the house the night that Steven's mother died.

	(41)	Steven (10:24 video 1)	
403	I1	so Jim is a baby how old's Brett.	403. looking down at notes on lap, right leg crossed over right, moves right hand to page, pen pointed on page. Sitting in swivel chair, right leg bent up and bare foot on table, left leg hooked over right knee and C10 pulling at his toes or toenails and looking at them, then lifts left hand to mouth, appears to briefly suck a finger, or eat some toe nail 405. returns to pulling at toes or toe nails
404		(1.0)	
405	→ C10	"I dunno"	
406		(0.8)	
407	I1	is he (.) a grown up or a kid.	
408		(0.5)	
409	C10	grown up.	

In response to Steven's "I dunno" the interviewer follows up with a forced-choice question, which presents two candidate responses for him to choose from that remove the obligation to respond with a precise age, similar to the interviewer's response to Harriet in extracts 39 and 40. By doing so, she demonstrates that she is not treating Brett's precise age as something that Steven ought to know.

In extract 42, the interviewer is questioning Darren about both his and the perpetrator Phillip's activities immediately before the target incident: Phillip exposing himself to Darren by poking his penis down the side of their shared bunk bed.

		(42)	Darren (5:27 video 2)	
1041	I3	°okay°	[what [what had you been do:ing	1041. from writing, folds hands together and rests elbows on knees, still looking at notes on table, then looks at C3. C3 has hands between knees sitting forward on edge of seat, eyes cast down, possibly smiling, then looks up at I3 1044. slouches back in chair, rests right elbow on chair arm and rubs eye, pulls right ankle up to rest on left thigh 1046. sits forward, holding right calf and foot with hands, looking down 1047. slight nods 1050. lifts left hand to forehead, appears to scratch 1052. looks up at I3 1054. shakes head, looks down
1042		(.) j'st befo:re (0.9)	°Phillip put his doodle down [the side] of the bed°	
1043			[mh mh] ly:ing there.	
1044	C3			
1045		(0.2)		
1046	I3	↑yeah		
1047		(0.4)		
1048	I3	and [w-]		
1049	C3	[yip]		
1050	I3	>what about< Phillip	[what had he been	
1051		doing before that °happened.°		
1052		(0.5)		
1053	→ C3	°dunno°		
1054	I3	°don't kno↑w°		
1055	C3	[no]		
1056	I3	[okay]		
1057		(0.8)		
1058	I3	and <u>this</u> what time would have this		
1059		(d)happened. °d'ya know.°		

Darren reports his knowledge about what he was doing just prior to the incident at line 1044: “ly:ing there.”. However, the same question about what Phillip was “doing before that °happened°” is followed by a brief delay and a softly spoken “°dunno°”. The interviewer utters a quiet, questioning, “°don't kno↑w°” that invites Darren to confirm that he does not know or, alternatively, provides one last place for him to display his recall and then, when he confirms his lack of knowledge, she switches topic to the time of day or night that the “doodle down the side of the bed” incident happened.

Extract 43 is part of a sequence where the interviewer is exploring why Harriet's grandmother appeared to have some suspicions that Harriet's grandfather was abusing her.

along with other visible signs, as indicating that the children are disengaged or tired. This is exemplified in extract 44 from Steven's interview. We take up the conversation where the interviewer is trying to establish who first saw Steven's mother dead. Karen is the sister of Steven's friend, and Steven and his friend ran to her for help after they first found Steven's mother.

		(44) Steven (29:29 video 1)	
1131	I1	<u>how old</u> is Karen.	1131. looking back at previous page of notes, hunched forward 1131-32. slouched in chair, knees bent, bare feet on table, elbows resting on chair arms, right hand near mouth, possibly something in mouth 1133. turns to current page. C3 moves hand from mouth to hang over side of chair, head and gaze following. 1134-1139. writing 1136-1143. yawning, covers mouth with left hand, then lets hand drop to chair arm, looks towards right hand at end. 1140. stops writing, brings right hand to support chin, looks at C10. 1140-46. stroking and tapping at chair arm with right hand, holding something white in hand 1147. looks down to page 5.5 seconds into silence. 1.2 seconds into silence, C10 shifts right hand to scrape fingers or white object on material of trousers, looking downwards. 1148. looks back up at C10. C10 reverts to scraping fingers, or object on the right chair arm, head and gaze following. 1150. possibly glances at I1 from beneath brows and then back to right hand. 1151. slight nod. C10 crosses right ankle over left. 1152. lifts gaze toward I1, rests head back on chair back 1153. scratches left cheek, drops hand back to chair arm. 1155. smiling 1157. looks back toward right chair arm. 1158. looks at I1 1160. looks back toward right chair arm
1132		(1.2)	
1133	→ C10	<u>I dunno</u> (how old).	
1134		(3.8)	
1135	I1	<u>who was</u> the first <u>adult</u> who got there.	
1136		(1.0)	
1137	C10	.HH huhhh? ((vocalised while yawning))	
1138		(0.6)	
1139	I1	<u>who was</u> the first <u>grown up</u>	
1140		<u>the first adult</u> who got there	
1141		(0.2)	
1142	C10	H H H	
1143		(1.2)	
1144	→ C10	<u>I dunno.</u>	
1145		(2.5)	
1146	I1	<u>°alright°</u>	
1147		(9.8)	
1148	I1	<u>mpf</u> how you <u>feeling</u> ,	
1149		(2.0)	
1150	C10	u::m (1.2) <u>good?</u>	
1151	I1	<u>good</u> (.) <u>oka:y</u>	
1152		(1.5)	
1153	I1	<u>do you wanna stop</u> or can you keep going	
1154		for a bit longer.	
1155	C10	<u>stop stop</u>	
1156		(0.2)	
1157	I1	I <u>did</u> notice <u>you were</u> yawning. (.) and I	
1158		<u>thought you</u> might have been getting a bit	
1159		bo:red,	
1160	C10	<u>mh.</u>	

Steven denies knowing Karen's age (line 1133) and then denies knowing who the first adult was to get to the scene (1144). Between lines 1136 and lines 1142, Steven is visibly

and audibly yawning and, since the interviewer is looking at Steven from line 1140, she can no doubt see this. She accepts his “dunno.” with her “^oalright^o” at line 1146 and then continues looking at him for over 5 seconds into the long 9.8 second silence at line 1147. Arguably, in this case, she uses her visual observation of his yawning to interpret Steven's *I don't know* responses as the product of being tired and disengaged and she makes this theory explicit to him at lines 1157-1159: “^odid notice you were yawning. (.) and I thought you might have been getting a bit bo:red,”.

Thus, interviewers appear to take account of not only the degree to which it is probable that a child might be expected to know a particular thing when making judgements about when to press children further or not. They also appear alert to visible and audible signs that a child's “I don't know” are the product of being tired and disengaged and, as we see in this example, they tend not to pursue children on questions of fact when they make such observations, even when it is probable that the child might know the answer.

7.2.8. *When “I don't know” is part of other activities*

A number of conversation analysts have noted occasions when *I don't know* is used in conversation and the kinds of interactional activities it gets used for in addition to, or apart from disclaiming knowing (Beach & Metzger, 1997; Edwards, 1995; Kärkäinen, 2003; Potter, 2004; Weatherall, 2008; Wooffitt, 2005). In the current data I noticed that sometimes when interviewers ask children questions, children preface their responsive second pair part turn with *I don't know* but then go on to tell something of what they do know. On such occasions, children seem to be doing activities with these *I don't know* prefaces quite apart from disclaiming knowing.

In extract 45, Darren prefaces his estimate of when his two step sisters came to live in the house where the abuse took place with *I don't know*.

(45)		Darren (5:12 video 3)	
1968	I3	↑what year did ((stepsister)) and	1968-69. looking down at page on table, hands folded over one another over knees 1970. looks at C3 1968-73. both arms resting along chair arms, moving legs up and down slightly, looking toward I's notes 1973. moves back to write
1969		((stepsister)) come to live	
1970		in that house.	
1971		(0.2)	
1972 →	C3	I dun°no::° (.) <u>think</u> it was two thousand	
1973		and one <u>I think?</u>	
1974	I3	you think two thousand and <u>one</u> or	
1975		<u>some,thing=how ol:d</u> [were you.=	
1976	C3	[m::?	
1977	I3	=d'you remember how old you ↑were	
1978		(0.2)	
1979	C3	°n:uh.°	

The first thing to note is that the interviewer asks a highly specific question at lines 1968-1971 that seeks the precise year. After a brief delay, Darren issues his $\text{I dun}^{\circ}\text{no}::^{\circ}$, which fades out toward the end of the TCU. But then, after a micro-pause, he utters an estimate of when his stepsisters came to live at the house. The placement of I think at the beginning and end of the second TCU provide for the sense that this *is* an estimate, not a certainty. This is an instance of I think functioning as an epistemic downgrade, as discussed in section 7.2.4. Moreover, the rising, questioning intonation at the end of the TCU make it sound as though this is just one candidate response that may or may not be accurate. Taken together, these features give the sense of a tentative estimate. The interviewer's next turn confirms that she hears it this way too, immediately mirroring Darren's I think with you think and adding or something , which permits the possibility that it could be a year other than 2001, before changing tack to try and elicit the needed detail in another way.

In extract 46, Ben also prefaces a tentative estimate with *I don't know*.

(46) Ben (20:51 video 1)		
854	I2	what day is <u>footy</u> training on.
855		(0.4)
856	→ C2	↑I ↑↑dunno:.(0.4)↑second ↑day(0.6)[prob'↑ly]
857	I2	[whose
858		<u>foot</u>] ball training <u>was it.</u>
859		(0.6)
860	C2	((n↑ame))'s
861		(1.0)
862	I2	((name))?
863		(0.4)
864	C2	yeah
865	I2	does <u>she</u> play <u>football</u> .
866		(0.4)
867	C2	<u>mm</u>
868		(3.5)

854-62. writing

856. slumped in chair with knees and feet up, shifts hands from holding hat, to slapping thighs

858. brings hands to hold knees, which are still drawn up on chair

862-3. lifts hat up with mouth, and drops it at end.

863. writing, then looks up, pen held on page

867. slight nod

868. looks down, writes

As was the case in extract 45, this interviewer asks a specific question that seeks the precise day that football training was on, since this was one of the events surrounding the alleged abuse perpetrated on Ben. Again, there is a delay before Ben issues his →I ↑↑dunno:.” delivered with pronounced upward intonation on “dunno” and a final, falling contour. After another delay, during which the interviewer is still writing, Ben utters –second day” with upward, questioning intonation, as though this is an estimate and just one possible candidate response. Then, after a slightly longer delay, he adds another increment –prob'ly”, which is also delivered with questioning intonation and in overlap with the interviewer starting her new turn (line 857).

So far then, I am developing a case that *I don't know* as it is used here is not actually functioning as a denial of knowing *anything at all* in regard to the question asked. Rather, it seems to be functioning as part of a package to signal to the interviewer something like: *what I say next should be heard as a guess or an estimate of the information you seek and*

you should not hold me to it. This is similar to Beach and Metzger's (1997) observation that "[i]f the speaker is offering an opinion or assessment in response to a prior request for information, claiming a lack of knowledge functions instructionally to hear the information that follows in light of the speaker's own uncertainty" (p. 569).

One piece of evidence for this interpretation is to compare it to those instances where interviewers gloss a child's tentative response to a specific question in a way that gives it a greater sense of certainty, as was the case in extract 24, re-presented here.

	(24)	Darren (9:31 video 3)	
2099	I3	(0.5) and you weren't kicking it that	2099-2108. arms resting along chair arms, chin dropped to chest, looking down to floor. 2099-2100. looking down at notes on table, scratching head with left hand. 2100. lowers left hand to page, rests fingers on it as she reads from notes 2103-4. nod 2104. nod 2105. turns to look at C3 2107. looks back down to notes
2100		ha:rd. (1.0) °and then ah° Phillip was	
2101		laughing. (0.7) °a:nd a[h:°]	
2102	→ C3	[I] think °he	
2103		was laugh[ing] anyway.°	
2104	I3	[°yi°] think he was	
2105		laughing (0.6) °and then he:: uh° pulled	
2106		it back.	
2107		(0.4)	
2108	C3	°m°	

Like Darren's repair at line 2102, after the interviewer imbues his prior knowledge claim with greater epistemic certainty than he appears to have intended, children's *I don't know* prefaced estimates or guesses appear to be doing similar work to ensure that their knowledge/memory claims are heard as tentative or uncertain.

Consider Robert's *I don't know* prefaced turn at line 994 of extract 47.

(47) Robert (9:36 video 2)

991	I4	'nd a:fter he makes you pee into the	
992		bottle .h what does he do with the pee.	
993		(0.8)	
994	→ C7	I'd'nno tips it ou::t?	
995		(0.6)	
996	I4	have you see:n him chuck it ou:t?	
997		(0.4)	
998	C7	he tips onto the garden 'n stuff like	
999		that,	
1000	I4	you've seen him do that?	
1001	C7	yea:h?	
1002		(6.5)	
1003	I4	""↑ok:ay""	

991-1001. leaning to the left, head resting on left hand. Lifts pen to write at "yeah"
 991-1003. touching and pulling at own fingers, looking down at hands.

Robert is the child who most uses the *I don't know* preface in the data corpus. Of the 16 clear instances I found where children do this, Robert is represented nine times. In extract 47 the interviewer asks a specific question about what the perpetrator does with a bottle of "pee" after he has made Robert "pee" into it. Then there is the now familiar delay before Robert issues the *I don't know* preface latched immediately with a second TCU "tips it out?" delivered with questioning intonation at line 994. Once again this provides for a sense of tentativeness, as though this is a possibility but not certain. On this occasion, the interviewer does not permit the tentativeness to stand but pursues a more concrete confirmation over a series of turns that the child has *seen* this happen and is not guessing at what *might* happen to the bottle.

One notable difference in the way Robert uses the *I don't know* preface compared to the other children is that he leaves no gap between the first TCU "I'd'nno" and the second "tips it out?". This is observable again in extract 48 where the topic is focused on how the perpetrator made Robert put his penis in a vacuum cleaner hose before turning it on.

(48)		Robert (6:15 video 2)	
895	I4	>where'd-< where were you when this	895-902. looking down to hands, fidgeting with something (torn paper cup?)
896		ha:ppened.	
897	C7	the rumpus room an e'd make me pee in	
898		bottles and stuff like that?	895-900. writing, leaning strongly to left
899		(12.8)	
900	I4	↑c'n ↑↑you: w'll ↑whose vaccuum cleaner	900. stops writing, moves in chair, then points pen back onto page at end
901		was it.	
902		(0.6)	
903	→ C7	I dunno prob'ly one of nanna's old ones?	903. reaches towards table and places something there, continuing to touch it while talking
904		(0.7)	
905	I4	what did it look like.	
906		(0.5)	

Here, as in extract 47, the absence of a gap between the *I don't know* preface and the tentative, upward intoned guess that follows (“prob'ly one of nanna's old ones?” line 903), provides some evidence that these turns are designed to perform one cohesive action. These are not in the same class as the stand alone *I don't know*s that we examined earlier, which directly disclaim knowing. Rather, these instances appear designed from the start to display tentative knowledge. The *I don't know* preface works as a kind of signal that what comes next is tentative and this tentativeness is then confirmed by the use of hedging terms like “probably” and the questioning intonation of the substantive response, so that it comes over as a possibility rather than a certainty.

In extracts 45-48 above, the children utter some specific piece of knowledge in the second TCU following the *I don't know* preface, even though it is marked as tentative. Darren nominates “two thousand and one” as the likely year, Ben nominates the “second day”, Robert claims that the perpetrator “tips it out” and that the vacuum cleaner was “one of nanna's old ones”.

However, on other occasions, children provide a range of possibilities in the turn-constructional units (TCUs) that follow, not just one. Consider extract 49 from Robert's interview where the topic is the impact on Robert when the perpetrator held onto his testicles and lifted him off the floor:

(49) Robert (5:16 video 2)		
865		(1.8)
866	I4	what <u>has</u> that felt like when he's done
867		that,
868		(1.2)
869	C7	wha'ya me:an.
870		(0.6)
871	I4	well <u>after</u> he's (0.2) <u>h</u> held onto you as
872		hard as he can and then he's .h
873		li[fted you:
874	C7	[er hu:rt?
875		(1.8)
876	C7	for aw <u>h</u> ile
877		(6.0)
878	I4	"how long is aw <u>h</u> il::le."
879		(1.5)
880	→ C7	"I'd'nno" a <u>couple of hour:s</u> (0.6)
881		<u>up to a da:y,</u>
882		(13.0) ((writing))

865-874. leaning strongly to left of chair, head resting against left hand, right hand resting on notepad on lap
866-67. reaches to table and picks up something (torn paper cup?)

870. puts a piece of paper(?) back on table, still has some in hand
871-2. tearing small pieces off paper and putting them on table, eyes cast down

874-82. tearing up what remains of the paper cup, eyes cast down
875. writing

878-79. poised to write, shakes hair back at end, resting head back against left hand.

880. appears to rub nose with back of hand.
881. rests head back onto left hand, starts writing at end
882. writing

Asking children how they *feel* about what was done to them or what something *felt like* are common questions that often create difficulties in answering, as children are sometimes unsure whether to provide a description of emotion or sensation. But the present focus is on Robert's response to the interviewer's specific question "how long is awhile" at line 878. As previously, there is a delay before the *I don't know* preface. And as is common to Robert's use of these prefaces, he latches his second TCU ("a couple of hour:s") immediately to the end of "I'd'nno", which also lacks the final contour intonation that some of the other children's have. Thus with Robert there is an even

stronger sense that the *I don't know* preface and the following TCU form one cohesive whole, performing one cohesive action. Like the previous examples, the second TCU (“a couple of hours”) is delivered with questioning intonation, which in itself suggests tentativeness but then, after a (0.6) second gap, he adds a post-gap increment —up to a day”. In effect, this post-gap increment increases the range of uncertainty surrounding how long “a while” was. Looked at another way, the ambiguity created by providing a range of possible time frames also gives the child a wider range within which to be accurate and thus not made vulnerable to challenging questions (such as “how do you know that?”), which sometimes follow when children give more specific and certain responses.

Extract 50 is different because of the disjunction between Harriet’s “I don’t know” and the estimating, which, similar to Robert in the previous example, presents a range of possible “right” answers.

(50)		Harriet 2 (19:13 video 1)	
623	I2	°o:ka:y.°	623. nodding (responding to previous turn) 624-628. looking down, toying with fingers 624. looking at C4, rolls right hand in forward circle three times (wheel turning motion) and brings to rest in lap. 627. appears to look up and off to the left slightly 628. possibly looks downward towards hands again, still toying with fingers 630. looks more directly at I2 631. moves to write, looking down at page 632-638. writing, underlining several times at “okay” 634. looks back down, still toying with fingers.
624	I2	.h se HOW OLD WERE you when (.) ya	
625		grandpa started to abuse you, (0.2)	
626		d’ya reckon,°	
627		(3.5)	
628	→ C4	I don’t know.	
629		(2.0)	
630	→ C4	bout (0.8) †six	
631		(0.4)	
632	I2	°mm[hh°	
633	C4	[>six or seven around them ages five	
634		six or seven.<	
635		(0.5)	
636	I2	°five or six or seven.°	
637		(0.2)	
638	I2	°o:ka:y°	
639		(0.2)	

Following the interviewer's specific question at lines 624-626, there is a lengthy delay before Harriet responds with ~~I~~don't know" at line 628. Early in the 3.5 second delay, Harriet looks up slightly and away to the left. This kind of visual display of ~~doing~~ thinking" or ~~doing~~ remembering" is perceptible throughout the interviews and, whilst interesting, is not explored here. However, as mentioned earlier, it may explain why interviewers do not interrupt children during these delays, providing they are looking at the child and not writing at the time.

Unlike the previous examples, Harriet's ~~I~~don't know" appears built to stand alone as a complete turn. It is fully articulated, has final contour intonation and, most significantly, there is a full 2 second gap allowed to pass. However, Harriet then comes in with "bout" at line 630, and ~~about~~" retrospectively alters the ~~I~~don't know" into an incomplete turn, and the remainder of her utterance (~~about~~ (0.8) ↑six") into a post gap-increment: part of one single turn rather than two turns at talk. For example, had Harriet followed the 2 second gap with a different utterance, such as: ~~I~~think I was about six", then this would constitute a new turn at talk. So whilst the whole turn does not start out as one cohesive action where *I don't know* is built in to the turn as a means of making it hearable as a tentative guess or estimate (most visible in Robert's examples) it *is* turned into one retrospectively.

Harriet then expands further at lines 633-634, broadening out the range of possible ages she was when the abuse started. As with Robert in the previous extract, this functions on two levels. It increases the range of uncertainty surrounding when the abuse started, which is least helpful from the interviewer's perspective, but it also helps head off the

challenging questions that often follow when children are more specific, arguably a desirable thing from a child's perspective.

Another activity that children are doing with these *I don't know* prefaced responses appears to be involved with the conversation analytic area of preference organisation. Specifically, there are some instances where the *I don't know* preface seems specifically to delay a dispreferred second pair part from the child. From a sequence organisation perspective, preferred responses to first pair parts are those that further the project or action embodied in the first pair part while dispreferred responses are those that fail to further the action embodied in the prior turn (see chapter 4).

These *I don't know* prefaces seem to be involved with doing dispreferred second pair parts (SPPs) because, firstly, they delay the substantive SPP response, a common feature in dispreferred SPPs. Secondly, marking the substantive response that follows with uncertainty and tentativeness is also dispreferred because the turn is not providing the precise information sought by some of the highly specific questions asked by interviewers, and thus is not furthering the action with which that FPP question was involved.

In extracts 45 to 50 the children's SPPs, though containing some markers of being dispreferred, do nonetheless contain a substantive response to the FPP question. By contrast, in the following examples the turn-constructural unit (TCU) following the *I don't know* preface does not even provide that and is therefore even more dispreferred. Consider Darren's response in extract 51.

		(51) Darren (6:07 video 2)	
1072	I3	a:nd (1.3) hhow long was his doodle (0.4)	1072. stops writing, brings hands together, turns to face C3 at "doodle" 1072-1082. leaning forward gripping edge of table with hands, looking downward, 1075. nods and moves back to write
1073		°down through that gap°,	
1074	→ C3	°m:: dunno (i'was †not) it wasn't there	
1075		for that long (_ _)°	
1076	I3	o†kay	
1077		(1.0)	

In response to another specific question: —how long was his doodle (0.4) °down through that gap°,” Darren delays his answer in two ways at line 1074: first with the drawn out —m::,” which functions to hold the turn space, then by the —dunno” before the dispreferred second pair part (SPP) is delivered —(i'was †not) it wasn't there for that long (_ _)°”.

What makes this a dispreferred SPP is that it does not directly address the action embodied in the interviewer's first pair part, which is a request for specific information. Instead of providing a specific time, or even a tentative estimate of the length of time the perpetrator had his penis down the side of the bunk bed, Darren's response tells what it wasn't - it wasn't there for that long - which evades giving even an estimate of the time.

Dispreference is also audible in Robert's talk in extract 52. Just before the start of this extract, in response to a question about whether the perpetrator has done anything else to him, Robert says that the perpetrator has —piked him up by the balls”.

	(52)	Robert (4:08 video 2)	
828	I4	can you remember when <u>that</u> happened,	828. writing, stopping at end but leaving pen pointed onto page 828-29. leaning forward, touching paper cup? on table 830. sits back from table, rests left hand over right, upturned wrist, looking down at hands. 831-835. toying with fingers of right hand, looking down 836. writing. C7 wipes nose with back of hand and arm.
829		(1.7)	
830	→ C7	^o I dunno= ^o I fink, ^o (0.4)	
831		well he <u>does</u> it all the <u>ti::me</u> .	
832		(0.5)	
833	I4	<u>how many</u> times has it <u>happened</u> .	
834		(1.0)	
835	→ C7	I'd'nno.=prob'ly over a <u>hundred</u> ?	
836		(3.5)	

At line 828 the interviewer asks a specific question focused on eliciting a time point(s) when this picking up by the balls took place. After a lengthy delay, Robert delivers an *I don't know* preface, immediately latched with ^oI fink,^o which has continuing intonation marking it as a not yet complete TCU. Following the 0.4 second intra-turn gap he restarts this second TCU ~~w~~ell he does it all the ti::me." (line 831).

Once again, this is a dispreferred second pair part. It does not progress the activity embodied in the interviewer's first pair part (FPP) question, which seeks a recollection of a specific time or times when that particular form of abuse happened. Instead, Robert claims that the perpetrator ~~d~~oes it all the ti::me." Internal evidence that this does not fulfil the action embodied in the interviewer's FPP question is the fact that she reformulates the question in an even more specific way with ~~h~~ow many times has it happened." (line 833). It is notable that she leaves off the ~~can~~ you remember" preface in this reformulated version, which would more easily make ~~no~~, I don't remember" a sequentially available, relevant response. Instead, she issues a strong interrogative question that unmistakably requests that Robert recall and nominate the number of times the act took place. This time Robert offers a more preferred response: an *I don't know* preface, latched immediately with a tentative estimate ~~p~~rob'ly over a hundred?"

similar to extracts 45-48. The interviewer then begins to write, thus signalling her acceptance that the sequence is closed.

The examples considered so far show the interviewer doing most of the interactional work to direct children into providing more specific responses. Something else happens in extract 53 from Harriet's interview.

(53)		Harriet (8:34 video 2)	
1478	I2	<u>"you're nodding your head,"</u> = HOW LONG has	1478. continues to nod
1479		all this been going on for.	
1480		(1.0)	
1481	C4	<u>"since=since I's about five six"</u>	1481. raises head to look at I2
1482	I2	<u>mpf.h <"fi:ve or six[:.]"></u>	1482-85. writes
1483	C4	[ye[p]	
1484	I2	<[a]nd how many	
1485		ti::mes>	
1486		do you <u>reckon</u> <u>that he's done things</u> to	1486. underlines, then looks up at C4, then brings right hand to rest over left wrist
1487		you. (.) "how many times would you <u>guess</u> ."	1487. jerks head backward
1488		(1.2)	
1489	→ C4	<u>I du:nno.</u> (0.2) "about <u>lots::?"</u>	1489. slight head shake
1490	I2	<u>"lots"</u> (0.3) <u>"okay"</u>	1490. nods, appears to look away to right at end
1491		(0.7)	
1492	C4	<u>"every time nanna and uncle goes out."</u>	1491-1492. shakes hair from face as lifts head up
1493		(0.5)	
1494	I2	<u>.h yeah go</u> (0.2) <u>↑where</u> was your um: (.)	1494. looks to notes, turns back a page
1495		y'r nanna <u>on that ***day</u> night.=	1495. looks up at C4

At lines 1486-1487, the interviewer asks a specific question focused on eliciting the number of times that Harriet's grandfather has perpetrated acts of abuse on her. After a 1.2 second delay Harriet starts her turn with I du:nno. , followed by a short gap, and then a tentative (about) but non-substantive estimate of how long (about lots::?). Perhaps recognising that her information request was unreasonable (Harriet has been abused chronically by her grandfather over 4-6 years and being able to put a number to that is unlikely), the interviewer immediately issues a confirming receipt of Harriet's estimate with a softly spoken repeat lots and an even quieter accepting

—°okay°” (line 1491). This, together with the nod commencing during —lots” and looking away at the end of the turn, signals that the interviewer has receipted and accepted Harriet's response and the sequence is now closed. But then, after another delay, Harriet expands her SPP to provide a new formulation addressed to the original question regarding how many times: —°every time nanna and uncle goes out.°” (line 1492).

What is interesting about Harriet's expansion is that it seems to again illustrate that children are attentive to the adequacy of their responses, something that was discussed in section 7.2.2 on how children account for their knowledge (e.g. Richard in extract 19 —*my brain um told me*”). Although Harriet is still not providing a precise number of times, her reformulated response, coming as it does after an acceptance by the interviewer of her first response, appears to display that she herself finds something problematic in her first response —°about lots:::?” (line 1493). And the most likely problem is that —about lots” is not a very informative answer, whereas —°every time nanna and uncle goes out” is more so. This, together with the earlier examples of when children appear to be attending to the adequacy of their answers, supports the proposition that children are invested in displaying their own competency in these interviews, rather than being passive —vessels of answers” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), easily manipulated into saying inaccurate things by poorly formulated questions. As this example shows, even where an interviewer has asked an essentially unanswerable question, Harriet, through her own interactional skill and effort, transforms it into an occasion where she *does* provide informative details that are clearly addressed to the business or action embodied in the initial FPP question.

7.3. Conclusions and implications

7.3.1. *Summary of findings on children's epistemic work*

Recapping the findings on the epistemic work that children do as part of these investigative interviews, the analysis began with the idea of a continuum of knowing/remembering, from children making claims to know things in an unhedged, unaccounted for way, through to denying knowing or remembering. From there, the analysis worked along this continuum, examining the different kinds of work that children appear to be doing in terms of displaying the extent of their epistemic certainty or uncertainty.

In the section on unmarked claims to know or remember something, it was simply noted that there are some topic areas where children mostly (though not always) respond to questions with a direct display of knowing, without marking their talk in ways that make their state of knowing seem uncertain. Questions about name, age, address, birthdays and details such as what they or the perpetrator were wearing at the time of an alleged incident were almost universally responded to by children in ways that suggested no tentativeness. Even contextual questions about the abuse, such as how many times a particular act was performed on the child, or when a particular incident occurred were sometimes responded to with certainty, although these types of questions were more likely to elicit a greater degree of tentativeness generally. In this section, children could also be seen giving sophisticated responses to difficult questions, such as Harriet's response to a leading forced choice question about what grandpa was wearing (extract 6). This reinforced the argument that children are not passive answerers, since they often give answers that the preference structure does not make it easy for them to give.

Next, occasions where children add accounts to their claims to know or remember things were examined, providing further evidence of children's engagement with the socially motivated concern to convey themselves as reliable and accurate reporters of the things that have happened to them. In particular, children often produce descriptions of other remembered events or happenings surrounding their claim to know something in a way that works to bolster the veracity of that original claim. Often children produce these accounts when there is some interactional signal that the interviewer finds their unaccounted for knowledge/memory claim problematic. Children also achieved the comparatively difficult task of responding to interviewers' questions about what someone else may have seen or heard, usually another potential witness. In such instances, children displayed the ability to back up their claims to know such things with accounts that relied on displays of logical deductive reasoning.

At other times, interviewers directly request accounts from children when children themselves do not offer them, deploying questions such as —*how do you know that?*” Most often interviewers accept children's accounts when prompted this way. And even where the child's account fails to provide the kind of evidence that interviewers need, as was the case with Sarah in extract 17, interviewers rarely pursue the child directly on the topic. An exception was interviewer 4 in extract 18, who pursued Susie to give a better account. This precipitated visible and audible signs of discomfort for Susie. Children also showed an ability to detect when their account for knowing or remembering something is not adequate to the purpose, evidenced by their repair to another, more logical form of account, such as Richard's shift from claiming his brain was the source of his knowledge, to the more common account of linking the memory to some other co-occurring remembered event, such as a birthday in extract 19.

Next was an analysis of how children mark their knowledge/memory claims as uncertain or tentative and “I think” prefaced knowledge/memory claims were revealed as one way that children downgrade the epistemic certainty of such claims. It was argued that in contrast to Sidnell’s (in press) observation of children’s “I think” prefaced claims marking a kind of epistemic deference to adults in his data, in this data children’s *I think* prefaced claims seem more involved with making their claim robust to challenge on the grounds of accuracy, since the children themselves are marking the claim as uncertain and thus potentially inaccurate. Evidence that children are actively working to produce tentative knowledge claims *as* tentative can be found in those instances where interviewers re-state the child’s claim in more certain terms and children then restate the tentativeness in the next turn.

From there, I examined ways that children disclaim knowing or remembering things they are asked about, beginning with how they often account for their lack of knowledge or memory. I noted how children orient precisely to features of the original situation that make their claim to not know or not remember reasonable and plausible. Belinda draws upon the length of time since the incident to account for her decrement in memory; Robert puts forward a dispositional explanation for why he does not know the date when an incident happened; Steven uses the physical barriers to him being able to see behind his mum’s neck to account for why he does not know if there were knots in the strangulation device; and Ben blames the movies that always talk about sex but fail to demonstrate it for why he does not know what sex actually is. This tendency to give such accounts makes it clear that children are not neutral about their claimed memory/knowledge deficits. Their accounts imply that they are concerned to show themselves as people who have good reasons for not knowing or remembering certain

things. And this implies a concern to show themselves as competent, credible and helpful witnesses. If children were not attending to these social concerns, and only responding passively to the questions asked of them, then we should not expect to see such accounting practices.

The next section examined occasions where children disclaim knowing/remembering in unaccounted for ways but in the presence of certain interactional features that promote this. —Do you know” phrases, either in turn initial position or tagged at the end of substantive questions, make —no” a preferentially available response for children. Children also commonly leave significant gaps before responding with —no, and sometimes include tokens that suggest —doing thinking”. By not interrupting during these gaps, interviewers appear to collaborate in treating the gaps as though something appropriately cognitive, such as thinking or remembering, is being done by children.

Children's use of *I don't know* in the absence of an account is uncommon in this data set. In two interviews, there were a cluster of —I don't know” responses toward the end of the interview that were also accompanied by visible signs of disengagement and tiredness, which the interviewers themselves detected and commented upon. What was most interesting about children's —I don't know” responses though, was how they were taken up by interviewers. There was an emerging pattern whereby interviewers appeared more likely to pursue children to recall something if that area of knowledge was of the personal kind that other children in the data set were able to answer easily, or that the child may have demonstrated knowledge about earlier in the interview. In such cases, interviewers treat children's denial of knowledge not as a genuine denial, but as some indication of trouble, such as embarrassment, loss of attention, or a lack of understanding of the question. But where the knowledge fell into areas that children could not be presumed to

know, such as other people's experience or motivations, or even contextual information about the abuse that the child may not have committed to memory, interviewers were more likely to treat this as a genuine denial of knowledge and drop the line of inquiry.

In the final section, I looked at the special case of children's *I don't know* prefaces, which seemed to have little to do with denying knowledge. Instead, these prefaces appeared to function as a way of doing *tentative approximations* and foregrounding the status of the upcoming approximation as just that: an approximation or guess. The upward, questioning intonation of the substantive guess component in these turns added to the impression that children are marking these turns out to be heard as guesses or approximations. This was particularly salient in Robert's interview because of the way that he left no gap between his *I don't know* preface and the guess component. It was also suggested that these *I don't know* prefaces and the tokens that sometimes precede them (e.g. ~~um~~:"um:::":") were part of children doing dispreferred responses. By not providing the highly specific details sought by the interviewer's questions, children are in essence giving dispreferred responses. And, as prior research shows (Schegloff, 2007), delay in delivering the SPP is typical in such cases.

7.3.2. *Implications*

At a philosophical level, the implications of the analysis are to show that children are doing epistemic work to designate their claims to know and remember things as more or less certain. They are not neutral about the epistemic status of their claims and will restate their version if an interviewer attempts to transform a less certain claim into something more certain. They also show an ability to competently navigate their way out

of leading questions and give answers that seem oriented to giving their own versions of things, rather than being led into making false claims.

This reinforces the need to revise individualist images of children as passive vessels of answers (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; MacMartin, 1999), who are dependent upon ideal questioning methods to elicit the truth of their experience. While some children are no doubt more prone to being led, this data set contains many examples of children working hard to solidify their own versions, even in the face of conversational barriers to doing so.

At the more practical, micro level, some useful applied learnings can be taken from details in the analysis. Some question forms, such as those containing “do you know?” tags, invite denials of knowledge but are nonetheless important in order to preserve permission for children to deny knowledge and not be pressured, or appear to be pressured into making false claims. In using these forms, police interviewers show proficiency in treading the line between the institutional demand to get as much detail as possible from the child, and the importance of not pressuring children through the use of strong interrogative question forms.

The analysis also suggests that police would do well to ensure that they are reflecting back accurately to children the degree of certainty or otherwise expressed in their claims to know and remember things because children do, at times, make sure to correct interviewers who impart a greater degree of certainty than the child's utterance implied.

Verbal utterances are not doing all of the interactional work in these interviews. Body gestures appear to play a significant role in the sequential unfolding of the interaction, an area worthy of much more attention. When Robert gives his account —“my brain told me”

to explain how he remembers something now that he could not recall earlier in the interview, there is a strong suggestion that he has taken a cue from the interviewer having just pointed to her head with both hands as she asks him how he remembers, particularly since he then goes on to revise his account to a co-occurring remembered event, his birthday.

On other occasions, children can be seen looking upward toward the ceiling, looking to their right or left, tapping their head, or looking at a part of their body in question (e.g. Sarah and her hand, extract 21) in ways that are perfectly timed to display “doing thinking” or “doing remembering” about the subject the interviewer has just questioned them on. Without seeing these visible movements, these apparent gaps in conversation might be viewed as some sign of interactional trouble. It is even possible that analysts could view them as strong, pressuring silences that interviewers, by not interrupting these silences, impose upon children. But when viewed on the video, it seems plain that interviewers are also treating these subtle head and body movements as indicators that children are doing the necessary work of thinking and remembering that a witness is expected to do. This is a mark of children's and police interviewers' conversational competency that each can deploy and interpret these body gestures in ways that progress the interaction and the institutional task at hand. Police interviewer training could be enhanced by shifting some of the focus from verbal utterances toward showing police some of this more subtle interactional work and how it enables the interview to progress.

Although the analysis did not highlight it to any great extent, there were examples of children deferring their SPP responses to initiate insert sequences. And these insert sequences, in both cases (Ben in extract 11; Robert in extract 8), involved children asking

questions to clarify their understanding before going on to answer. Although not common in this data set, it is nonetheless encouraging to see children do this, especially when it goes against the strong order of sequence organisation discussed in chapter 4. Thinking about ways to encourage children to interrupt the sequence for such purposes could make a significant contribution to showing child witnesses as overwhelmingly concerned to get their story across accurately, as opposed to being the passive responders to the more powerful adult police interviewer. While police interviewers often tell children at the start of the interview that they should feel free to say if they do not understand something, perhaps they could regularly remind children that they get —time’ of asking all the questions and that the child should feel free to ask questions at any time, especially if they do not understand something.

Children care to be seen as knowledgeable, helpful and competent people. When they claim to know things such as their birthday, age and address, they are *doing being competent*. This was especially obvious in Belinda’s case, where she expanded repeatedly to add all the extra details she knew, even when those details were not asked for (extract 3). Listening to Belinda, and to the police interviewer’s praise of her exceptional knowledge, is a reminder that children, like adults, are concerned to be perceived positively by more powerful others, and there is plenty of room to offer well-timed general praise to children in this setting about their goodness and cleverness without it being seen as potentially leading, or as biasing children’s responses in some way. Achieving the forensic objectives cannot be partitioned out from the need to attend to the social aspects as long as children’s talk is being relied upon as evidence.

Chapter 8: Children's Accounts of moral agency

8.1.Introduction

Child sexual abuse is a highly moral issue that typically elicits strong moral condemnation of those who perpetrate the crime. In the investigative interviewing literature, however, there appears to be no overt acknowledgement that children may also be cognisant of sexual abuse as a moral issue. This may be due to the literature's pragmatic focus on finding ways to elicit quality evidence from children, with the attendant emphasis on what interviewers should do to best enable this. As discussed in chapter 3, the main image presented of children in the literature is one that emphasises the various cognitive, memory and linguistic (in)abilities of children of different ages and, when considered from this perspective, it makes sense to devise interviewing methods that cater to children's varying capacities in these areas. However, this perspective does tend to pay less attention to some of the less measurable social factors likely to influence how a child talks about their experience, such as the extent to which a child appreciates that what has been done to them is widely considered wrong.

The literature does document the fact that children can often find talking about sex and their abusive experiences embarrassing (Lamb & Sternberg, 1998; Lyon 1999; Saywitz et al. 1991; Saywitz, Goodman & Lyon, 2002; Sternberg et al., 1997) and may experience feelings of responsibility, complicity, guilt and shame (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003; Lamb & Brown, 2006; Wilson and Powell, 2001; Summit 1983). Nevertheless, this is not the same as acknowledging that children possibly come to these interviews with the moral knowledge that sexual abuse is wrong.

In this chapter, I show how children, in their talk, orientate to sexual abuse as a moral concern. By taking the perspective that children are social beings, knowledgeable about the moral norms surrounding sexual contact between adults and children - or even just the sexual activity of children – it becomes possible to see how children attend to their moral agency in their accounts of abuse and, moreover, how an interviewer may unwittingly invite such accounts. An appreciation of this may, potentially, open the way for more sensitive interviewing practices that attend to this problem.

8.1.1. The psychology of children's morality

To date, psychology's approach to children and morality has, for the most part, centred upon the idea that children pass through identifiable stages of moral development. Both Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1984) concerned themselves with how children think when they engage with moral problems and how their reasoning about moral problems becomes more sophisticated with age.

Piaget approached the issue of moral development by analysing children's verbal accounts when given scenarios involving game rules, clumsiness, stealing and lying (Duska & Whelan, 1977). He constructed paired stories that differed only according to the intent of the protagonist. For instance, in the clumsiness paradigm, one story has the protagonist playing with his father's inkwell in his father's absence and making a small blot on the table cloth, while the alternate story has the protagonist trying to fill the inkwell to help his father and making a big blot on the table cloth. Children up to about age 8 tend to judge guilt according to the degree of material damage, and not the good or bad intention of the protagonist. Thus, the child that made the large inkblot is the naughtier.

Based on his studies, Piaget divided children's moral development into two broad stages between the ages of 6 and 12. The youngest children are at a stage of *heteronomy* where rules are immutable by virtue of being laid down by adults. Heteronomy gradually gives way to *autonomy*, where rules are seen as the outcome of a free decision and worthy of respect insofar as they are the outcome of a negotiated mutual consent within social groups.

Like Piaget, Kohlberg also focused on moral reasoning. He interviewed a group of boys and men ranging in age from 10 to 28 and then re-interviewed them every 3 years across an 18 year time span (Duska & Whelan, 1977). His interview involved the presentation of a moral situation or dilemma for the person to make a decision about, followed by a series of questions aimed at uncovering the reasoning behind the decision. In Kohlberg's account, there are six stages of moral development, beginning with stage 1 where, like Piaget, the person's judgements about whether an action is good or bad centre on its consequences (e.g. whatever leads to punishment is wrong) through to stage 6, where the person makes decisions according to individual conscience, taking into account the likely views of everyone affected by the moral decision (Mitchell & Ziegler, 2007).

Both Piaget and Kohlberg's research fits within the 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). From this perspective, it makes sense to use methods such as hypothetical scenarios, ask children to say what they think, and then take these verbal descriptions as *reflecting* some underpinning cognitive structure that, via a process of development, is *causing* increasingly sophisticated responses.

However, as discussed in chapter 2, discursive psychology has criticised this cognitivist account of the mind-language-reality relationship by inverting it to show how notions such as “mind” and “reality” can themselves be viewed as discourse categories that are used in, and for the social business that talk and texts are involved with (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Edwards, 1997). As Edwards (1997) notes, “it is the business of discourse to formulate and deal with the nature of the world outside and the world within: with reality and mind, and the relations between them” (p.19). Consequently, for discursive psychology, the idea that children’s moral development can be examined by generating moral dilemmas in the “minds” of children, and then extracting the child’s reasoning about these dilemmas by asking questions and hearing answers is problematic because all of this is carried out through discourse. And since discourse, whether talk or text, has been shown up by discursive psychology for its constructive, or reality making, rather than reality reflecting properties, then the whole notion that something called “moral development” can be studied as a product of individual minds becomes rather shaky. As an illustration, if discursive psychology were to take “moral development” as its topic, it might interrogate how and when notions such as “moral development” are implied or made explicit as part of people’s descriptive practices, the kinds of activities such descriptions are involved with, and the versions of “reality” generated from such practices.

As it happens, discursive psychology has not, as yet, turned its analytic attention to the cognitivist account of children’s moral development but it has begun to examine the topic of morality in talk more broadly, in line with its commitment to examine psychological issues in a non-cognitivist way. Thus, instead of locating morality in the mind, as something prior to any talk or action related to morality, a discursive psychological approach starts with naturally occurring interaction and looks at when, how and to what

end morality is made topical in talk. Its focus is on the talk itself and what that tells us about the sense-making practices of the people who are interacting.

From a discursive psychological perspective, one way that morality becomes salient in talk is when speakers offer up warrants or accounts for certain kinds of actions (or absences of actions) performed by themselves or by others, and the way that such accounts are made to seem legitimate or illegitimate by co- interlocutors (Drew, 1998; Jayyusi, 1984; Stokoe, 2003; Stokoe & Wallwork, 2003). As will become clear in the analysis that follows, it is precisely this which gives children's talk about their agency, or lack of agency, in response to sexual abuse the sense of being "morality talk", rather than any explicit mention of morality per se. Children appear to be doing what Drew (1998) terms "defensive moral work in accounts of or for their conduct" (p. 297).

Amidst the work on morality in the discursive psychological literature (e.g. Drew, 1998; Kurri & Wahlstrom, 2001, 2005; Stokoe, 2003; Stokoe & Wallwork, 2003), there is none that I could find specifically pertaining to children. However, Kurri and Wahlstrom's (2001) study into the discursive production of morality in their analysis of domestic violence counselling is of some relevance. Similar to the present analysis, they took up the issue of moral agency; specifically, how counsellors and clients together made topical the issue of the agency displayed by a woman in response to the violence perpetrated on her and, moreover, the seeming preference for "strong agency" versus "weak agency" (p. 191).

The ensuing analysis focuses 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 very fact that children seem to 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. The ramifications this has for interviewing are discussed.

8.2. Analysis

Within the data corpus, there are broadly three ways that children tend to talk about their agency in relation to the abuse perpetrated upon them. The first is where children say how they actively resisted the perpetrator in some way, even if they were unable to stop the abuse; the second is where children say why they could not stop it happening; the third is where children emphasise their lack of complicity in it happening. I show some examples of each of these and consider what it is about the interactional context that seems to elicit or project these types of accounts from children.

8.2.1. Active resistance: This is what I did to stop it

One highly regular occasion where children give accounts of actively resisting the perpetrator is when the interviewer directly asks the child if they said anything while the abuse was occurring. Usually, on these occasions, the account comes in the second pair part (SPP) and is often delayed, as happens in extract 1. Lisa is 10 and the allegation is

that she has been abused by the teenage son of one of her mother's friends whenever she visits their house.

(1)		Lisa (13:21 video 1)	
392	I5	.h (.) (w)can: you tell me so	392-406. sitting on edge of seat, looking down into lap, hands folded in lap with arms straightened 392. from looking down at notes, lifts head to look at C6. 393. nods 394. turns back to notes, rests chin on left hand. 395. brings pen to page poised to write 397. looks up at C6 398. looks back to notes and starts to write 399. writing, lowers left hand from chin to rest on page part way through silence 400. stops writing and looks up, sitting back slightly 402. looks back to page and starts to write 404. nods, still writing
393		I understand that we're thinking the	
394		same thing .h >wha' does he mean by<	
395		let's get it o:n.	
396		(0.3)	
397	C6	""means lets have sex""	
398	I5	let's have sex oka:y	
399		(7.5)	
400	I5	mn.hh do you say anything to him when	
401		he says that to you	
402		(1.0)	
403	C6	I say (0.5) "no go away"	
404		(0.7)	
405	C6	"just leave me alone"	
406		(8.5)	

One notable feature of Lisa's delayed response at line 403 is that she omits to respond to the format of the interviewer's turn at line 400-1 as a yes/no interrogative that projects a yes/no response (Raymond, 2003). We might have expected Lisa to say ~~yes~~ or ~~no~~ in the slot before her account of *what* she says at line 403. But by not doing that, Lisa's turn provides for the sense that she is treating the interviewer's ~~do~~ you say anything" question not as a yes/no interrogative calling for a yes/no response, but as warranting an account of how she properly resisted Martin's proposal that they ~~get~~ it o:n" (lines 394-95). This pattern, where children bypass the yes/no response and move straight to an account of what they said, is pervasive throughout the data set.

The same pattern can be seen in extract 2. For this child, Susie, there is an allegation of abuse on one occasion by the neighbour's son.

(2)		Susie (24:12 video 1)		
814	I4	.h so he was mo:ving up and do:wn?		814-15. leaning back in chair, left arm hanging over the chair arm, right elbow resting on chair arm, looking toward I4 814-818. looking at notepad on lap and writing, head resting in left hand, elbow on chair arm 816. brings right hand up and rubs eyes 818. looking at I4 with hand partly shielding eyes 819. stops writing and looks up at C5 6 seconds into silence 822. rubbing hand along eyebrows/forehead. I4 looks back to notes and starts writing 823-827. writing 824-25. moves hand away from face to gesture in a forward circling motion 826. lets right arm drop over the chair arm, looks toward table
815		(0.4)		
816		on your body?		
817		(0.2)		
818	C5	mmhh		
819		(8.2)		
820	I4	did you say any↑thing		
821		(1.0)		
822	C5	°I: said get off me but he wouldn't.°		
823		(0.4)		
824	C5	.h but when actually ((name1)) came he-		
825		he quickly jumped off and layed back in		
826		(0.2) her spot		
827		(20.0)		

Once again in response to a yes/no interrogative about what she may have said while the abuse was occurring (line 820), Susie bypasses the yes/no response and moves directly to an account of what she said: “°I: said get off me but he wouldn't.°” (line 822). She has actively tried to resist Martin even though she was unable to make him stop.

The same pattern is visible in extract 3. Darren is a 9 year old boy alleging abuse over a period of time by his step brother.

	(3)	Darren (19:41 video 1)	
605	I3	wh:↑at's <u>that</u> like when he does tha::t. (0.8)	605-18. leaning forward out of chair, writing on notepad on table
606			605-06 .leaning over right side of chair, looking down toward floor
607	C3	°it's disgusting.° (1.0)	607-11. still leaning over side of chair, starts picking at something on right knee
608			
609	I3	did he ↑say ↑any↑↑thing (0.7)	
610			
611	C3	just say <u>get off</u> .hh °and try and get <u>away</u> ° (1.2)	612. sits up in chair, rubs right knee 613-19. rubbing knee, looking toward I3's notes on table, appears to be smiling
612			
613	C3	(°_____°) (0.6)	
614			
615			
616	I3	°and you <u>try:</u> to get away.° (1.0)	
617			
618	I3	does ↑he say <u>anything</u> ?	619. stops writing, looks up at C3, folds right hand on top of left
619	C3	hhh ih: : n::o?	

As in the previous two extracts, after a brief delay Darren bypasses the format of the interviewer's YNI (line 609) and moves straight to the account of what he said and did in response to his step brother Phillip's actions toward him (lines 611-12). As it happens, he has misunderstood the person reference and responded with what he himself said and did, which is why the interviewer repairs by reissuing the YNI at line 618.

Extract 4 is different and, through its difference, supports the proposition that these "did you say anything" type interrogatives issued by interviewers are, as the children mostly seem to detect, normatively functioning not merely as yes/no interrogatives but also as a request for the details of *what*, if anything, they said.

	(4)	Susie (3:24 video 2)	
965	I4	.h so:: >when he< (.) the first he	965-67. slumped back in chair, rubs right hand across eyes and comes to rest with head leaning against fingers of right hand 965. legs crossed, looking down at note pad on lap with right hand resting on it, head resting against left hand, then nods 967. looks at C5 968. slight nods 971. turns back to note pad and starts to write
966		squeezed you on your boobs did you	
967		say anything then?	
968		(0.7)	
969	I4	what did you say,	
970	C5	I jus' slapped him °in the face°	
971	I4	↑did yo:u?	

Here Susie only responds to the format of the interviewer's "did you say anything" interrogative by *nodding* (line 968); that is, on this occasion she treats it simply as a yes/no interrogative and does not respond to the implicit action embodied in the interviewer's turn: a request for the details of *what*, if anything, was said. By contrast, in the previous examples, children bypass the yes/no interrogative component and skip straight to responding to this implicit request for the detail of what was said. Hence, on this occasion the interviewer needs to make the request for detail explicit at line 969 with "what did you say" and only then does Susie offer the account of how she forcefully resisted the perpetrator's sexual advances: she "slapped him °in the face°".

There are several points to draw from the analysis thus far. First, children in this data set are responsive to more than the literal form of a yes/no interrogative, such as "did you say anything?". As evidenced by extract 4, such questions appear designed to perform the additional action of requesting details and children usually treat the questions this way by providing details. The fact that children can interpret these additional meanings runs counter to the more common image of children as highly prone to misinterpret interviewer questions that are not worded precisely.

Second, the fact that children use this slot in the interaction to offer accounts of how they actively resisted the abuse is evidence that they are orientating to the moral dimensions of sexual abuse. If they were not conceiving of sexual abuse as a moral issue with implications for their own moral status, then presumably they would not see the need to formulate accounts of their agentic efforts to prevent it from being done to them.

Third, the way that interviewers formulate these “did you say anything” questions can be illuminated by considering conversation analytic findings on preference organisation as they pertain to question design. Heritage and Clayman (2010) observe that, in relation to questions, preference in the conversation analytic sense refers to “the bias or tilt of questions that are designed for, favor, suggest an expectation of, or ‘prefer’ an answer of a particular type” (p.142). Using questions and answers generated in a medical setting between doctors and patients, Heritage and Clayman (2010) note that types of questions that regularly prefer a “no” response are “straight interrogatives with negative polarity items (any, ever, at all, etc.) e.g. ‘Was there ever any blood in the diarrhea at all?’” (p.143).

In extracts 1 to 4 above, the interviewers’ question forms appear to fit the definition of being straight interrogatives with negative polarity items (“any”), which usually, according to Heritage and Clayman, prefer a “no” response. For instance, in extract 1, lines 400-401, the interviewer says: “do you say anything to him when he says that to you”. In extract 2, line 820, the interviewer says: “did you say anything”. In extract 3, line 609, the interviewer says: “did he say anything”, and reissues the question at line 618 with “does he say anything?” after a mishearing by Darren.

And in extract 4, lines 965-967, the interviewer says: ~~so~~:: >when he< (.) the first he squeezed you on your boobs did you say anything then?".

Yet, in all but extract 3, line 619, the children do not respond with ~~no~~" in accordance with the structural preference. Instead, they deliver *accounts* and, according to Heritage and Clayman's analysis, these accounts are structurally *dispreferred* in relation to the form of the question. So how can this be explained?

A likely explanation is that this is a case of multiple, or cross-cutting preferences (Schegloff, 2007). As discussed in chapter 6, sometimes the *form* of the question prefers one response, while the *action* embodied in the question prefers another. An example given in chapter 6 was: ~~You can't give me a ride home can you?"~~ As detailed there, while the *request* (the action) prefers *granting*, the polarity (~~you can't . . .~~) prefers, or anticipates a ~~no~~" response (Raymond, 2003).

If it is the case that there are cross-cutting preferences at work here, then what might their function be? Arguably, it might be evidence of police interviewers orienting to the problematic cultural assumption that credible victims in sexual abuse cases can be expected to resist perpetrators (MacMartin, 2002). By framing the question in a way that favours a ~~no~~" response (e.g. ~~no~~, I did not say anything when he did that to me"), police interviewers are perhaps working to generate a conducive interactional environment for children to admit that they did *not* resist, without also feeling pressured to account for it. By way of contrast, consider the implications if the question was in the form of a declarative with a negative tag (Heritage and Clayman, 2010), as in: ~~you did say something, didn't you?"~~ In this example, the question structurally prefer a ~~yes~~" and can easily be heard as strongly inviting children to align with the form of the question by agreeing that they did say something to resist the perpetrator.

However, as the data shows, children nevertheless do provide responses that are dispreferred in purely structural terms. Specifically, in the above examples, they provide accounts that detail what they said (even Darren does this in extract 3, lines 611-612, based on a mishearing). And, as I argued earlier in the chapter, this seems to suggest that they *hear* within the interviewer's turn a request for information: to state what, if anything they said in response to the perpetrator.

Therefore, it can be argued that these turns by interviewers are indeed instances of yes/no interrogatives with multiple, or cross-cutting preferences, and these cross-cutting preferences may be the natural product of two competing imperatives that interviewers have to contend with. First, they must gather all possible corroborative evidence capable of supporting (or denying) an allegation of sexual abuse, which includes evidence that the child expressed a desire for it to stop, since this speaks to the issue of degrees of coercion, or force used. Second, they must also be sensitive to not causing the child to feel responsible in any way for the abuse perpetrated upon them, which includes being attentive to the possibility that the child may *not* have said or done anything to resist the abuse. Their question *form* attends to the latter imperative, while the *action* embodied in the turn attends to the former. Children, however, for the most part appear to respond to the *action*, and the implications of this are discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

8.2.2. *This is why I couldn't stop it*

A second kind of moral accounting children do is where they account for why they did not, or could not stop the abuse happening. In other words, they account for their lack of agency. In this set of interviews, such accounts are given by children who were abused

over a lengthy period of time: Harriet, Robert, Lisa and Darren. It is understandable that a child who knows that the *interviewer* knows that abuse has been going on for some time has a dilemma of sorts. How do they present themselves as not liking and not wanting the abuse when it has occurred over a long period of time and they have not told anyone?

Extract 5 is from Harriet's first interview. She was 10 at the time of her first interview and 11 at the time of the second and there is an allegation of ongoing abuse by her grandfather since Harriet was 5 years old. In this interview she calls him Michael.

	(5)	Harriet 1 (13:27 video 1)		
343	I2	so Michael was kissing <u>you=where</u> was he	343-8. writes, underlining at end	
344		kissing you.		
345	C4	in the face.		
346		(1.0)		
347	I2	°o↑kay°		347-8. looks down at cup, rubbing palm against it 349-50. stops writing, sits back with folded hands, looks up at C4 at end 349-62. continues looking down, holding cup and touching it with fingers of other hand
348		(1.8)		
349		°al↑right° (0.2) and how did you feel		
350		about that.		
351	C4	I di'nt like <u>it</u> ?		
352	I2	you didn't <u>like</u> it.		
353		(1.0)		
354	C4	and I knew if I told him I di'nt like it		
355		.h he would get <u>angry</u> at me?		
356	I2	<u>m:m</u>	353. slight nods	
357		(0.8)	356. slight nods	
358	C4	<u>cos it's</u> happened <u>before</u> he got <u>angry</u> ?	358. appears to glance down then up	
359		(0.5)	360. nods	
360	I2	°°okay°° so <u>has Michael ever</u> <u>kissed</u> you	363. nods, still looking down at cup	
361		<u>before</u> ?		
362		(0.5)		
363	C4	°yup°		

Harriet's account starting at line 354, explaining why she did not speak up to Michael and tell him she did not like it, is projected by the "how did you feel" question at lines 349-350. Asking children how they *feel* about the things that have been done to them is pervasive in these interviews. As mentioned in chapter 7, sometimes these questions are

confusing for children because it is not always clear whether the interviewer is asking how it felt in terms of body sensation, or in terms of emotion. In this case though, Harriet gives a clear assessment, “~~I~~ di’nt like it?” (line 351).

Although the interviewer’s turn at line 352 “you didn’t like it.” has final contour intonation, the video shows she is still gazing at Harriet and giving slight nods across the 1 second silence at line 353. The gazing and nodding from the interviewer arguably function here to convey to Harriet that the sequence is not closed but ongoing and it is now her turn at talk. Harriet takes her turn at line 354 (built as an increment to her prior turn via the ~~and~~”) and the turn is occupied with giving an account for why she did not speak up to Michael: “~~and~~ I knew if I told him I di’nt like it .h he would get angry at me?” (lines 354-355).

This is still not treated as a closed sequence by the interviewer. Her “~~m~~:m” at line 356 with upward intonation is accompanied by slight nods while still looking at Harriet. This together with the 0.8 second silence suggests the interviewer is bypassing her turn, which generates interactional pressure for Harriet to continue her turn. And Harriet does continue at line 358. She provides a further account of how she *knows* he would have gotten angry because he has gotten angry before. Ironically, Harriet is able to transform the longevity of the abuse, and what that might imply about her “~~failure~~” to protect herself, into a resource for justifying her inaction. It is her *past experience* of resisting the abuse and inciting Michael’s anger that has taught her not to speak up again.

Later in this same interview there is evidence that Harriet (and perhaps all the children) are justified in sensing that interviewers are expecting or wanting them to provide some

account for why they did not speak out against what was happening to them, as seen here in extract 6:

		(6) Harriet 1 (24:41 video 1)	
830	I2	how did you feel about having to do those things. (1.2)	830-32. sitting to front left of chair, eyes cast down and toward table, arms folded across lap, hands tucked in sleeves 830. still writing, looks up at end, pen still on page. 833. slight head shake, looking down toward table 834-6. looks down at notes 837. brings left hand up and rests forefinger near mouth, looking at C4, head tilted to left. C4 shakes hair back, tilts head backward looking at I2 838. lowers chin to look straight at I2, hands tucked in sleeves 839. slight head shake, then lowers eyes 840. nods for emphasis 844. nods, looks at notes, finger still touching near mouth 845. looks at C4, takes finger away, shakes head, then brings finger back to mouth, looks at notes 847. lowers left hand to lap 848. looking at C4 head tilted to left and points into the air, then points again, then again
831			
832			
833	C4	°I didn't like it.° (0.7)	
834			
835	I2	°°okay°° (2.3)	
836			
837	I2	.hhh did you ever say anything (2.5)	
838			
839	C4	°no cos I know° .hh °cos if um I know if I did he would've got (.) grumpy=cos he norm- .hhh cos when I don't the next morning he gets up really grumpy (0.2)	
840			
841			
842			
843			
844	I2	°okay no that's okay. I was just asking not blaming you or anything° (.) °°just asking°° (.) MPF alright so have I got it right you've had to kiss his willy?	
845			
846			
847			
848			

At line 830 is another “how did you feel” type question and Harriet responds with an assessment: “°I didn't like it.°”, shaking her head and looking down to the floor. The interviewer then looks down to her notes and issues a softly spoken “°°okay°°” (line 835), closing off the sequence both audibly and visibly. But then, at line 837, she looks up and asks “.hhh did you ever say anything”. This projects Harriet's account for why she did not say anything in an effort to resist the abuse.

As an aside, two of the police interviewers told me that they ask these questions about what the child said, and what the perpetrator said, because they hope to elicit just these kinds of accounts, which can be used as evidence to help strengthen the child's case. For instance, if a child says "I said stop but he said he'd hurt my mum if I didn't do it" then this is evidence that they were coerced and this shores up the child's case against defence lawyers who may try to construct children as complicit in some way. Also, if one child can report something that the accused said, where he or she may have used certain unique expressions, and then another child reports the same thing, then this is considered very strong evidence against the accused. So these questions about what was said do have a purpose and are well intended.

But in this case, since Harriet did not say anything to her grandfather Michael, she appears to feel pressed to account for why not, especially since she has already said she didn't like it. As was the case in extract 5, here in extract 6 she again transforms the longevity of the abuse and its possible implications about her "failure" to protect herself into a justificatory resource. She has tried to resist Michael before but when she doesn't do what he wants, he gets grumpy. It is her *past experience* of resisting the abuse and inciting Michael's grumpiness that has therefore taught her not to speak up anymore. At lines 844-45 the interviewer displays that she has heard in Harriet's prior turn some effort at justifying her inaction against her abuser, and by virtue of making such a justification shows her orientation to this as a possible moral failure on her part. Thus, the interviewer uses the third turn slot to repair Harriet's understanding. She is "not blaming" but doing the morally neutral activity of "just asking" (lines 845-846).

Another example of a child accounting for why they did not act to prevent something happening comes from the case of Steven, the 9 year old boy who found his mother dead, presumably strangled by her de-facto partner. He is being interviewed about it the next day. Steven claims to have heard Grant, his mum's partner, shouting, and his mum screaming from her bedroom and the interviewer is trying to work out what else Steven heard and whether he actually saw Grant, or only heard him.

(7) Steven (11:55 video 1)

471	I1	and you said to me that you heard Grant's voice.	471-73. slumped in swivel chair, swivelling to and fro, one bare foot on table, the other pulled up and resting on thigh, looking down 471-75. Looking at C10, holding note book on lap with left hand, holding pen in right fist pointing outward 474. looks up at I1 475. looks away to right of I1, rubbing eye with left hand 476. nods, then looks down to note book 476-78. drops left hand to mouth 478-49. turns pages of note book 479. drops left hand to lap 481. nods, still looking down to note book, moving to write 482-86. writing 483. outward gesture with left hand, comes to rest picking at knee of trousers, eyes cast down 486. gestures out to right with right hand, looking towards the right, then looks back toward I1 487. raises eyes to ceiling, then drops them. I1 stops writing and looks up at C10, then nods 488-91. holding and moving hands near neck as though demonstrating the cord that was choking his mother 489. nods, then nods 491. nods, still looking at C10 492. drops hands to lap 493. nods and looks down to notes 493-94. brings right hand to chin, looking downward, starts swivelling chair 495. shifts note book on lap and looks up at "you said" 496. drops hand from chin to lap, looking ahead, but not at I1
472		(0.4)	
473			
474	C10	yeah. (.) (then we all) went in .h	
475		but she wasn't dead that time	
476	I1	°alright° .h so where did you go into when you heard Grant's voice.	
477			
478		(2.8)	
479	C10	I heard my mum scream and that's .h when she died.	
480			
481	I1	you heard mum screaming?	
482	C10	I didn't want to go in there in case .h	
483		Grant killed me.	
484		(1.4)	
485	I1	°oka:y°	
486	C10	cos maybe in the morning .h cos she's .h	
487		um:: kind of tough and .h (0.2) I think	
488		she was (.) still (.) kind of (.)	
489		breaving? .h so I (.) so I can take it but	
490		I was wrong.	
491	I1	°yea::[h°	
492	C10	[she died	
493	I1	°:kay.	
494		(0.8)	
495	I1	so you know when [you said to (name)]	
496	C10	[(didn't know) G]rant	
497		was that strong.	
498	I1	°alright.°	

Starting at line 476, the interviewer's FPP question \rightarrow so where did you go into when you heard Grant's voice." sets off Steven's account. Steven's responsive SPP to her FPP question doesn't appear to come until line 482 with \rightarrow didn't want to go in there in case .h Grant killed me." and, even then, it does not directly respond to the \rightarrow where" component of the interviewer's question. Rather, it is an account for why, since he heard mum screaming, he did not go into her bedroom to help her. It is difficult to know what is happening with the small insert sequence starting with \rightarrow heard my mum scream" at lines 479-480 but there is a lengthy silence before Steven starts it. It could be some kind of preliminary to his account for not going to her aid but my sense is, especially looking through the rest of Steven's interview, that he is not attending to the interviewer at all for a good deal of the time, perhaps because he is preoccupied with and distressed by what he has witnessed only the day before. Moreover, the way that he continues to talk beyond the interviewer's \rightarrow oka:y^o" at line 485, and his interruption to her FPP in progress at line 495-96, lends the sense that he is absorbed in his own thoughts about what has happened: why it was that he thought mum was going to be okay cos she's kind of tough and how he thought she could take it but was wrong because Grant was \rightarrow that strong". This is speculative, of course, and not accessible from the methodological stance of a study into social interaction. Nevertheless, it looks very different from the more finely honed accounting that other children within the data corpus do when they appear to be fully attending to the interviewer, evidenced by the precision with which they fit their turns to the interviewer's prior turns.

These examples from Harriet and Steven's interviews suggest that when children perceive some moral obligation to have acted to prevent something happening but have not acted, they appear to feel some pressure to account for why not. Steven's interview suggests that

this might not be confined to children's moral knowledge surrounding sexual abuse. To the contrary, his interview invites speculation that we might expect to see these displays of children's morality-in-(inter)action in a number of interactive circumstances where a child's moral response to a given situation is made relevant by an interlocutor.

8.2.3. *It happened but I was not complicit*

A third type of moral accounting found in the data is where children's talk is focused on their non-complicity in relation to the abuse, rather than offering accounts of direct resistance, or the mitigating circumstances that made it impossible to resist. Extract 8 is from Robert's interview. He is 9 and the allegation is of long term, often violent abuse by his uncle whenever Robert goes to stay at his grandmother's house where his uncle also lives. The abuse is alleged to have started when Robert was 3 years old.

	(8)	Robert (24:49 video 1)	
635	I4	°okay° .hh so what about on the bus: on	<p>635-55. sitting toward front of seat, toying with fingers, looking down to lap 635. notepad on lap, stops writing and scratches face with right hand and brings head to rest against left hand 636-38. brushing hand over hair, brings pen to rest on page, poised to write 640. writes 641. stops writing, rests head against left hand</p> <p>648. lifts head upright and brings left hand to grasp side of note pad</p> <p>652. points pen onto page ready to write 653-55. writing</p>
636		the way to ((town)). how many times did	
637		it happen then.	
638		(1.0)	
639	C7	ah: abou::t once or <u>tw</u> ice?	
640		(3.0)	
641	I4	how would it happen on the bus.	
642		(1.0)	
643	C7	ah there w's nobody at the back <u>se</u> a:t?	
644		(1.0)	
645	I4	[so]	
646	C7	[or] in the back <u>r</u> ow?	
647		(0.5)	
648	I4	is that where (.) so (w)where were you	
649		sitt <u>ing</u> ?	
650		(0.4)	
651	C7	ah next to <u>h</u> im?	
652		(0.4)	
653	C7	we:ll:: not <u>tr</u> ying to <u>re</u> ally.	
654		(1.5)	
655	C7	he would jus' follow me <u>arou</u> :nd.	

Here, the interviewer is trying to get details about the occasions when Robert's uncle has abused him during a bus trip to another town. The interviewer's FPP question ~~h~~ow would it happen on the bus." at line 641 projects Robert's account. Robert's initial SPP response ~~a~~h there w's nobody at the back sea:t?", suggests that he hears a call for an account of *how* these things could happen on a bus, given that buses are usually fairly public places, or something like that because he could also have understood it as a request for details about what his uncle actually did to him. At line 648, the interviewer starts a closed question that seems to be headed towards ~~i~~s that where (you were sitting?)" or something like that, but then repairs to a more open form ~~s~~o (w)here were you sitting?", in accordance with recommended practice (Faller, 2007). And now Robert comes in with his non-complicit account. First he states that he was sitting next to his uncle (line 651), then repairs to make it clear that he was not *trying* to sit next to him (line 653) and, furthermore, his uncle was the one doing the following (line 655) that led to them sitting next to each other, not Robert.

Another example of this non-complicit accounting can be seen in extract 9 from Harriet's first interview.

	(9)	Harriet 1 (16:51 video 1)	
491	I2	.h and what did you have on underneath	491-93. sitting to front of chair holding paper cup in lap and looking downward toward table 491. looking down at notepad on lap, underlines on page, looks up at end, folds one hand over other 494. shakes head and looks up at I2 at "wear" 496. shakes head 498. shakes head 499-500. nods as she looks down and moves pen to page 501. appears to raise eyes to C4 502. nods
492		your pajama pants.	
493		(0.2)	
494	C4	MPF I don't normally wear anythink.	
495		(0.2)	
496	I2	°so did you have anything on° underneath	
497		that ↑night	
498	C4	↑mh↓mf	
499		(0.2)	
500	I2	°°o[kay°°]	
501	C4	[I never] do.	
502		(0.2)	

The interviewer's FPP question, "and what did you have on underneath your pajama pants." (lines 491-92), is a common kind of question in these interviews and serves multiple functions. Firstly, if a child can clearly articulate details such as what they were wearing, what the perpetrator was wearing, what colour the lounge suite was and remain consistent in their reports of these and other details across the interview, then they give the appearance of being a reliable and accurate witness with excellent recall, which is good for the child's case. Also, descriptions of clothing, furniture, room layout and other such details can often be corroborated by other people who saw the child or perpetrator that day, which again builds the child's case as a reliable witness.

However, Harriet's response at line 494 suggests she hears something else in the question because she gives an *account* for why she wasn't wearing anything underneath her pyjama pants. She does this using a kind of script formulation (Edwards, 1994, 1995). She *normally* (line 494) doesn't wear anything, hence there was nothing exceptional about the fact that she wasn't wearing anything underneath her pyjama pants that night either. Notably, she does not simply respond by saying "nothing", and this suggests that to her, at least, whether she was wearing nothing or something is an accountable matter.

Since this is not a specific enough response for the interviewer's forensic purposes, the interviewer issues another FPP designed to constrain Harriet's response to the *specific* occasion being talked about: "that night" (line 497). And now Harriet concedes she had nothing on underneath her pyjama pants (line 498). The interviewer nods, begins to look down to write, and then issues a sequence closing third (SCT) with her softly spoken "°o[kay°°]" at line 500. But Harriet then overlaps with "[I never] do.", built as an increment to her prior turn at line 498, and this re-states the meaning embedded in her earlier turn at line 494: that the reason she did not have anything on underneath her pyjama pants is because she *never* does and not just on *that* occasion where she was being abused by her grandfather. The fact that Harriet restates this at line 501 using an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) (she upgrades from "[I don't normally wear anything.] do." to "[I never] do.") suggests she is doing some extra work here to make it plain that she is not in any way to blame, or to be seen as having made it *easy* for grandpa by not wearing anything underneath her pyjama pants since even on ordinary nights she never wears anything underneath.

A further point to be made about the interviewer's question in extract 9, "and what did you have on underneath your pajama pants", is again related to preference organisation. Because the question contains a presupposition that Harriet did have something on underneath her pyjamas, structurally it prefers alignment with that presupposition (Levinson, 1983; MacMartin, 2008). In plain terms, Harriet cannot align with the interviewer's turn unless she agrees with the presupposition. If she disagrees with the presupposition, then this represents a misalignment. And since Harriet's response "[I don't normally wear anything]" does disagree with the presupposition, which assumes she wears something underneath, it is therefore a misalignment. Arguably, the

fact that Harriet does this is further evidence of children's ability and willingness to respond in ways that demonstrate disagreement and misalignment in the interests of articulating their version of events. This shows them to be active, rather than passive, recipients of interviewers' sometimes less than ideal questioning methods.

Sarah, who is only 7 and the youngest child in the set of interviews, also does a form of this non-licit accounting in extract 10:

	(10)	Sarah (6:13 video 1)	
213	I5	.h so .hh (1.0) how did he make you	213-216. Sitting back in chair, left elbow resting on chair arm, and chin resting on hand. Looking at I5. 213. sitting to front of chair, elbows on knees, hands clasped together, looking up and to left of C8, then tilts head to left and looks at C8 214. opens fingers out and brings them back together 216. brings left fist up and rests head against it 217. drapes left arm over side of chair, eyes follow to left 219. presses both palms on seat and looks away to the right 220. brings hands back to lap, clasped. C8 appears to look at I5 221-23. nodding repeatedly 221-24. looks down and wipes at nose, finishes by looking up and brushing hair from face 225. nodding, then nodding 225-26. pressing fingers of both hands onto the inside of the chair arms, looking down and to left. 227. looks up at I5. 229. nods 231. nodding 233. nods. C8 grabs her right wrist with her left hand to demonstrate, eyes follow, then looks back up, returning hands to inside of chair arm
214		touch his private bits.	
215		(0.4)	
216	I5	tell me about that.	
217	C8	we::ll	
218		(0.7)	
219	C8	first off hhh mnp.h he: um like said .h	
220		"come (1.3) come (0.2) and sit (.) on	
221		me" and I said "ye:s" and (0.4) w'll=	
222	I5	=mmhh	
223		(0.6)	
224	C8	and I thought he wanted to talk	
225		but .h I di- but he ma:- (0.2) he like	
226		.hh (0.4) put my hand	
227		onto his private bits.	
228	I5	so he said "come and sit on me:?"	
229		(0.4)	
230	I5	and you thought he wanted to talk and he	
231		(put) yer ha:nd on his private bits.	
232		(0.2)	
233	C8	he:: he like (.) grabbed my hand an' put	
234		it there.	

The interviewer issues her "how did he make you touch his private bits" FPP question in the open question style that interviewers are encouraged to use at lines 213-214, then prompts with "tell me about that." at line 216 when Sarah does not

immediately start responding. It is notable that the interviewer uses words that emphasise the perpetrator's agency here: ~~h~~ow did he make you". Two interviewers I spoke to said they are aware that children are sensitive to language that implies they may have had agency in the abusive event and, consequently, they consciously try and choose language that does not implicate the child in the ~~do~~ing".

Sarah responds with an account that draws on the idea of mistaken thinking: she *thought* grandpa just wanted to talk, which is why she went over to him in the first place, but instead he put her hand on his private bits. In line 225 she repairs twice before she delivers the final construction of what grandpa did and, notably, it is the version that attributes the most agency to grandpa that she finishes with. It is not clear where ~~h~~ di-" was heading at line 225, but ~~h~~e ma:-" is possibly going to be ~~h~~e made me put my hand", which is then upgraded to ~~h~~e like .hh (0.4) put my hand onto his private bits" (line 226), thus shifting the agency to grandpa. In response to the interviewer's summary at lines 230—231, Sarah further adds that ~~h~~e:: he like (.) grabbed my hand an' put it there." (lines 233-34). Having her hand ~~g~~rabbed" and ~~p~~ut" on grandpa's private bits makes it clear that he was the agent, not Sarah. Moreover, being ~~g~~rabbed" implies a force that would have been difficult to resist.

A similar use of mistaken thinking is used by Belinda in extract 11:

(11) Belinda (16:56 video 1)

567	I1	tell me about that time in the old house. te- describe to me what he did to you. (0.3)	567-73. sitting toward front of chair, head resting against right fist, holding a polystyrene cup in left hand, looking at I1 567. leaning forward out of chair looking down at notes in front of her. Looks up at C1 at "time" 568. forward rolling gesture with both hands 573. nods, looks down to notes to write 574. turns page of note pad. C1 gestures with open palm to side of head and rests head back against fist. 575-78. writes and looks up at C1 "massages". 576. presses hands down on chair arms, lifts self up in the chair, bounces down on the seat and puts cup on table, looking off to right, sitting back, arms resting along arms of chair. 577. looks toward I1's notes 579. clasps hands, looking at C1, then nods 580. glances away to left then back to I1 581-2. looking at I1 581. nods 582. nods once and keeps looking at C1 583-86. brings both hands up to touch shoulders 584-86. nodding, still looking at C1 587. lowers hands from shoulders to chest. 588. nods and looks down to notes, starts writing. C1 lowers eyes to look at notes 589-90. writing
570	C1	umm he asked me if he wa- I wanted a ↑ma,ssage. (1.2)	
573	I1	mmhh	
574	C1	and he explained why? (1.4)	
576	C1	.hh or he said hhh (2.5) co:: explained why he said .hh becau::se I used to do massages= =I said why and he said I used to do massages to my ↑tea,cher	
581	I1	°okay° (2.0)	
583	C1	I thought he was going to massage my thoul- s: should,ers	
585	I1	ye:p (0.8)	
587	C1	but he massages me with his dick °an' I said° .hhh hhhhhh	
589	I1	an' where did he message you with his di:ck.	

Similar to Sarah in extract 10, in response to an open question seeking details on what her step-brother did to her at lines 567-568, Belinda responds with an account of how she *thought* he was only going to massage her shoulders but ended up massaging her with his dick. By providing the extra details of the conversation between them (he used to do massages to his teacher, therefore he must have some experience and it is reasonable that I should have trusted him), she builds a version of events that makes it clear that she

entered into the massage arrangement in good faith and without any idea of what would happen. She was non-complicit in the events that occurred.

8.2.4. *An exception that proves the point?*

Now I want to go back to the start, where I showed examples of where children give accounts of how they actively resisted the abuse. In extract 1, we examined Lisa's account of how she resisted the abuse, re-presented here:

(1) Lisa (13:21 video 1)			
392	I5	.h (.) (w)can: you tell me so	392-406. sitting on edge of seat, looking down into lap, hands folded in lap with arms straightened
393		I understand that we're thinking the	392. from looking down at notes, lifts head to look at C6.
394		same thing .h >wha' does he mean by<	393. nods
395		let's get it o:n.	394. turns back to notes, rests chin on left hand.
396		(0.3)	395. brings pen to page poised to write
397	C6	°°means lets have sex°°	397. looks up at C6
398	I5	let's have sex oka:y	398. looks back to notes and starts to write
399		(7.5)	399. writing, lowers left hand from chin to rest on page part way through silence
400	I5	mn.hh do you say anything to him when	400. stops writing and looks up, sitting back slightly
401		he says that to you	402. looks back to page and starts to write
402		(1.0)	404. nods, still writing
403	C6	I say (0.5) °no go away°	
404		(0.7)	
405	C6	°just leave me alone°	
406		(8.5)	

But in extract 12, which is from a slightly earlier part of Lisa's interview, she gives a more mixed account:

(12) Lisa (7:51 video 1)

225	I5	MNP.h so when he puts his ha:nd (0.8)	225-27. sitting toward front of chair, hands clasped and resting on knees, looking toward table 225. stops writing, but keeps hand on page, still looking at notes 226. turns to look at C6, hands clasped together 228. starts toying with fingers and wringing hands, looking down at them. 229. nodding 230. leans toward C6 as though to hear better 232. nods 233. wringing hands. glances at I5 on "LIKE IT" 235. nod 236. hunches shoulders and smiles as she laughs, looks at I5 237. nods and looks down and to left, then looks back to C6. C6 looks down towards I5's lap
226		down yer pa:nts .hh how does he do tha::t.	
227		(1.6)	
228	C6	we::l (0.5) like (1.2) anyti:me when	
229		(0.4) nobody can see us he'll j'\$. (0.5)	
230		°come by: and he'll shove his hand down.°	
231		(0.2)	
232	I5	mnp.hh:	
233	C6	>I USUALLY LIKE IT< ((smiling voice))	
234		(0.3)	
235	I5	mpf.h [m::]	
236	C6	[or I'll bite his arm+hih hih	
237	I5	hih hih ((sniff)) >okay< so he comes	
238		behi:nd you does he?	
239	C6	°yep° and sometimes from the front.	

Once again the interviewer's FPP question —so when he puts his ha:nd (0.8) down yer pa:nts .hh how does he do tha::t.” follows the advice typically found in child interviewing protocols (Orbach et al., 2000; Poole & Dickinson, 2005). She is exploring specific material Lisa has already offered about what Martin does to her using an open ended —how” question. The delay at line 227 followed by Lisa's dysfluent SPP response, containing four distinct pauses within the turn and a drop in volume for the last part of the turn, strongly suggests there is some interactional trouble here. Potentially this is because Lisa is unsure what kind of detail —how” is calling for. Does it mean —how” as in the physical movements that Martin made in order to penetrate her clothing? Or does the —how” contain an implicit questioning about whether Lisa herself permitted him to do that, since he did manage to put his hand down her pants?

After a brief gap at line 231, the interviewer appears to start a new turn, signalled by the sound of her lips parting and an in-breath but Lisa comes in with a rushed and louder —I USUALLY LIKE IT<”, which is followed by a 0.3 second gap before the interviewer

responds with an extended $\text{m}\downarrow : :$ and a nod. The downward intonation of $\text{m}\downarrow : :$ is quite different to those occasions where she and other interviewers receipt children's reports with mh , or okay or other such receipt tokens that provide for a sense of having heard and accepted the child's talk. Even when material is sexually explicit or shocking, interviewers almost always, bar a few exceptions, keep their receipt tokens quite neutral and the literature encourages this (Poole & Lamb, 1998). Therefore, in this instance it gives the interviewer the distinct sound of being disconcerted, or unsure of how to proceed, particularly as, more usually, this is a slot for a sequence closing third (SCT) to receipt the child's SPP, before interviewers start a new sequence with a FPP question.

At this very point, and in overlap, Lisa utters something more akin to the conventional account of resistance to unwanted sexual advances. Her utterance $\text{or I'll bite his arm=hih hih}$, latched with laughter, has the effect of transforming her liking into something more akin to $\text{sometimes like it but I also resist it}$. The laughter also works to transform the account into something light-hearted and to invite affiliation from the interviewer (Jefferson et al., 1987), which the interviewer does, briefly, with her own laughter before issuing a rushed SCT okay and a new FPP question (lines 237-38). Hence, it appears as though Lisa detects that the more usual thing in this setting is to say that you did everything possible to resist the abuse and not admit to any kind of liking. Some evidence for this is that all her accounts following this, and there are several, focus on the things she said and did to stop Martin, or to get away from him.

8.3. Conclusions

This final analytic chapter explored how children regularly formulate accounts that show they are attending to the issue of who had agency in relation to particular abusive

incidents. One implication of the analysis is to show that children come to the interview cognisant that sexual abuse is a moral issue. Specifically, I contend that if children were not aware that it is a moral issue with implications for their own moral culpability, then they would not see any need to formulate responses that attend so precisely to the issue of agency: the perpetrator's agency in initiating the abuse, the child's agency in resisting the abuse, or the child's reasons for not resisting the abuse. Children like Lisa (extract 12) would presumably see no need to add ~~or~~ "I'll bite his arm" after claiming that she usually likes it when Martin puts his hand down her pants.

It is important to be clear about what is not being claimed here. There is no suggestion that because a child makes a claim to have enjoyed some aspect of the sexual activity that this in any way mitigates the seriousness of the crime of sexual abuse. Also, there is no suggestion that children invent these agency accounts out of some ~~knowingness~~ "that this is the expected response to sexual abuse. The argument, quite simply, is that children formulate their accounts of what happened in a way that observably attends to the matter of who was agentic and this suggests they perceive that agency is a consideration when it comes to moral culpability in relation to sexual abuse.

A second implication of the analysis is that because children's agency accounts occur in the immediate context of questions about what they said or did in response to the abuse, what they were wearing or not wearing, and other such details that are important for the forensic purpose of gathering evidence, there is a need to acknowledge that children are hearing more than a literal call for ~~just the facts~~ "in these questions since they deliver the facts in a way that simultaneously attends to their own moral non-culpability.

This is important because in the investigative interviewing literature children are at times portrayed as being highly suggestible and easily led with clumsy questioning techniques and this is no doubt true some times for some children. But this analysis helps to show that children are doing a lot more work in interaction than simply trying to retrieve the most accurate memory, although they may be doing that too. The data suggest that children are attentive to how they are viewed as people, a reminder to us that what is taking place here is not only a gathering of facts but also a social occasion, where a child is demonstrably attending to perceptions about their status as moral persons.

Examining some of the interviewers' questions and children's answers through the lens of preference organisation provided additional analytic traction on children's willingness to sometimes misalign with interviewer's questions in the service of articulating their own version of events. When interviewers asked questions like "did you say anything?", children commonly responded with accounts of what they said to perpetrators, even though the form of the interviewers' questions structurally preferred a "no" response. However, it was also suggested that these questions may contain cross cutting preferences. Therefore, children may have been giving primacy to the action-type preference (i.e. to provide a substantive account of what, if anything, the child may have said to resist the perpetrator), rather than the preference embodied in the question form.

A more straightforward case was made for instances where children could be seen giving misaligned responses to interviewers' questions where those questions contained presuppositions. This was the case with Harriet in extract 9 and the interviewer's presupposition that Harriet was wearing something under her pyjamas. Such instances seem to be clear examples of children doing the more difficult action of misaligning,

seemingly with a view to being accurate reporters of their own experience. One implication of this is that in addition to the displays of moral agency embodied in children's accounts of resisting abuse, they also display agency by their willingness to resist powerful question forms that invite, or make it easier to give certain responses. A third implication of the analysis is to show that sometimes interviewers' well-intended questions aimed at gathering corroborating evidence might cause children to feel some pressure to account for why they are not to blame. As I said earlier, children's tendency to offer accounts that include coercion or threat by the perpetrator is viewed as a helpful thing by interviewers because it provides corroborating evidence that helps strengthen the child's case in the rare instance that these cases get to court. Yet this can be especially problematic for children who have been abused over a long period of time by someone close to them, such as Harriet, Sarah, Robert, Darren and Lisa. For these children, the fact that the abuse has gone on over a long time means that they cannot offer an account of successfully resisting the abuse, which for those children who do so, appears to contain some sense of having acted in a morally appropriate way. Also, children who have been abused over a long time by someone close to them frequently have mixed feelings towards their abuser, feelings that do not easily fit with the normative narrative of hating the abuse and the abuser and putting up a fight (Paine & Hansen, 2002). For these children especially, questions like "did you say anything?" present an obvious dilemma. How does the child present themselves as properly wanting to resist the abuse but, having gone along with it for a long time, justify why they didn't resist or why they never disclosed to anyone as happens in cases where the abuse is discovered by a third party rather than being disclosed by the child. Harriet was in this position in this set of interviews.

While it may not yet be possible in the actual investigative interview setting, perhaps a debriefing after the interview would be helpful. Police could share with the child stories of other children that portray how normal it is for children who have been abused over a long time to have a mixture of feelings about the perpetrator, and how difficult it is to speak out. This may help ensure that children do not leave with the belief that they should have spoken out earlier, perhaps helping to alleviate any feelings of shame or responsibility.

A final implication of the analysis is that it offers a novel way of examining children's morality in (inter)action. As mentioned, psychology's usual concern is to understand children's moral development within a cognitive-developmental paradigm, constructing scenarios and asking children questions designed to show their reasoning when making moral judgements. By contrast, with its non-cognitivist agenda, this discursive psychological analysis has shown how children's talk-in-interaction can be examined for how it orients to morality in the situated context of a sexual abuse interview. Of course, this makes no contribution to the literature on moral development and cannot. This is because discursive psychology problematises the idea that talk is a simple reflection of thoughts, attitudes and other cognitive constructs, which is a basic assumption underpinning research methods such as question-answer interviews.

In line with discursive psychology's empirical insight that talk is action oriented, what the analysis does show is that even a child as young as 7, like Sarah, is observably shaping her talk in a way that attends to her own lack of agency in relation to the sexual abuse perpetrated upon her. She has, it seems, already learned that this is something that matters

in a moral sense and it is something she is capable of responding to in interaction with an adult.

What I have construed as children's contextually produced accounts that attend to the morally accountable matter of agency in relation to the abuse they have experienced is given a different slant in the forensic interviewing literature. Consider this quotation:

Part of developing rapport is to subtly communicate the message that the child is not at fault. Victims need to understand that they are not responsible even though they did not say no, did not tell, accepted gifts and money, or even enjoyed the sexual activity. If they think they are going to be judged, some children may exaggerate their victimization by alleging threats and force that did not occur to make the crime more socially acceptable. (Lanning 2002, p.333)

This perspective is borne out of the *vessels of answers* image (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), which assumes that if the interviewer asks the right sorts of questions, in the right sort of way, then a child will produce the most accurate, least embellished account. Here, again, rapport is offered as the means to getting children to give accurate, non-exaggerated accounts and the interviewer is presented as being in control. There is an implicit assumption here that the interviewer can independently influence the social aspects of the interview.

But, as argued throughout this thesis, such a view de-emphasises the fact that two people are party to this social interaction and both are responding to one another's talk, turn-by-

turn. There is a reciprocity occurring, with the interviewer's turns at talk emerging in the situated context of the immediately prior talk of the child, and vice versa, each party shaping the trajectory of the conversation, turn by turn. Within the literature advising interviewers how to do a good interview there is, then, a naive view of how interaction actually works in the sense that interviewers are given an image of themselves that overemphasises their power to shape the child's responses, without acknowledging the concomitant influence of the child's talk upon that of the interviewer.

What this suggests in a practical sense is a need to revise the prevailing view of "what is going on" in an investigative interview. Instead of insisting upon the idea that an interviewer could, with perfect questioning, elicit the most truthful account from a child devoid of social considerations, it might be more fruitful to acknowledge that talk-in-interaction can never be stripped of the social because talk *is* a primary site of social action. When we talk in interaction with another, we are never simply "describing" or "reporting" but are *always also* doing social actions such as evaluating, justifying, blaming, complimenting, inviting, persuading and so on. Furthermore, the rhetorical nature of discourse means that one way of describing something is always countering alternative ways of describing the same thing, whether that is made explicit or not (Billig, 1996; Wiggins & Potter, 2008). Therefore, since the investigative interview is itself a particular form of talk-in-interaction, it cannot avoid the social, rhetorical, action-oriented nature of talk to uncover some pure snapshot version of what happened.

If this basic insight from discursive and conversation analytic approaches within psychology and sociology could be taken up by those within the judicial system, without being reduced to the simple notion that there is no use relying upon children's sole

eyewitness testimony if a testimony devoid of social considerations is unattainable, then there is scope for some revision to practice in relation to some of the prohibitions placed upon interviewers when interviewing children. For example, the idea that an interviewer should beware not to attribute any agency to a child when formulating their questions about a specific abusive incident - whilst good advice from the perspective of politeness, rapport building and even accuracy - is misguided if it assumes that this is the singular variable that might “~~steal~~” a child’s account of their own lack of agency, or how they fiercely resisted a perpetrator’s actions. As the preceding analysis shows, even an apparently innocuous question, such as “did you say anything?” can project an account of agency, or lack of agency, since children are responding not only to literal words but the inferences that become available through the sequential location of those words within a conversational sequence. In short, interviewers are not in charge of the way the interaction unfolds to quite the extent implied by a good deal of the advice literature written for investigative interviewers.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and implications: Investigative interviewing as social interaction

9.1. Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I begin by summarising the main findings from each of the analytic chapters. From there I set out the implications of this study for the field of investigative interviewing as well as how the findings can be extended beyond forensic settings and into clinical settings, where psychologists and other mental health professionals are engaged in the work of assessing, counselling and offering therapeutic interventions to children. Finally, I articulate some of the limitations of the research and recommend directions for future research, before offering some concluding remarks.

9.2. Summary of the analytic chapters

In the first analytic chapter, chapter 5, I showed how children and interviewers navigate the frequently delicate stage in the interview where children are called upon to show that they understand why they are being interviewed, with a focus on identifying an alleged perpetrator and an abusive act(s) of some kind. I termed these moments *topic initiating sequences* and argued that these represent an important interactional moment in the investigative interview because unless a child discloses these two most basic pieces of information early and without too much prompting, interviewers risk being accused of leading the child into disclosing and this is potentially very damaging to the child's case.

The analysis showed how these topic initiating sequences - whether they run off quickly and smoothly, or laboriously - are always a collaborative achievement between the

interviewer and child. Consequently, even the most skilful interviewer cannot do anything formulaic to guarantee a smooth passage through this sometimes difficult stage.

Nonetheless, I argued for the merit of examining how children and interviewers work through this important moment in the interview. In particular, I concluded that police interviewers may benefit by seeing how it is that they and the children they interview navigate this stage, even in the face of significant disturbances to progressivity. For the interviewer's part, finding their way through this stage is not always achieved by faithfully following the strictures of the investigative interviewing guidelines but instead is achieved by relying upon the principles of ordinary conversation²³.

Given that these topic initiating sequences include naming an alleged perpetrator, working out problems with person reference was a clear example of how interviewers and children can be seen working with the tacitly understood rules of ordinary conversation to establish an ongoing, shared understanding. The fact that children themselves sometimes repair their own inadequate person references, even when their sequential obligation has ended, was also helpful for showing how children are active participants in the production of what ultimately comes to be deemed a high quality investigative interview. Looking at interviewers' use of forced choice questions in their sequential context was also revealing because they were only used when children appeared very unwilling to disclose one of the central details and the forced choice question seemed to be an attempt to try and restore progressivity to an interaction that had stalled.

²³ This observation can be contrasted with advice such as the following: "While on the surface investigative interviews have similarities with other types of conversations between adults and children, the investigative interviewer actually and deliberately needs to *not* employ some of the conversational helping behaviours that are adopted in general conversation to make a conversation with a child flow well (Snow & Powell, 2005). The only way to do this is to study best-practice guidelines and to undergo training that assists in the mastery of these guidelines" (Powell, Wright & Clark, 2009, p.7).

Moreover, the analysis offered a new slant on how continuers (sometimes called minimal encouragers or facilitative prompts in settings outside of conversation analysis) may not always be (maybe not even mostly) working in a unilateral way to encourage a person to talk. By examining continuers in their sequential context, it was possible to see in one case how the interviewer's continuers were made relevant by the child's cues that her turn was still in progress and, simultaneously, the continuers signalled to the child that the interviewer was bypassing her turn.

In chapter 6 I showed how props such as body diagrams and children's drawings can help restore progressivity to an interaction that appears to be stalling due to children's discomfort with naming sexual body parts and sexual actions. I argued that although there is some reference in the literature to drawings and body diagrams being of assistance in enabling children who feel shame or embarrassment when reporting sexual information to talk, there is no research that explicates the process by which the props may achieve this. Conversation analysis is an ideal method for analysing such a process and the analysis showed the interactional precedents to these props being introduced – specifically, the signs of children's discomfort - as well as the impact of the props on the progressivity of the interaction.

However, I made the point that these props should not, as a result of this analysis, be seen as an isolated remedy for overcoming children's discomfort. Rather, they should be seen as aids that may be helpful when used by an interviewer who is sensitive enough to observe signs of discomfort and to respond to that in the interactional moment. Likewise, their success relies upon the responsiveness of the child to the interviewer's efforts to restore progressivity to the interaction.

Whilst chapters 5 and 6 emphasised some of the more practical things that interviewers do to work through typically difficult parts of the interview (although children's (non)collaboration in these projects was also highlighted), chapters 7 and 8 explicitly moved the analytic focus to things children do in the interaction that show them attending to socially motivated concerns: that is, the epistemic work of designating their knowledge/memory claims as more or less certain, and their accounting for why they were not morally culpable for the abuse perpetrated on them.

Chapter 7 explored the epistemic work that children do to mark their claims to know or remember things as more or less certain. The analysis followed a continuum from children's unmarked claims to know or remember things, through to their unmarked claims to *not* know or remember things. In-between these two poles, I showed some of the ways that children account for either knowing or not knowing certain details they were questioned about. On the other side, I showed how interviewers treat children's *I don't know* responses differently, depending on the degree to which it seems likely the child would know the information they are being asked about. Thus, children's answers to do with basic details (e.g. name, address, birthday, reason for the interview) were more likely to be pursued by interviewers, while answers on material the child cannot be presumed to know, such as another person's motivations, were normally not pursued.

Overall I made the argument that by doing work to mark their knowledge/memory claims as more or less certain, children display their engagement with the socially motivated concern to convey themselves as reliable and accurate reporters of the things that have happened to them. The use of *I think* prefaces, as well as *I dunno* prefaces were two of the most striking ways that children downgrade their epistemic certainty surrounding the details they report to police interviewers. At other times children could be seen explicitly

doing repair when interviewers overstated the certainty of the child's more tentative claim in a prior turn, which implied a concern to be precise about their degree of certainty in regard to the details they report. Seeing how children sometimes alter their accounts for how they know and remember things in ways that provide more convincing justifications for that knowledge (e.g. Richard's "my brain told me" to "it was near my birthday") was evidence that children are attending to how their accounts are received by interviewers. Children's answers cannot, I argued, be divorced from their status as social beings attentive to social concerns, such as being seen as truthful and competent reporters of facts.

Chapter 8 focused on the way that children formulate accounts that show they are attending to the issue of who had agency in relation to the abuse. This, I argued, shows that children come to the interview cognisant that sexual abuse is a moral issue with implications for their own moral culpability because if they were not cognisant of this issue, then presumably they would not see any need to formulate responses that attend so *precisely* to the issue of agency.

In making this argument, I emphasised this should not be viewed as strategic on the part of the child, as though they are consciously and deliberately presenting themselves in a favourable light. To the contrary, it needs to be seen as indicative of the sad and awful dilemma children are in when they perceive certain questions are calling them to account for how they responded to the abuse or why they did not disclose earlier, an especially difficult thing for children to do who have been chronically abused over long periods. An important implication of chapter 8 was to counter the view of children as highly suggestible and easily led with clumsy questioning techniques, and also to show how they

are doing more work in interaction than merely trying to retrieve the most accurate memory. They may at times be suggestible, and they may also be focused on accurate reporting but they are always also demonstrably attending to perceptions about their status as moral persons.

9.3. Implications for investigative interviewing

When considering how this research impacts upon the field of investigative interviewing, it seems prudent to declare what it does not do. Most of all, it does not offer any text book methods for interviewers to insert into their practice with a predictable, positive impact on the quality of the interview. Thus, from the perspective of researchers who employ the scientific method to try and rule in or rule out certain practices by looking at the differential outcomes on variables such as children's recall, consistency, disclosure rates and so forth, the value of this study might be questioned. However, as I showed in chapter 3, those kinds of studies also have their share of problems, most particularly the fact that they are usually analogue studies and therefore lack ecological validity.

The main contribution of this study is to provide a detailed, close-up examination of what actual police interviewers and actual child witnesses do within the setting of a genuine investigative interview and this is one of its strengths.

Police interviewers, as well as those involved in their training, may benefit from taking a closer look at some of their interviews using the sequential approach of conversation analysis adopted in this study. This would allow them to see things like the developing context that ultimately leads to an interviewer asking a forced choice question in order to progress an interaction that is stalling, for example. At times this might show that an

interviewer does appear to ask these kinds of questions prematurely. Evidence for this would be asking overly specific questions before there are any clear signs that a child is showing difficulty responding. Conversely, a sequential analysis might also show, as a number of my examples did, police working quite hard to stay with asking open-ended questions, only resorting to specific questions in the face of obvious and intractable problems with progressivity in the interaction. Hence, there is room, I suggest, for more finely tuned advice to police interviewers surrounding what constitutes poor questioning, and the sequential context within which certain forms of questioning occur seems a good place to start.

There may also be a need to revise the view that police are misguided when they talk about a good interview arising to some extent from whether the child is or is not a “talker”²⁴ (Wright, Powell & Ridge, 2007, p. 400). Several police interviewers from my study described knowing an interview had gone well because a child seemed to understand and respond easily to their questions: in other words, when there was minimal disturbance to the progressivity of the interaction. This is easy to spot when adopting the sequential analytic approach involved in conversation analysis. When the interaction is progressing smoothly and interviewers are not having to reformulate their questions multiple times to try and elicit an informative response from a child, then there is a clear sense that this is a good interview, whether the child is disclosing details that confirm or disconfirm the veracity or the seriousness of an allegation.

²⁴ Before starting data collection, I met with the 5 police interviewers from the SCIB and several of them were very interested in my hypothesis surrounding the extent to which the child may have as much to do with the *perceived* quality of the investigative interview as the interviewer. One of them said something along the lines of “if a child is a good talker, then it makes you look good and if they’re not then you look bad”.

Clearly it matters that interviewers make a genuine effort to formulate their questions in ways that are most likely to encourage children to give elaborate responses, and avoid generating perceptions that the child may have been led. However, this study also shows that children can be very competent at inferring what interviewers are seeking, even when interviewer's questions are sometimes poorly formulated by the best practice standards. This was particularly apparent in chapter 5, where children could seemingly hear the action built into the interviewer's "do you know why you are here" type questions and answer it informatively, rather than merely treating it as a yes/no interrogative. At other times, children showed that they understood what interviewers were driving at even though the child was not providing the requested detail, evidenced by them giving an account for not telling (e.g. chapter 5, extract 4b, lines 77-79).

Of course, the children in this data set ranged from 7 to 11 years of age, and therefore were likely to be more conversationally competent than younger children. Therefore, these findings may not apply to investigative interviews with younger children, where there may be a greater need for precision and simplicity in the way that questions are formulated. Research suggests this may be true (Walker, 1999).

Nonetheless, an important implication of this study is to show that police interviewers are not carrying the full burden of conversational competency. Children can, and do, respond informatively to confusing, unclear questions sometimes, and can also be seen correcting interviewers who overstate the epistemic certainty of a child's claim about some detail. Conversely, at other times children display their competency at *not being* informative even when the interviewer is doing all the right things by best practice guidelines and in conversational terms, such as leaving silences after first pair part questions, which keep the obligation current for children to respond.

Therefore, police may be right to intuit that what comes to seem like a “good” interview or a “bad” interview is not entirely a product of their own making. The child’s conversational competency, as well as their ability and willingness to respond informatively, are also important. This seems vital to convey to police in training settings because, otherwise, police may receive only the message that they need to do better. Once again, a sequential approach to analysing actual interviews can reveal how police are not entirely in control. The child is not a passive vessel of answers (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

The way that children were visibly orienting to socially motivated concerns has implications for investigative interviewing but there is one conclusion I would not wish to be drawn. I would not wish anyone to infer that there is something troublesome about children’s talk showing that they are attentive to things such as how they might be perceived by a more powerful adult interviewer. Showing that children give accounts that attend to their agency and non-culpability in connection to the abuse or, in Steven’s case the matter of his not going to his mother’s aid, is not to suggest that something else may have “really” happened and that children’s honesty is in question. As discussed in chapter 3, there is no reliable way to access the pure truth of a child’s experience (or anyone else’s) or to discern a reliable from an unreliable report.

What I am saying is that the social is inescapable. People do not enter into social interaction of any form devoid of concern for the social. This may be less salient in some settings than others, but people’s talk-in-interaction in all settings can be scrutinised for how it displays an orientation to social concerns, especially what kind of person one is: one’s identity. Other conversation analytic studies have shown this time and again in

diverse settings ranging from relationship counselling (Edwards, 1995; Edwards, 1998) to young “punks” talking about the way they look (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995).

Therefore, the important point to take from this study is that since children’s attentiveness to social concerns is inescapable, interviewers should not be persuaded that they can in some way conduct the kind of interview that will erase children’s concern about such things.

However, what interviewers may do is to be mindful of how certain questions, such as “did you say anything when [the perpetrator] did that to you?” are most certainly going to be heard by children as a call for an account of how they resisted, or why they could not resist or some other account for their action or inaction. By asking interviewers to be mindful, I am not suggesting that these questions not be asked, or that children’s sense of needing to account for themselves can be avoided. I am suggesting that these types of questions could be asked more sensitively at times in ways that convey to children that they are not to blame, particularly in cases of chronic abuse where children may be feeling shameful about not disclosing sooner and how this might be interpreted. As mentioned in chapter 8, my own conversation with two police interviewers showed that they are already aware of how children are sensitive to matters of agency in connection to the abuse and so this is unlikely to be a revelation to interviewers.

Children’s attention to detail when it comes to marking the epistemic (un)certainty of their claims to know or remember details in connection to the alleged abuse may also be put to practical use. As I have argued, that children do this at all suggests they are not neutral about how their claims are interpreted by interviewers, something that is most visible when children correct interviewers who overstate the certainty of a child’s claim.

From a best practice perspective, interviewers are encouraged to tell children to correct them if they get something wrong, or misunderstand something the child has said. To encourage children to do this, interviewers could make certain to reinforce children on those occasions when they correct the interviewer, by praising them for making sure they tell exactly what they remember, and for not being afraid to speak up. Such moments of interaction are also likely to lend an added sense of authenticity to the interview because the sequential organisation of the interviews, which has children mostly only responding with second pair parts (SPPs), generally makes it difficult for children to initiate repairs like this. Hence, those watching the video tapes can witness the child's willingness to break from the sequential pattern to put their version forward.

An important implication of this study is to show the value of looking at video and not relying only upon written transcripts of interviews because the embodied aspects of the interaction between interviewers and children were clearly relevant at times. Police, of course, are not likely to want to subject their tapes to the level of detailed analysis that conversation analysis entails in their day to day operations. Nonetheless, in a training context, analysing the coordination of talk and body gesture could be very informative. In particular, it could help to show police some of the visible signs that children are uncomfortable or embarrassed. And it could show the kinds of things that police are doing (or not doing) to attend to that, such as removing eye gaze, turning their bodies slightly away from the child, changing topic, or introducing a body diagram in a way that functions to give both parties something else to look at apart from one another. With more interviews than those that formed my data corpus, there is potentially much more to discover about how police work through these potentially difficult moments in the interaction.

With some caution, I contend that the findings in this study might be useful to lawyers, as well as judges who preside over child sexual abuse cases in the rare event these cases get to trial. Fortunately, in South Australia, and most Australian jurisdictions, when a child sexual offence is prosecuted at trial, an order can be made to permit the video-taped interview to be played to the court²⁵ (Attorney General's Department, 2009). This then becomes the child's evidence-in-chief. In particular, it might be useful to understand that what might ultimately come to be deemed as a "good" interview or a "bad" interview cannot easily be attributed to only the interviewer or only the child because these things are jointly produced in interaction.

Whilst this is not helpful to the court's overarching goal of uncovering the truth, it is worth keeping in mind that some of the impressions – both positive and negative – being formed by those watching the interview are coming from the interaction they are watching, and do not necessarily have any bearing on the truth at all. For instance, a child's inconsistency could be a sign that they are an unreliable witness or it could, for example, be the product of a misunderstanding within the interaction that the interviewer has not detected, and thus has not repaired. Although courts cannot be expected to subject audio-visual recorded evidence to detailed conversation analysis, knowing that both these things are possible explanations would be a valuable addition to the justice process.

9.4. Implications for talking with children in clinical settings

This thesis has focused on investigative interviews of children as witnesses, but many of its findings can be translated to clinical settings, where psychologists and other mental

²⁵ In South Australia, the child witness must be under the age of 12 or suffer some form of intellectual impairment for this option to apply.

health oriented professionals are tasked with assessing, counselling, or offering therapeutic interventions to children.

For instance, clinicians and counsellors may also experience the sense that some sessions with children go well and others not so well and, similar to investigative interviewers, may sometimes attribute this to whether or not the child talks easily (Wright, Powell & Ridge, 2007). Thus, clinicians could also benefit from the knowledge that what comes to seem like a productive or unproductive session is a joint production. Both children and interviewers shape the interaction.

One illustration of this from the present study was the way that continuers (often termed minimal responses in counselling texts) were shown to be produced collaboratively at times, with the child's turns at talk making them relevant, and the continuers simultaneously signalling that the interviewer was bypassing their turn. Looked at this way, it can help clinicians to understand why, at times, continuers seem to function well to keep a child talking, while at others they feel or sound contrived in their delivery. Examining their sequential placement may reveal the trouble source; for example, inserting a continuer when the child has clearly completed their turn at talk may exert pressure on a child to say more, or it may result in an uncomfortable silence, or it may result in another attempt by the child to close the sequence, perhaps by offering no new information, as was the case in some of the present interviews.

The present data also highlighted the collaborative production of silence, or gaps in the talk, and this is another area of potential usefulness for clinicians working with children in interview or therapeutic settings. As I showed in these interviews, the gaps that create

obligation for a child to talk follow after an interviewer's FPP questions, when a SPP response from the child is yet to come. This is a conversational phenomenon observable in social interaction generally – FPPs make a responsive SPP relevant. Thus, when children do not respond immediately, clinicians can continue to hold the child to the obligation to respond by withholding any further talk of their own. Of course, if overused, it can begin to impact on the progressivity of the interaction, which in turn generates the sense that the child is not a "talker" (Wright, Powell & Ridge, 2007, p. 400), and/or that rapport is in jeopardy.

As in investigative interviewing, the text book advice to student clinicians is to work on rapport in order to create a productive interaction (Hersen & Thomas, 2007; Sattler, 1998). For example, in a typical text aimed at student clinicians, Villa and Reitman (2007) advise that rapport is "essential to conducting a child interview and is associated with a greater likelihood that the child will produce useful clinical information" (p.9) and, moreover, citing Powell and Lancaster (2003), state that "child-interviewer rapport can be defined as "present" when the therapist is perceived as supportive, nonjudgmental and child centred" (p.9).

As I have argued at several points, when rapport is conceptualised in ways that refer to non-observable inner states like this (e.g. a child's perceptions of, or feelings of warmth toward an interviewer) then it is a difficult thing to point to, and even more difficult to provide instructions in how to create it. Thus, I argued that the conversation analytic concept of progressivity may offer some insight into at least part of what we mean when we observe rapport between people. In Australia, on some clinical training placements, student clinicians have to video tape several of their therapy sessions for their supervisor to assess. Some clinical psychology practices also seek permission from clients to video

tape sessions for training and development purposes. This kind of data presents a rich opportunity for individual clinicians to assess those parts of their interviews or therapy sessions that appear to go smoothly and those that seem more problematic; to look at how both these things emerge interactionally; and to note those things they themselves do that contribute. These things may line up with the types of things that clinical text books recommend, such as giving the interviewee undivided attention, providing reassurance and support, using a warm and expressive tone of voice and things of that nature (Sattler, 1998). This is, however, only determinable by analysing actual interview data. Using data from clinical settings, researchers experienced in conversation analysis are especially well placed to follow-up on the idea of progressivity as the observable part of what we might be picking up on when we deem rapport to be present. This would be a most useful addition to the clinical literature.

As discussed in chapter 6, this study showed the utility of using body diagrams and children's drawings as aids to restoring progressivity to the interaction when a child seems too uncomfortable or embarrassed to talk. Like investigative interviewers, clinicians must also talk to children about sensitive, potentially embarrassing topics, such as sexual abuse and, whilst clinicians are already encouraged to use pictures and drawings to help reluctant children to talk (Sattler, 1998), this study adds empirical support by showing how such props made a positive difference to the interaction. As mentioned in chapter 6, since clinicians working therapeutically with children do not operate under the same rigorous legal standards as forensic investigators, they would not use these props in quite the same way. Clinicians could, for example, use diagrams and pictures to allow the child more freedom to show what happened to their bodies by pointing, without also

needing to press them to verbally articulate details, since verbal articulation is unlikely to be as important therapeutically as it is forensically.

The detailed sequential analysis provided by this study offers evidence that props can function to make an interaction less intense for children. When both the interviewer and child were jointly focused on the drawing, rather than each other, the interaction went more smoothly, even when delicate material was being discussed that had previously brought the interaction to a standstill. As with investigative interviewing, however, clinicians should treat such props as an adjunct to, and not a replacement for, skilled, sensitive interaction on their part.

Clinical psychologists do not only see children prior to, or subsequent to a child's encounter with the forensic-legal systems that investigate and prosecute allegations of sexual abuse. Saywitz and Camparo (2009) make the point that children are sometimes referred to therapy while protracted legal cases are making their way through the judicial system. This can be to treat clinical symptoms, even if sexual abuse is unsubstantiated and the cause of the symptoms remains unclear, or it may be to treat post-traumatic stress symptoms in cases of substantiated abuse. As Saywitz and Camparo (2009) note, in such cases additional forensically useful information can emerge in the context of therapy. However, they also observe that there is potential for contamination of evidence in this setting because therapeutic techniques do not have the goal of preserving the reliability of children's reports. Consequently, they make a case for the importance of research that investigates which therapeutic techniques have the least likelihood of contaminating children's reports while at the same time meeting children's mental health needs.

The present study adds to that agenda by pointing to additional things that mental health professionals ought to be cognisant of when talking with children about sexual abuse in clinical settings; for example, being aware that clinical interviews, like investigative interviews, are also social interactions where children are not just providing facts but also attending to socially motivated concerns. So, for example, psychologists can prepare for the fact that children commonly make reference to their lack of culpability in relation to the alleged acts perpetrated upon them, and can be sensitive to how their own questions might invite these kinds of accounts from children.

Moreover, psychologists might consider in their own practice how some children appear to orient to being precise reporters of the things that have happened to them, which was most evident in the present study when a child corrected an interviewer who had misrepresented, or overstated the child's claim. Whereas praising children in an investigative interview is generally discouraged, in a therapeutic setting it would be permissible for psychologists to comment positively upon a child's attempts to be precise in their reporting. Broadly, there are many more opportunities for psychologists in therapeutic settings to provide meta-commentary on what they notice a child is doing with their talk, comments such as "I notice when you corrected me just then that you seem to be trying really hard to make sure I understand exactly what happened". When used carefully, it seems likely that this kind of meta-commentary would usefully encourage children to do more of the same the next time something they say is misrepresented, regardless of whether or not it relates to sexual abuse.

9.5.Limitations of the study and directions for future research

This study involved a detailed analysis of a relatively small number of interviews and I borrowed ten Have's (2007) justification that this is acceptable when thinking about data from the "specimen" rather than the "factist" perspective (see chapter 2). In more familiar parlance, this was an exploratory study. Focusing on a small number of interviews helped me become very familiar with the interviews as a whole through multiple viewings/listenings, as well as permitting me to transcribe all of them. In turn, that familiarity with the data led to many rich lines of inquiry to follow.

However, an obvious shortcoming is the generalisability of the findings. These interviews were conducted by 5 interviewers from the same organisation. Although I suspect the kinds of things I found are likely to also be found in other interview settings because the findings appear to be, broadly speaking, derivative of everyday conversational practices, this is still an empirical question in need of an answer. Moreover, the children in this study were between 7 and 11 years old and therefore this study cannot comment upon the degree to which younger children are likely to show the same competencies that the children in this data corpus did, especially in terms of hearing the actions within interviewer's turns that were not always precisely worded.

Therefore, an obvious direction for future research is to draw upon a larger corpus of interviews with children across a broader age span. This could include investigative interviews as well as clinical and therapeutic interviews with children, particularly where sensitive material is being discussed. Conversely, looking at less sensitive settings could also be useful as a comparative study to notice how interactional problems that impact progressivity do or do not manifest depending on the material being discussed.

Whilst this study offers a great deal in terms of its ecological validity – these are actual sexual abuse interviews – it is not experimental in nature and this also affects its generalisability. Naturalistic studies cannot, of course, control for any of the variables outside of the interview that clearly may influence it; most notably, age-related differences in cognitive and language development, the truth or falsity of the allegations, and the prior conversations or interviews the child has had about the alleged abuse. It is hoped, however, that this study's illumination of the finer details of what takes place in this discrete set of interviews will compensate for these limitations. In particular, I hope that it stimulates more research that puts emphasis on the joint interaction between interviewer and child, and how the interviewer must work with the turn-by-turn contingencies presented to them by children, rather than the current dominant focus on how the interviewer shapes the interview.

This should not be taken to mean that interviewers cannot improve their practice. By contrast, applying a method such as conversation analysis could reveal regular things that interviewers do that are helpful or unhelpful in interviews, as measured by its impact on the progressivity of the interaction over a number of sequences. This is in contrast to only looking for regularities in the impact that particular question formulations have upon a child's immediate next turn response since, as this study showed a number of times, interviewers and children often work these momentary problems out within the next few turns at talk. And where the child appears embarrassed or reticent to talk, there is no perfect question form that seems more likely to get them to disclose. Interviewers must seemingly draw upon all their conversational resources over many, many turns to try and move a child who is also, as a conversationally competent person, able to avoid

answering informatively if they are not motivated to do so because of feelings of reticence, shame, or embarrassment.

The limits placed on my access to the data, whilst entirely appropriate, do have implications for reliability. No-one else apart from me was permitted to view the video tapes. Therefore, no-one could check the accuracy of my transcription based on those tapes. This would be of greater concern, however, in a content analytic study where the researcher develops codes and categories to organise the data. When data are organised and categorised in that way, the reader is a step away from seeing the raw data and inter-coder agreement becomes important as a means of checking reliability.

Although transcripts based on naturally occurring talk can always *also* benefit from other people checking for accuracy, the kinds of things most likely to be disputed are intonation, length of gaps in talk and things of that nature; that is, how things were said, as opposed to what was said. This can certainly affect meaning but in the present study, even if from time to time I may have missed some of these details, my analysis did not rely on them to such an extent that it should make any substantive difference to my conclusions. Also, as discussed in chapter 2, in addition to the original transcription process, I checked the transcription of particular extracts used in the thesis on three separate occasions to listen for any omissions or errors I may have made.

Many conversation analytic studies based upon video recordings nowadays show the video during presentations, which does, of course, provide a vivid display of the participants to the talk and what they are doing with their bodies and surroundings as they interact. The ethical conditions attached to this project did not permit that kind of viewing and, hence, others cannot see first-hand the body gestures that I saw and have attempted

to transcribe. This is a loss in terms of methodological rigour as well as the ease with which I can present the findings in a lively way. Any loss of anonymity for the children involved is clearly an even greater loss though. Moreover, had I been permitted to publish the video of the extracts I would have needed to blur the faces of the children at a minimum and this would have interfered greatly with many of the body gestures I refer to in the analysis, such as the embarrassed smiling, and the direction of children's gaze. Future research that uses data as sensitive as this would benefit from building in permission for another person to check the transcription. But the rights of child witnesses to remain anonymous should mean that, beyond transcribing, any use of the video continues to be prohibited.

A strength of using video data in this study was being able to see what interviewers appeared to be responding to outside of the child's talk (or lack of talk) when formulating their own turns at talk. In chapters 5 and 6, where I examined longer sequences of interaction, it was possible to see more fully how certain question forms arose in the context of what was visibly, as well as audibly happening. A useful future study would be to focus more precisely on the contingencies that give rise to what are normally deemed problem questions (e.g. specific questions introduced too early) and to examine the effects on the interaction. Such a study might show the detailed ways that more skilled interviewers (or perhaps skilled conversationalists) steer the interaction back to a more open question style, for example. This could in turn be applied in training settings.

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9.6. Concluding remarks

As I complete this thesis, I want to stress that my intention has been to begin a useful conversation between those in the investigative interviewing field whose focus is, quite

properly, on the role of the interviewer in creating a climate that enables children to provide evidence in the most reliable way, with the least amount of distress caused, and between those who, like me, see value in examining how the interview is a joint product of the interaction between the interviewer and child, where the interviewer is not wholly in charge of its quality.

All fields of research are open to criticism, and criticism can be healthy and helpful, but my hope is that rather than being viewed only as a criticism of approaches that tend to de-emphasise children's role in producing quality interviews, this study of children's and interviewers' talk-in-interaction is instead used to foster interest in children's competency as witnesses, and to show that children are not merely disinterested conveyors of facts; they are also understandably concerned, as we all are, with the kinds of inferences that might be drawn about the kinds of people they are, including inferences about their competency, honesty, and morality.