CHILDREN'S SOCIAL POWER IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PRIMARY PREVENTION PROGRAMS

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

There is public sanction to equip elementary school children with personal protection know-how through school-based sexual abuse primary prevention programs. A central premise of this initiative is that children's own resistance to sexual abuse can be fortified through education and skills training. Critics of the movement argue that increased knowledge does not make children any more powerful to act, and that programs have failed to address the huge power imbalance existing between children and their adult abusers. In the following qualitative research study the social power differential between children and adults is empirically explored as a means of considering the congruency between children's real life social power experiences and prevention program lessons.

Fifteen, nine and ten year-old children spoke, during in-depth interviews, about their lived experiences of power and powerlessness in their daily relationships with adults. The researcher's personal journaling throughout the research process provided additional insight into adult-child relations of power.

Incongruencies between children's daily social power experiences and child sexual abuse prevention program lessons are demonstrated through data which describes children's difficulty in interpreting adult intentions, refusing powerful adults, and relying on adult protection. Possible strategies for more successfully achieving the goal of empowering children through this primary prevention initiative are raised on the basis of these findings.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 IN SEARCH OF A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

As we attack the problem of sexual molestation, we must take on this task in an effective and well-planned manner. Without careful examination of how our approaches affect children, we stumble forward with good intentions, but often achieving an unwanted result. As we carefully examine our efforts and our results, we become effective and we protect our children (Hindman, 1992, p. i)

Two decades ago, a controversial social program initiative arrived on the education scene, to be hailed as an essential solution in the movement to eradicate child sexual abuse. Directed at the children who are the potential victims of sexual abuse, in-school child sexual abuse prevention programs have been praised by proponents, such as Carol Plummer, as empowering for children:

Programs aiming for prevention of sexual abuse have made significant strides in only 15 years. These efforts have not been perfect and have been much easier to criticize than to create, but prevention has proven itself in each category of its endeavours. Despite political opposition, financial onslaughts, and even programmatic imperfections, prevention is desired by the public and supported by research; it deserves a chance to get the work done to make the world safer for children (Plummer, 1993, p. 303).

Meanwhile, opponents of these same programs reproach the movement for being based on unproven assumptions. Repucci and Haugaard (1989, p.1268), for example, in response to Plummer's assertions state that, "It is unclear whether prevention programs are working or even that they are more beneficial than harmful".

Emphasis in sexual abuse prevention training is on providing elementary school children with safety skills in an attempt to help them avoid and overcome the sexually exploitive behaviours of adults.
One of the key goals of prevention education is to teach children not to be passive in the face of threat or victimization, but rather to try to thwart it by saying no, yelling, threatening to tell or running away (Finkelhor, Asdigian & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994, p.7).

Although programs are diverse in content and format, grade school children are commonly taught three core principles and corresponding rights. Children are taught:

- to recognize inappropriate touching or abuse (their right to body ownership is reinforced),
- to refuse/resist if touched inappropriately or in a manner that makes them feel uncomfortable (their right to refuse an adult is reinforced),
- to disclose abuse to a trusted adult (their right to be protected by adults is reinforced).

A necessary beginning point involves teaching young children to identify or recognize sexual abuse, along with their right to body ownership and protection from harm. The good touch/bad touch continuum, for example, has been designed to instruct children about different kinds of touching; the delineation of differences between aggressive, sexual, and appropriate touching facilitates their being able to identify inappropriate touch (Conte, Rosen, Saperstein & Shermack, 1985). Private parts are explained as being off limits except during those circumstances related to personal hygiene or injury. The idea that bad touching is often times shrouded in secrecy is typically addressed, as is the notion that children should reveal to trusted adults any bad touch experiences. Generally, children are taught that they should take action if threatened or actually touched in an uncomfortable or inappropriate way. Their right to say "no" or refuse the actions of an abusive adult is strongly reinforced. As part of this message, it is explained that children need to follow their intuition and refuse uncomfortable touch regardless of who is doing it; the fact that abusive adults may be people children know and like is now being
specifically addressed in many programs. Finally, children are taught to identify and rely on their adult support system. They are encouraged to use self-protection and disclosure skills if confronted with inappropriate or uncomfortable touching and their right to be protected by trusted adults is stressed. Along with the importance of telling a trusted adult about any bad touch experiences, children are encouraged to keep telling adults until they are believed. Since adults are ultimately responsible for the protection and safety of children, children are told that they are not to blame for any abuse experiences that do occur.

Methods for presenting this safety information have expanded to include creative and innovative forms such as plays, workbooks, videos, and comic books. It was estimated, over five years ago, that more than a quarter of a million Canadian children had participated in a sexual abuse prevention program of one form or another (Gentles & Cassidy, 1988). Today, because of the widespread popularity of this initiative, this figure has easily doubled. In a recent U.S. National sample of 2000 ten-to-sixteen-year-old children, it was found that 67% had participated in a school-based prevention program (Finkelhor, Asdigian, Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994). Clearly, regardless of the continual debate over the impact and effectiveness of these prevention programs, there is widespread public sanction in North America to equip children with personal protection know-how.

Sexual abuse prevention programs have two distinct goals; that of primary prevention or stopping the abuse before it begins, and that of secondary prevention or identifying children who have already suffered abuse. A desire to stop sexual abuse, or prevent it before it occurs, is a chief reason for the enthusiastic implementation of these programs. Child sexual abuse primary prevention programs are fundamentally aimed at
averting the occurrence of sexual abuse rather than at responding, after the fact, to those who are already the victims of sexual abuse. The basic goal of any primary prevention initiative is to reduce or block environmental hazards and traumas that may lead to maladaptation or illness for the individual (Cowen, 1983).

Prevention training is seen as providing young children with an "inoculation" that injects knowledge and skills that empower children to effectively ward off sexual molestation (Berrick & Gilbert, 1991, p. 109).

The early identification of sexual abuse through children's self disclosures is, theoretically speaking, the second level of prevention or "secondary prevention" (Berrick & Gilbert, 1991; Dubé, Heger, Johnson, & Hebert, 1988; Lorion, 1983). Secondary prevention refers to initiatives targeted either at high-risk groups or groups already identified at an early stage of trauma. Primary prevention initiatives, on the other hand, target all or non-affected individuals rather than specific high-risk segments of the population. At the secondary level of prevention, the goal is to lessen the negative consequences of injury through early identification and intervention (Cowen, 1983). Acknowledgement of the large number of children who are victims of sexual abuse, along with the difficulty involved in their seeking assistance has provided the impetus for including secondary prevention strategies in these prevention programs. The disclosure or early identification function of child sexual abuse prevention programs, while emphasized with child participants, has been considerably less developed as a process within the adult community. Almost two decades after the conception of these programs, there remains a considerable lack of preparedness on the part of teachers, for example, to respond to situations in which sexual abuse is suspected (see Tite, 1989).

As with many social problems, primary prevention is a more attractive alternative than early identification (secondary prevention) or treatment (tertiary prevention)
(Berrick & Gilbert, 1991; Cowen, 1983). Secondary and tertiary prevention are argued by some to be levels of intervention (Cowen, 1983), with primary prevention being the only true form of "prevention". Child sexual abuse prevention programs offer a preferred level of social action in that mental health and the welfare of all children are promoted without the unpleasant task, or cost, of identifying and intervening with those who are already negatively affected. The blockage of the traumatic life event is perceived as being far better than a cure.

The rapid implementation and growth of these primary prevention programs should not, however, be taken as proof of program success (deYoung, 1988; Berrick & Gilbert, 1991; Melton, 1992). Child sexual abuse primary prevention programs, although extensively implemented in Canadian schools, continue to be challenged in principle. My own inquiry into the efficacy of these programs has led me, as well, to question the theoretical grounding and historical development of this movement.

In the remainder of this first chapter, I share with the reader the process I have undertaken in my search for a purposeful research question relevant to the development of the child sexual abuse primary prevention program and empowerment movement. By organizing my thoughts in this way, I hope to relate to the reader the inconclusive nature of the surrounding body of knowledge upon which this movement has been built, while offering insight into my rationale for posing the central research question that I have come to ask.

1.1.1 Considering the Efficacy of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs: An Important Place to Begin

I began with the intention of investigating the efficacy of in-school child sexual abuse primary prevention programs or, in other words, the ability of these programs to
effectively accomplish the intended goal of preventing child sexual abuse. A considerable body of research which addressed the very question of whether this program objective was being achieved was reviewed. Very quickly I became aware of the significant and somewhat impossible challenge of identifying an accurate method for investigating the question of whether children who have participated in these programs are better able to prevent their own sexual abuse. As explained by Conte (1987, p. 171), "Prevention programs have been delivered to hundreds of thousands of children with few evaluations identifying the effects of training."

Convincing evidence of program efficacy would require that children's experiences of sexual abuse be compared before and after program training or by showing that program participants, after training, experience less sexual abuse than non-trained children. The virtual impossibility of this task was made clear to me when I considered the huge ethical and practical barriers to asking children about their experiences of sexual exploitation and abuse. In a highly publicized Canadian National population survey (Badgely, Allard, McCormick, Proudfoot, Fortin, Ogilvie, Rae-Grant, Gelinas, Pepin and Sutherland, 1984) it was reported that, before the age of 18 years, approximately one in eight boys and one in four girls had been the victims of unwanted sexual experiences. Omitted from the survey were the accounts of persons younger than 18 years of age since parental consent would have been required for this young age group. Information from young people would likely provide unreliable estimates since abusive adults would simply refuse the participation of their victimized children. Furthermore, many abused children and their parents would choose not to reveal the victimization (Wurtele, 1987). Because of these barriers to accurate reporting, existing information about the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse has been predominantly based on the retrospective accounts of adult
survivors (see Badgley et al., 1984; Russell, 1983, 1986). Questioning children directly about their sexual abuse experiences, both before and after prevention program participation, would, in all likelihood, not provide accurate information about children’s experiences. Nor would it be considered a socially acceptable approach to investigating the efficacy of these programs.

Program efficacy could also be illustrated if one could demonstrate a lower sexual abuse frequency for children participating in prevention programs, than the rate for children in society at large. Unfortunately, the extent to which children are sexually abused in the general population has continued to elude researchers. Unlike childhood abuse prevalence studies, which refer to the number of people maltreated at any point during childhood, incidence of child abuse refers to the number of children maltreated in a single year. Recently, an annual incidence study on child maltreatment was conducted in the province of Ontario (Trocme, McPhee, Tam, & Hay, 1994). These researchers provided provincial estimates based on a core sample of 2,447 child maltreatment investigations drawn from a total population of 53,000 family cases open for Children’s Aid Society services in 1993 (Trocme, McPhee, Tam, & Hay, 1994). Such a study is a most difficult undertaking because of the ongoing absence of standard definitions, data collection, and reporting methods in the child maltreatment field and child welfare system (Trocme et al., 1994). On this topic the authors write:

Statistics describing the incidence and prevalence of child abuse and neglect are easily misinterpreted when taken out of context. Variations in definitions and data collection methods lead to significant differences in estimates of the scope of child maltreatment (Trocme et al., 1994, p. 7).

The fact that there is still no national compilation of child abuse statistics in Canada (Rogers, 1990), is further testimony to the difficulty involved in consistently defining and documenting sexual abuse, along with other forms of abuse. In response to this
information gap, Trocmé and his colleagues propose to conduct similar incidence studies in other provinces in Canada (Trocme et al., 1994). While this recent Ontario incidence study provides greater clarity about the extent of sexual abuse amongst children in this country, there remains uncertainty about the extent of unreported sexual abuse cases.

In part, due to the methodological challenges and reporting problems faced by those engaged in the study of child sexual abuse prevalence and incidence rates, a reduction in sexual abuse rates after participation in prevention programs has been difficult to determine. Because of the absence of systematic program evaluation studies, the degree to which these programs are effective has remained unclear. While demonstrating prevention's effectiveness is a difficult task, proving its ineffectiveness is equally problematic (Plummer, 1993).

In the past, the question most commonly addressed in assessing the worth of prevention programs has been whether or not prevention training has the desired impact on children (see Pietrzak, Ramler, Renner, Ford and Gilbert, 1990). For those engaged in the evaluation of sexual abuse prevention programs, increased and maintained knowledge of safety skills and minimized fear reactions in child participants has been equated with program success and greater safety for children (Volpe, 1981; Leventhal, 1987). In this regard, investigations have consistently shown that children acquire the desired prevention concepts after program exposure and that their fear reactions to program content are negligible (Finkelhor & Strapko, 1987; Swan, Press, & Briggs, 1985; Volpe, 1984; Wurtele, 1990; Wurtele & Miller-Perrin, 1987). Proof that children acquire the desired knowledge concepts after program exposure, however, does not further our understanding of the success of these programs in achieving the intended goal of actually "preventing" sexual abuse. Children's knowledge of protection skills is a necessary but
insufficient ingredient for the primary prevention of abuse.

A change in knowledge, which is really an intermediate measure, has been examined without any evidence that such a change is linked to changes in behaviour (Kraizer, Witte & Fryer, 1989, p. 23).

Children's acquired knowledge is, in itself, an inadequate outcome measure of program efficacy in this prevention movement (Berrick & Gilbert, 1991; Kraizer, Witte, & Fryer, 1989; Leventhal, 1987). In order for children to prevent their sexual abuse, they need to be able to translate their newly acquired knowledge into protective behaviours. Health educators and other community workers have demonstrated the difficulty involved in promoting this all important link between knowledge and real life behaviour (Leventhal, 1987; Melton, 1992). In fact, eliminating or reducing opportunities for risky behaviour usually produces greater increase in safety than attempts to teach or persuade people to avoid risky behaviours (see Melton, 1992).

During this past decade, a great deal of criticism has stemmed from the fact that child sexual abuse prevention programs are based on the unproven hypothesis that knowledge enables children to prevent their own sexual abuse (Dube, et al., 1988; Kraizer, Fryer, & Miller, 1988; Melton, 1992; Conte, Rosen, Saperstein, & Shermack, 1985). As a result of ethical and methodological problems, little research has looked at the real world effectiveness of programs (Finkelhor et al., 1994). Innovative evaluation strategies that measure actual behavioural change or direct outcomes of teaching programs are needed (Leventhal, 1987; Wurtele, 1987).

One such creative, (as well as ethically questioned), approach to program evaluation was reported by Fryer and his colleagues (Fryer, Kerns, Kraizer & Miyoshi, 1987). These researchers considered the effect of program training in the area of stranger abduction on children's resultant safety behaviour. Forty-four kindergarten, first, and second grade
children in Denver, Colorado participated in an experimental design study. Children were randomly assigned to a control or treatment group, with treatment group children being exposed to an eight-day program on stranger abduction, consisting of 20-minute presentations each day. The program offered children an opportunity to exercise the rules and concepts through role-playing. One day prior to training, however, each child was enticed to leave the school building with a potentially dangerous stranger who was actually a member of the research team. In their study, children were individually encountered in the hallway at school by an adult stranger and asked if they would assist the adult. In the pretest, children were asked by the stranger to accompany him to his car to help bring treats in for his son's birthday party. Following the pretest period, the 23 treatment group children were exposed to the 8 program sessions on stranger abduction prevention, after which, the simulation experience was repeated with another stranger in another part of the school. During post-test trials, each child was asked to accompany the stranger to his car to help carry in some puppets. The ability of children to avoid the simulated stranger abduction, as rated on a pass/fail basis, dramatically improved for the 23 program trained children with only 5 of these children agreeing after program completion with the stranger's request to leave the school (13 of 23 experimental group children agreed during the pre-test; 10 of 21 control group children failed during the pre-test and post-test). While the authors conclude that the vulnerability of children was reduced through program training, this piece of research also suggests that training does not ensure all children's ability to actually implement the taught safety skills. Furthermore, we cannot assume that knowledge applicable to specific incidents, such as in situations of stranger abduction, is easily transferred to circumstances of intrafamilial or other types of abuse (Gentles & Cassidy, 1988).
In all likelihood, it would be most difficult for a child to translate safety knowledge into behaviour when the sexual touching is done by a powerful and important person in the child's life (Leventhal, 1987). That known adults may be abusive has proven to be the most difficult concept for children to learn in training programs (Finkelhor & Strapko, 1987), and has remained a contentious topic of discussion within these programs. School officials, parents, and perhaps even children themselves, are not prepared to hear this frightening truth. Yet, over and over again it has been shown that the vast majority of sexually abused children are preyed upon by parents, relatives or trusted friends within "affinity systems" (Steed, 1994). Recent Ontario incidence statistics indicate that, in 88% of 11,846 investigated sexual abuse cases (28% of which were substantiated), the suspected perpetrator was either related to or known by the child (Trocme et al., 1994). Twenty-four percent of the alleged perpetrators were biological fathers, 12 percent were stepfathers or common-law partners, and 46 percent were other males such as brothers, grandfathers, or cousins. Most notable was the finding that sexual abuse by strangers was relatively rare. The identity of the perpetrator was unknown in only 12 percent of the investigated cases (with approximately half being substantiated). Given the close relationship between most child victims and their adult abusers, one would expect that children will have a difficult time translating safety knowledge into action. In pursuit of answers to the question of whether children are able to make this knowledge-behavioral link, some researchers have advocated for the use of longitudinal outcome research to directly assess the affects of education programs on the rates of child sexual abuse and reporting (Finkelhor & Strapko, 1987; Melton, 1992; Rogers, 1990). An appropriate design would involve following children to a point in young adulthood where they personally could more readily and comfortably answer questions retrospectively about
incidents of abuse that may or may not have happened subsequent to their training (Finkelhor & Strapko, 1987). In effect, such an approach was attempted by Finkelhor, Asdigian and Dziuba-Leatherman (1994) in their very recent study involving telephone interviews with a Nationally representative sample of 2000, ten-to-sixteen-year-old American youth and their caretakers. One purpose of the study was to consider the impact of prevention programs on young people's ability to avoid and cope with attempted "real life" victimizations. During the survey, a number of youth (N=148) specifically reported an actual or threatened sexual victimization experience. These young people were asked further questions about what they had done to keep the victimization from happening or to protect themselves. Their findings were summarized as follows:

In spite of their use of preferred strategies and the sense that they had been effective in keeping things from getting worse, the children with more comprehensive programs did not appear to have actually thwarted more victimization than other children [who had participated in less comprehensive or no programs]. The percentages of the assaults that turned into completed victimizations was no lower for them than for others (Finkelhor et al., 1994, p. 9).

This study provides information beyond whether or not children incorporate safer behaviours in their response repertoire when faced by abusers; it addresses the question of whether children are successful at stopping abusers when implementing recommended prevention program safety skills. While child participants in prevention programs indicated that they had behaved in ways envisioned by prevention educators (e.g., demanding to be left alone, yelling, threatening to tell), program participation did not increase the likelihood that young people could prevent or stop their victimization when confronted by actual sexual abusers (Finkelhor et al., 1994). In light of the fact that prevention is the central goal of these programs, this study does little to eliminate concerns pertaining to program efficacy. In fact, some troubling issues have been raised
by these researchers. For example, it was reported that the percentage of children experiencing injury during a sexual victimization was greater for well-trained children than for poorly or non-trained children. As outlined by the investigators, this pattern suggests that well-trained children may have a greater propensity to aggressively fight back against adult perpetrators. On this topic the researchers advise that, "Prevention educators need to think more about preventing injury in addition to preventing victimization" (Finkelhor et al., 1994, p. 14).

On a more positive note, it was reported that children who had more comprehensive prevention training were more likely to make disclosures about actual and threatened victimizations. Based on their findings the researchers conclude that:

... prevention instruction can help improve children's response to victimization, and that school-based victimization prevention education programs are having some success in increasing knowledge, inspiring a sense of efficacy and promoting disclosures among children. (Finkelhor et al., 1994, p. 14).

According to this conclusion, program efficacy is suggested by children's acquisition of knowledge, their feelings of being effective in responding to situations of abuse, and their disclosures of abuse. We must keep in mind, however, that children's knowledge, their perceived sense of control, and the reporting of sexual abuse, while positive outcomes in and of themselves, are not clear indicators of "primary" prevention. Critical is the fact that well trained children were no more successful at stopping their abusers than were poorly and non-trained children -- primary prevention was not an observed outcome in this study.

As previously noted, the disclosure of abuse is an inadequate measure of program success since disclosure after the fact calls for secondary prevention strategies to be put into practice. Perhaps because of this division in our understanding of program goals and measures of success, figures on the number of children reporting or disclosing their abuse
after program exposure, (in comparison to pre-program reports), have rarely been accumulated in a systematic and controlled fashion. Such statistics are, however, slowly becoming more available. The 1986 Annual Report of the Metro Toronto Special Committee On Child Abuse states that in a year when 17,182 children attended their program, 13 disclosures were made (cited in Gentles & Cassidy, 1988). This same Committee's 1993 report shows that over 35,000 Toronto Metro school children were reached with the Preventive Education program during the winter and fall of 1993 (Metropolitan Toronto Special Committee, 1993). Fifty-seven disclosures of sexual abuse were made directly to the School Liaison Worker who lead the pre and post play discussions with students. Disclosures made to school personnel on or after the day of presentation were not tabulated for analysis and so there remains uncertainty about the impact of the training information on children's disclosures over time. Leventhal (1987) suggests that the frequency with which sexual abuse is reported to protective service agencies after a training program could serve as a direct outcome measure if a proper comparison study were designed. Such efforts have, to my knowledge, not yet been undertaken. Gaps in research efforts are, in part, due to the fact that such studies would verify the successful implementation of secondary rather than primary prevention efforts.

The assumption that children's knowledge of personal safety skills results in their being able to stop sexual assaults has not been substantiated. While researchers have recently attempted to more directly address the critical link between safety knowledge and action (see Fryer, Kerns Kraizer, & Miyoshi, 1987; Finkelhor et al., 1994), findings to date reveal a shaky and inconclusive relationship between knowledge acquisition, the adoption of prevention skills training and, most importantly, the successful blockage of abuse.
1.1.2 **Translating Safety Knowledge into Action: A Critical Connection for the Child Sexual Abuse Primary Prevention Movement**

Our thoughts may predispose us to act in certain ways, but reality of a given situation may impede such thoughts from being enacted (Strayer & Schroeder, 1989, p. 105).

Having reached somewhat of a dead-end in the prevention program evaluation literature, I turned my attention to the question of why children's awareness about what to do in situations of child sexual abuse might not result in their personal safety. Surprisingly, reasons why children might fail to translate prevention knowledge into safer behaviours has generally remained empirically unexplored in the area of child sexual abuse. The simulated stranger abduction study conducted by Fryer and his colleagues (1987), outlined in the previous section, is one exception. These researchers reported that self-esteem played a significant role in children's ability to learn and implement safety behaviours (Fryer et al., 1987; Kraizer, Fryer & Miller, 1988). Children who entered the program with higher self-esteem scores were more successful at learning and implementing prevention skills than were children who entered the program with lower scores. While these lower self-esteem children left the program with higher esteem scores, they were not fully able to implement the protection skills taught. Self-esteem is suggested as a desirable pre-condition for the learning of prevention skills, enabling children to assimilate the information presented (Fryer et al., 1987).

Children's stage of development has also been identified as an important factor when trying to understand why some children fail to grasp and implement personal safety skill information. There is voiced concern over the absence of a developmental progression in the safety concepts (Melton, 1992; Berrick & Gilbert, 1991; Miller-Perrin & Wurtele, 1989). Mary de Young (1988) illustrated how a child's developmental stage and conceptual ability influences his/her interpretation of safety information. In her
exploration of the "good touch/bad touch continuum" concept, de Young theoretically analyzed the moral development of children under the age of 7. She hypothesized that, for very young children, the attribution of character to a person is congruent with the child's evaluation of the outcomes of that person's behaviour. More simply, at this young age children perceive the adult who accidentally breaks a toy as bad and the adult who manipulates them by giving them a new toy as good. The subtleties of intent are not understood by the young child. She writes:

With their concrete and egocentric focus on behavioral outcomes, young children generally will not be able to assess the incongruity of the situation, resolve it or predict its recurrence (deYoung, 1988, p. 67).

Children's personality traits (i.e., low self-esteem) and stages of development (i.e., moral development) are examples of two identified areas for targeting future research and program development initiatives. In addition to these explanations for why children may not retain knowledge and/or convert classroom taught skills into the desirable safety behaviours is the assertion that the power differential between children and adults leaves children vulnerable to abusive adults -- regardless of protection skills learned. Children may not act on their personal protection knowledge skills because of the daily and normal social restriction placed on them by adults; most children face strong social norms about respect, compliance, passivity and obedience with adults (Melton, 1992; Rogers, 1990; Wells, 1990). Limited social power to confront adults in day-to-day experiences may result in children being without opportunity or means to counter adult authority figures in situations of abuse.

In situations of sexual abuse, a generational power imbalance is at play (Krane, 1989). Children's social dependency on adults will likely result in only futile attempts to stave-off the sexual advances of more powerful adults. A good number of researchers (see
Conte, Rosen, Saperstein, & Shermack, 1985; Finkelhor & Strapko, 1987; Gentles & Cassidy, 1988; Krane, 1989; Melton, 1992; Peake, 1988) have refuted the notion that children are "empowered" to act as agents for their personal well-being simply by virtue of having learned the necessary concepts and words for identifying, avoiding and reporting experiences of sexual abuse. Melton explains:

Telling children that they have control over their bodies makes them no more powerful, a fact to which all children -- most American children -- who have been corporally punished can attest (Melton, 1992, p. 181).

Theorists with a systemic or social analysis of the phenomenon of child sexual abuse postulate that children's relative powerlessness in society creates an environment where all children are vulnerable to abuse. Feminists, in particular, have drawn attention to the role which male power and prerogative play in the abuse of women and children (see Krane, 1989; Stanko, 1986). The idea that these programs make children safer through skill training is flawed in that the notion fails to consider the massive power differential that exists between children and adults -- especially known adults (Peake, 1988). Placing the onus on children to stop adult perpetrators of abuse has been a particularly strong point of contention in the prevention program debate. Critics argue that changing children's knowledge and behaviour will not eliminate sexual assault due to the social power imbalance, and that under such circumstances appointing children as their own protectors resonates a victim-blame mentality (Krane, 1989; Wachtel, 1989). Armed with this perspective many child advocates maintain that prevention initiatives are being directed toward the wrong people in this movement. I asked myself why children, who are the victims of this crime, were targeted in the first place and whether their empowerment through skill training could actually be accomplished.
Training Children in Self-Protection: Is this an Empowering or Victim-Blaming Approach?

In most abuse prevention programs, attention is placed on intervening with the perpetrators of abuse. At a primary prevention level, with the target being sexual abuse prevention, this might mean that all adults, or perhaps more specifically, all men, since they constitute the overwhelming majority of sexual abuse perpetrators (estimated to be as high as 90% of abusers: see Badgley et al., 1984; Finkelhor, 1979; Russell, 1986; Trocme et al., 1994), would be educated about relating to children's needs and rights as well as about the abuse of power and control. Whether such an approach would substantially reduce sexual abuse is unclear at this time. Secondary prevention, could involve working with men who are at an increased risk for committing sexual abuse offenses. Sexual abuse perpetrators, however, have managed to remain difficult to identify and are, presumably, demographically too general to target for this level of action (Dube et al., 1988; Melton, 1992). Tertiary prevention would include working with identified sexual abusers. However, critics maintain that work with offenders is too costly and recidivism rates too high for there to be any confidence in intervention at this late point in time (Berrick & Gilbert, 1991). For these reasons, and because sexual abuse survivors have reported that they would have been less defenceless had they known to refuse the inappropriate actions of adults (Finkelhor, 1986; Berliner & Conte, 1990), primary prevention work with children has been construed as a much more positive and effective endeavour.

Originally conceptualized as part of the rape prevention movement during the 1970's, feminist theory on personal protection training and enablement has been the model for the development of child sexual abuse prevention program concepts (Berrick & Gilbert, 1991). The ideology of empowerment is, as in the rape prevention movement,
central to the concept that children can learn to successfully protect themselves from sexual abusers (Berrick & Gilbert, 1991; Repucci & Haugard, 1993). The empowerment of children is supposedly the intended consequence of child sexual abuse prevention programs. Yet, what is meant by empowerment in this movement has not been thoroughly explained or critically examined.

The term empowerment has been loosely applied to a variety of social intervention techniques, having become somewhat of a catchword among social activists (Swift et al., 1987). Generally defined as a developmental process which leads one toward a feeling of mastery over one's life, it is a multilevel concept applicable to the individual as well as to organizations and communities. Empowerment refers both to subjective experience and objective reality. In other words, empowerment conveys both a psychological sense of personal control or influence, (e.g., feeling powerful), as well as concern with actual social influence, political power, and legal rights (e.g., the modification of structural conditions in order to reallocate power) (Swift & Levin, 1987; Rappaport, 1984). While it is identified as a lifelong endeavour, empowerment has generally been described as an adult developmental process (see Kieffer, 1984). There is a conspicuous absence of discussion about the process of empowerment where children are concerned.

With virtually no theoretical groundwork on which to base the process of children's empowerment, it is not surprising that empowerment is interpreted in the child sexual abuse prevention literature in relatively simplistic terms. Most clearly, the empowerment of children is assumed to be promoted through skill training and education. Specifically, children are presumed to be empowered through training which teaches them to identify and handle threatening situations (e.g., knowledge and self-defense training), and to exercise or assert their rights (e.g., assertiveness training). The idea that children's power
can be altered by skills and knowledge alone has, as explained in the preceding section, been strongly criticised. The selection of a specific empowerment activity, such as skill training, is intimately linked to the way the problem is defined (Swift & Levin, 1987). In the case of child sexual abuse prevention, children's vulnerability for abuse or their empowerment deficit is interpreted as being related to their lack of resources and their limited competence. Individual or person-centred deficits are the focus of attention with structural issues affecting children's disempowerment remaining unaddressed. Programs are focused on improving and strengthening children's individual or intrapsychic characteristics, such as assertiveness, with social or cultural factors related to child sexual abuse, such as adult expectations about child compliance, being essentially ignored. While skills training may well have some degree of empowering consequence (i.e., children may feel powerful), it is questionable whether this is sufficient to address the substantial empowerment deficits faced by children in our society. The root sources of children's victimization, such as adult power-over them, have generally been left out of the solution formula.

The individual or person-centred versus social system world view of child sexual abuse and its prevention serves to promote a victim blame ideology. The assumption that children can "learn" to identify and avoid abuse suggests that they are in control of their own well-being. There is the danger of both encouraging an attitude of self-blame amongst children who are unfortunate enough to encounter abuse, and of fostering a victim-blame mentality in the adult community (Wachtel, 1989). By putting the onus to avoid abuse on those who are less powerful and by not addressing this structural power differential, we risk further disempowering children rather than facilitating their empowerment.
The connection between children's skill training and their social empowerment remained unclear for me. Furthermore, a clear theoretical explanation for the prevention program concepts, I was disappointed to find, was markedly absent from the literature.

1.1.4 **The Development of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Program Concepts: What Factors Contribute to the Sexual Abuse of Children?**

Unlike primary prevention programs that are based on causal theories of abusive behaviour, these programs have no tested theory: they are based on an unproven assumption that knowledge enables children to protect themselves (Melton, 1992, p. 184).

Most primary prevention programs are based on what we know precipitates the problem (see Pietrzak et al., 1990). In order to prevent abuse we must be able to determine what factors contribute to it, and understand the dynamics of abuse (Plummer, 1993). The predisposing factors responsible for children's sexual victimization are not easily identified.

Because much sexual abuse is hidden, so are the risk factors. Any characteristic that appears to be common to victims who come to public attention may not apply to the vast number of victims who do not. If most reported sexual abuse victims are from impoverished, disorganized families, for example, is it because these children are at higher risk or simply because these victims are more readily detected? (Finkelhor & Baron, 1986, p. 43-44).

In discussing those background factors associated with sexual abuse, Finkelhor and Baron (1986) reported that social isolation, poor parental relationships, and the presence of a stepfather appear to be some of the key factors related to children's increased risk for sexual abuse. Understanding social risk factors associated with this crime is useful when one's focus is on secondary prevention, or that of targeting a child population at heightened risk for abuse. Sexual abuse, however, is prevalent under a variety of social circumstances and most risk factors have a low predictive value (Berrick & Gilbert, 1991). For example, most stepfathers do not abuse their children. Furthermore, the attachment
of negative stereotypes to those groups associated with risk, might prove more damaging than helpful. In light of these shortcomings, the approach of targeting all children versus select groups, that is, primary prevention initiatives, are deemed more appropriate and effective.

In-school child sexual abuse prevention programs focus on curtailing those predisposing factors associated with children's sexual abuse. Because the victims are the target of child sexual abuse primary prevention programs, there is a move away from the commonly asked question, "what factors cause adults to sexually abuse children?", with a shift toward the question, "what factors or characteristics place children at risk for sexual abuse?" The foundation for curriculum development in the child sexual abuse prevention movement has been our understanding of how the sexual abuse of children occurs; program concepts address the critical risk-factors or areas of vulnerability in children's lives.

In my review of the literature I could locate very little original material outlining how prevention concepts had actually been researched and developed over the years. If this information does exist, it is not easy to access and, thereby, challenge. This literature has managed to elude others as well who have concluded that the development of prevention concepts has been, seemingly, piecemeal and almost exclusively based on the intuition of the program developers (see Tutty, 1989). Program advocates such as Plummer (1993) suggest that these programs were developed on the basis of emerging theory, expert consultation, and feedback from parents and teachers. In response to the criticisms surrounding the development of prevention program concepts Plummer writes:

Although critics may disagree with the choices made for programs, decisions were made with the input of specialists, and were not dependent solely on the developers' "best guesses" (Plummer, 1993, p. 290).
According to Plummer (1993) the dynamics of sexual abuse, such as how children are selected, coerced, sworn to secrecy, and silenced, were carefully studied to determine intervention strategies.

Presumably, the safety concepts are grounded in the experiences of those who have been sexually abused -- developed from anecdotal clinical information. But only a small proportion of those who are abused come forward, hence, our information is never complete. Furthermore, little published information documenting the first person accounts of child victims is available, our conclusions about the dynamics of child sexual abuse are often based on the retrospective descriptions of adult survivors. The recounted experiences of adult survivors fall short of informing us about the child's understanding of the abuse and the risk indicators which were apparent or unapparent to them at the time of the abuse. The retrospective accounts of adult survivors, while extremely informative, are tainted by limited recall as well as by the additional level of analysis and experience gained with age.

Much of the data on child sexual abuse has been collected in retrospective studies. These are limited by an individual memory, especially since memory for the preschool years is often weak (Tutty, 1989, p. 20).

First person accounts of sexually abused children, regarding their sense of personal power, is generally lacking in the literature. Children's words and their interpretation of the events have not been made very available to those working in the field.

The content of most current prevention programs was developed through clinical work with abused children and knowledge of the histories they recounted. But virtually no one has done a systematic analysis of such children, their knowledge, and their accounts of abuse for a better understanding of what the most important prevention steps might be. How many children actually did not know that what the abuser was doing was wrong at the time they were first approached? How many were afraid of being physically harmed? How many believed that if they told the secret something bad would happen to them? (Finkelhor, 1986, p. 253).
An exception is the work of Lucy Berliner and Jon Conte (1990) on children's perception of the process of sexual abuse victimization. Twenty-three children, aged 10 to 18, who had been victimized (from a few times to as long as 12 years) were identified as key experts on the process of victimization. Through semi-structured interviews the researchers explored children's understanding and experience at the time of the abuse, coercion strategies used by abusers, children's feelings about the offender, children's knowledge about sexual abuse, and their attempts at disclosure as well as their perception of personal power to refuse the adult. Three different but overlapping processes were identified as relevant in the prevention education for already victimized children and children in general: sexualization of the relationship, justification of the sexual contact, and maintenance of the child's cooperation.

To some extent clarification about the dynamics surrounding children's sexual exploitation can also be found in the small body of research which focuses on the male perpetrator's methods of child seduction. In one such study 20 adult sexual offenders were interviewed about how they selected, recruited, and maintained children in a sexual abuse situation (Conte, Wolf & Smith, 1989). Abusers seemingly had a special ability to identify vulnerable children and to use children's vulnerability to their advantage. As well they were found to be coercive in their actions and to desensitize children to touch. Offenders in another study reported a preference for children who were passive, quiet, troubled and lonely or from broken homes. The men described tactics which included bribery and the gaining of children's trust through friendship (Budin & Johnson, 1989). Again, while this information is helpful in increasing our understanding of children's vulnerability, it is important to keep in mind that children's perspectives of the abuse process is not necessarily the same as that named by adult abusers.
According to a review of these literature sources, children's vulnerability for abuse is related to a number of factors:

- Abusers are typically known adults and are therefore trusted.
- Adult abusers ignore children's privacy. They may watch children undress or climb into bed with them.
- Abusers pretend to touch children's private body parts by accident and children have a difficult time interpreting the intentionality as well as the appropriateness of the adult’s touch.
- Offenders take advantage of children's lack of sexual/relationship knowledge, telling them that their sexual touching and behaviour is not inappropriate, not really sexual, or that it is good preparation for their adult lives.
- Offenders emotionally manipulate, bribe, and threaten child victims saying: no one will believe their accusation, that family members will stop loving them, that the child is responsible for the adult’s strong desire and is therefore to blame, or that the adult will be sent to prison, or worse, the child taken from their home should they disclose the abuse.
- Adult abusers may threaten children with physical harm if they do not cooperate.
- Abusers target vulnerable children, such as those from troubled or abusive homes. These children who are lonely and who want to be special are easily befriended by the seemingly sympathetic adult.

Most striking is how normal or common many of these adult behaviours are in our daily interactions with children. It is not uncommon for adults to cuddle in bed with children, for them to speak to children who seem troubled, or to threaten uncooperative children with physical punishment. Children are available for abuse because of: their lack of understanding in the area of sexuality, their ongoing relationships with adults, "good child" cultural expectations, children's smaller physical stature, and their lack of emotional, psychological, and cognitive skills (Conte, Rosen, Saperstein, & Shermack, 1985). The influence of both individual (i.e., children's limited knowledge) as well as societal factors (i.e., expectations that children will be good) are at play in situations of sexual abuse.
Programs to prevent child sexual abuse have developed out of what we know about the dynamics of sexual abuse and have had very little to do with what we know about children's daily dynamics with adults. Most important, the experiences of non-abused children have been consistently overlooked as an important source of information in the development of prevention concepts (Tutty, 1989).

There is an assumption in this movement that prevention educators know what types of skills will make children less susceptible to sexual abuse (Repucci & Haugaard, 1993). However, those skills needed by children for their successful escape from abuse and, perhaps even more important, their ability to implement these skills remain unclear. The age of the child, the type of abuse experienced, the relationship of the perpetrator to the child are all factors which result in different skills being needed by children (Repucci & Haugaard, 1993). There is no simple formula for the prevention of abuse and the empowerment of children.

Prevention programs offer a remarkable range of innovative, attractive, and clever vehicles for presenting materials to children, but they reflect what adults think children need to know about sexual abuse and how adults think it should be presented (Kraizer et al., 1988). Perhaps due to the speed with which society has wanted to respond to the child sexual abuse crisis, there has been greater energy spent on the assessment of training concepts after, rather than before, implementation. In my opinion, the attitude that we can afford to learn from our mistakes is pervasive in this movement. Programs have continued to grow and flourish without the benefit of a strong theory or evidence of success. I began to reassess what I knew about the development, implementation, and efficacy of these programs.
My Emerging Understanding of the Child Sexual Abuse Primary Prevention Program Movement: Articulating My Primary Research Question

At this stage of my journey through the literature I had arrived at that uncomfortable place in the research process when you begin to believe that the more you read, the less you know. This experience was as much based on the content of what I had read as it was on the quantity. Wading through the material over and over again I was struck by an image of myself standing high on a stack of literature; shuffling through reams of paper, I felt certain that I had missed that important piece of evidence that would redeem the child sexual abuse primary prevention movement. To my horror, I looked down only to find myself standing in mid air, with nothing below to support me. I saw that I, along with the movement, had been propped up by countless suppositions. I remained resistant to letting go of my desire to contribute to the development of child sexual abuse prevention programs. This movement, after all, had managed to capture the imaginations of a league of well-meaning adults. Who in their right mind would oppose the idea of facilitating the empowerment of children and enabling them to protect themselves from the harm of sexual abuse. Still, there were too many holes in my understanding of child sexual abuse dynamics and the ensuing prevention movement to go forward with any confidence. I was left with a strong feeling of doubt that this initiative should proceed at all, and I was not at all comforted by the fact that I was not alone in this sentiment. I realized that the only way to go forward in the movement was to go backwards if you will, and begin re-building a sound theoretical basis for this initiative.

Much attention has been directed at the assessment of program efficacy and on the search for creative ways to evaluate existing programs (see Leventhal, 1987). In my estimation, an even more important place to focus our attention is on the theory behind this primary prevention initiative; there is a need to empirically address the question of
whether the empowerment of children is a feasible outcome of these training programs which are embedded in an adult centred culture. Our expectation that children have the power to enforce their will over adults needs to be seriously reassessed, particularly since this ability would seem to be a prerequisite for children's enablement in the blockage of sexual abuse. To date, no research in the area of child sexual abuse has offered a clear understanding about the actual power and powerlessness of children, as it is perceived and experienced by children themselves in their daily interactions with adults. A clear picture of the social conditions and constraints that permeate children's everyday lives is needed if we are to strive toward enabling children to act on their own behalf with any kind of confidence. Every movement, including the in-school child sexual abuse prevention program movement, should begin with the voice of the lived experience. The development of curricula for preventing child sexual abuse must be grounded in the lived experiences of children themselves if their empowerment is to be truly pursued as a goal. To date, this theoretical groundwork has been absent in the child sexual abuse prevention/empowerment movement.

Therefore, my overall purpose has been to explore the viability of protecting children from sexual abuse through a program based on a social empowerment model. I wondered whether the empowerment of children through skill enhancement and knowledge acquisition is a viable path, "the best path" (Berrick & Gilbert, 1991, p. ix), towards the primary prevention of sexual abuse. Before I could engage in this theoretical discussion however, the question of children's actual power to confront adult power needed to be empirically addressed. Empowerment can begin to be understood by examining the concepts of power and powerlessness (Moscovitch & Drover, 1981; cited in Lord & Hutchison, 1993). Based on my analysis of this movement, as outlined here, a central
research question became evident:

*What are children's experiences of power and powerlessness in their day-to-day relationships with adults?*

This question was a beginning point in my consideration of children's social power, and their vulnerability for sexual abuse. Secondary research questions are delineated at the end of Chapter 2 upon further analysis of the relationship between social power, sexual violence, the development of child sexual abuse prevention program concepts, and the empowerment of children.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL POWER, CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE, SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION CONCEPTS, AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF CHILDREN

A central theory within the present research study is that children's social power disadvantage in their relationships with adults makes them available for sexual victimization. Children's limited social power, in relation to that of adult abusers, it is argued, precludes children from being able to stop the occurrence of abuse regardless of skills learned.

A "power differential" perspective on the problem of child sexual abuse has been extensively cited as a reason for seriously questioning the appropriateness of training children to personally prevent their own sexual exploitation. Statements similar to the two which follow appear in a good number of articles dealing with the subject of child sexual abuse prevention programs:

Since adults have the ability to outwit or physically overpower children, and 84% or more of all advances by adults involve some form of manipulation, threat and or use of aggression (Gomes-Schwartz, 1984), assertiveness training for children seems a futile endeavour (Kaufman & Zigler, 1992, p. 276)

Given the cleverness, authority and material resources many adults command, can children ever be expected to win? (Finkelhor & Strapko, 1992, p. 14).

In my review of the literature it became apparent that the systemic or "power differential" perspective, while widely mentioned as a fundamental stumbling block in this movement, has not been well developed in itself. Critics of the movement have failed to go beyond the social truism -- that adults are more powerful than children. No one has empirically studied the degree and range of this power differential or considered how to begin to incorporate such information into programs. It is proposed that the social power
of children be investigated and detailed in order that we might more fully understand children's experiences of power and powerlessness in their relationships with adults. Such information would provide opportunity to theoretically discuss the relationship between the adult-child power differential, the problem of child sexual abuse, and the probable efficacy of prevention strategies directed toward "empowering" children to prevent their own abuse. Clarification of children's real life experiences of power and powerlessness in their relationships with adults may help to facilitate the development of more appropriate safety expectations both for children themselves as well as for their adult caregivers.

In order to ground this inquiry in the existing literature, I draw together in this Chapter relevant information on social power. Specifically, I address the following questions: what is meant by social power in the following investigation?; what is known about children's social power?; what is the theoretical connection between social power and the phenomenon of child sexual abuse?; to what extent have child sexual abuse primary prevention programs included concepts which address an adult-child social power differential?; and, how can children's social empowerment be facilitated or hindered by adults? To answer these and related questions, this Chapter is divided into four sections. The first offers an overview of the concept of social power along with a brief review of the literature which specifically addresses children's social power. The second section provides an overview of radical feminist theory on the connection between social power and sexual violence. Considered in section three are the ways in which concern over a social power differential between children and adults has been translated into child sexual abuse prevention program concepts. Finally, section four addresses the difficulties associated with trying to socially "empower" children. This analysis allows me to
move my generally defined purpose of inquiry, as described in Chapter 1, toward a more complete set of research questions.

SECTION I

2.2 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL POWER AND POWERLESSNESS

My interest has been in understanding children's own interpretation of their power in relationship to that of adults and, more precisely, in documenting children's experiences of adult control and power. As revealed in this next section, an understanding of children's social power from this perspective is sadly absent from existing scholarship. For example, theoretical literature in the area of social power rarely mentions the stratification of society on the bases of age -- and when age is mentioned it is with regard to those who are elderly and not the very young.

Literature in the areas of children's social development, children's rights, and children's effect on the lives of adults, while related to the topic of children's social power are limited in scope and not terribly informative about children's personal experiences of power and powerlessness. My frustration in trying to piece together an understanding of children's social power, from the perspective of children themselves, has illuminated the importance of making visible this invisible power dynamic.

2.2.1 Understanding Social Power in Children's Lives

An extensive body of theoretical literature has been produced on the topic of social power. For the purpose of this study I have focused on the nature of "power-over" relationships since this theoretical perspective helps to clarify the meaning of a child - adult power differential.
According to Weber (1947), "power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance..." (p. 152). Person A has power over person B to the extent that s/he can get person B to do something that person B would not otherwise do. The power relationship is the successful attempt by person A to get person B to do something they would not choose to do (Lukes, 1981). The question is, on what basis does person A have power over person B and how is this power maintained?

A distinction is often made between two principal kinds of power in society, consensus and conflict (see Orford, 1992). The consensus or "power in order to" perspective stresses the good that the relatively powerful can do to improve people's lives. Emphasis is on "legitimate authority" as a source of power. Legitimate authority suggests that social norms dictate that person A has the right to issue directives and that B has a related obligation to conform. In contrast, the conflict or "power-over" perspective emphasises the uneven distribution of power in society, stressing the threat of and use of force, or "coercive authority" as sources of power. Power generally has both aspects, with legitimate authority and coercive authority often being intertwined (Orford, 1992).

Adults who maintain the consensus perspective, will point to how children need to be told to brush their teeth, clean their rooms, go to school, and so on. These activities are, in all probability, beneficial to children's health and development and adults help to improve and positively influence the lives of children by ensuring these tasks are carried out. The norms of our society are such that adults are given the right to issue directives and children are obliged to conform. In this sense adult authority is deemed legitimate and necessary where children are concerned. This power differential is therefore functional and good -- adults use their power to socialise and protect children who are less
powerful members of society.

The focus in a child's life is on conformity and on trying to become more like adults because adults are perceived as legitimate authorities and experts. Based on this understanding of the world, children typically conform to the wishes and desires of adults in their lives. Because they are less competent than adults, children defer to adults and accept what they say as being right and true. Adults are the providers for and protectors of children.

Children are introduced to the culture through the guidance of its more experienced members -- they depend upon the guided participation of adults (Rogoff, 1989, p.12).

In part, it is children's need to defer to the "competent authority" of an adult which renders them powerless in situations that might actually harm them (Jackson, 1982), such as in circumstances of abuse.

Children may still, however, disagree with what is perceived by adults as beneficial and might prefer to not attend school at all, for example. John Holt (1974), a children's rights activist, argues that children should have the right to control and direct their learning; to decide what they want to learn, when, how, how much, how fast, and with what help. Without a doubt, adults would defend their right to compel children to go to school whether they want to or not. Such power over children is deemed acceptable and necessary since it is in keeping with what adults perceive as being in the best interest or for the good of children. Because there is a general belief in Western society that the power of adults actually benefits children, there is justification for adults to use punishment and/or force when confronted with a child's resistance.

Conflict, or an overt resistance to power-over, is sometimes seen as crucial in providing an experimental test of power, otherwise, the exercise of power may not be
obvious (Lukes, 1981). The clearest examples of power-over, in other words, are evident when conflict between children and adults is present. For instance, it is easy to identify a parent's power over a child when they, in response to a child's refusal to go to school, send the child to his/her room without breakfast, after which the child is chauffeured to school. The child's wishes, in this case to not attend school, result in conflict between parent and child. The parent responds by using their "coercive authority" to threaten punishment or to force the child to do what they want him/her to do -- go to school!

While person A may exercise power over person B by forcing person B to do what they do not want to do, person A may also exercise power over person B by influencing, shaping, or determining person B's very wants (Lukes, 1981). Thus, the power-over relationship may also take on a more ordinary or overt dynamic, such as through the control of information and the process of socialization, to the extent that actual conflict is not necessary to power (Lukes, 1981). This description of a power-over relationship is particularly pertinent in understanding the socialization of children. Children may not want to go to school, but they are taught to accept this responsibility as a social necessity -- even though a good education may be more of a parent's concern, the child is taught to take on the desire as his/her own need. There is often a vague distinction between personal choice and socially induced compliance.

There is further paradox inherent in the nature of legitimate authority ... since compliance is felt at one and the same time to be both voluntary and mandatory (Orford, 1992, p. 88).

Somewhere in between the consensus and conflict perspectives of power fall two additional bases of power, manipulation and persuasion. These forms of adult power are closely connected to the adult's possession of legitimate and competent authority. Because the child is less competent and socially conditioned to defer to adult authority, they are
vulnerable to adult manipulation and persuasion — often being unaware of or unaccustomed to questioning adult intentions. The adult possesses "personal authority", meaning that the child has a strong desire to please the adult in order to maintain relations of love and friendship. Adults may also "induce authority", by offering children rewards for their compliance.

Interpretation of adult-child relations of power will differ substantially depending on whether we choose to consider a consensus or conflict perspective of power. Furthermore, the perspective of power to which we adhere will likely be influenced by our social power/privilege status.

It is generally in the interests of the relatively powerful to emphasize legitimation and the benign uses of power, whilst the relatively powerless are much more likely to call attention to power differentials, the coercive nature of power and its abuses (Ng, 1980, p. 128).

Adult domination over children is further discussed at the end of this Chapter.

2.2.2 Children's Social Power in Their Relationships With Adults: A Brief Consideration of the Related Literature

At first glance it may seem a little strange to ask power questions about childhood, either by others in respect to children or, especially interesting, by children themselves (Gideonse, 1982, p. 277).

In writing about the politics of childhood, Hendrik Gideonse (1982) notes that very little research or theorizing has been done from a political science perspective on power relations in the family. Over a decade later, I would maintain that very little work has been directed toward documenting children's social power in the world, in general.

Psychologists along with sociologists have not so much failed to attend to this area of inquiry, as to attend to the question of social power experiences from the perspective of children themselves. While relevant aspects of children's social power have been
addressed by researchers in these fields, the focus of analysis has largely been limited to adult perspectives of children's competencies and social understanding. The questions adult researchers choose to ask about children's social lives are related to the assumptions they make about children in general. I provide here examples of some of the research areas related to the exploration of children's social power, and explain the limitations of this work according to my own particular assumptions about children and the study of their lives.

Scholarship bearing on children's social knowledge provides some, although fragmentary, information about children's experiences of social power (see Damon, 1977, Laupa & Turiel, 1986; Leahy, 1983). Perhaps most relevant to the focus of the present study, is Damon's (1977) developmental research directed toward understanding the organizing principles of children's authority knowledge. Authority is a social relation that is fostered by differential social power between persons, and calls for obedience to the person with the greater social power (Damon, 1977, p. 172). Two crucial issues are addressed in his work on authority knowledge, the change in children's recognition and respect for certain kinds of social power traits with increasing age, and children's rationale for obedience or disobedience. The focus of developmental work such as this is primarily on identifying the qualitative differences that exist between different stages of children's development, as well as those differences that exist between children and adults. Children's social knowledge is directly attributable to their increasing cognitive capacities. The underlying assumption in developmental research such as this is that children are incomplete versions of adults, and that adults are superior to children (see Mackay, 1991). As a result children are not viewed as fully social beings with a culture or social perspective of their own, worth investigating in and of itself (Waksler, 1991). Social
development research is geared toward documenting change in children’s social understanding and not toward providing rich descriptive insight into child culture. Furthermore, by focusing on the interpersonal dyad, meaning the relationship between child and other, wider social structural relations of power between social groups, such as children and adults, are left out of the picture. Obscured from our vision is how those wider structural relations enter into and are reproduced within micro-social relations (Burman, 1994, p. 44).

Damon (1977) has contributed to our understanding of those circumstances under which children obey and disobey authority figures. While such understanding is relevant to the topic of children’s experiences of power and powerlessness, research of this nature does not familiarise us with children’s feelings about adult authority: their frustrations, their moments of powerlessness, their concessions to adult power, their daily experiences of oppression, or even their overall awareness of relations of power in the world. Damon’s developmental account of children’s understanding of authority and obedience fails to capture children’s view of adult power in their own terms. Waksler (1991, p. 13) aptly points out that, "Exactly how children perceive the power of adults is unknown but there is no reason for assuming that they are unaware of it."

The absence of such an understanding is, in part, a result of adult notions of children as incompetent, incomplete beings. Psychological and sociological researchers and theorists typically take for granted the assumption that children lack social knowledge. Therefore children are studied from the perspective of not knowing something rather than knowing. Such assumptions blind us to important aspects of children’s social lives (Mackay, 1991; Waksler, 1991).
In her edited book on the social worlds of children, Waksler (1991) brings forth the important idea that adult views of children and children's views of themselves substantially differ. Waksler beautifully illustrates this point by providing both adult perspectives on children, as well as research studies which have captured children's perspectives of their social worlds. As explained in the book's preface:

Read in conjunction... [studies depicting adult perspectives and child perspectives] show that adults' views of children and the actual social worlds that children inhabit are quite different. Neither is right or wrong. Both exist (Waksler, 1991, p. ix).

I found children's rights literature to be more successful at promoting critical thought about children's social worlds, as this body of information provides a historical context for analyzing how we define childhood and interpret children's competencies. Directly critiqued in this literature is the concept of children as fledgling but imperfect reasoners; blank sheets to be filled by experience (Archard, 1993). The idea of childhood as the "not-yet-ness" of adulthood is questioned. As explained by Archard (1993), we cannot claim to know with absolute certainty what the differences between children and adults actually are and, more important, what limits these differences set to childhood. The boundaries which separate childhood from adulthood continue to be debated between children's rights theorists. How we, as a society, choose to differentiate children from adults is typically a reflection of prevailing social priorities rather than certainties about child development milestones and child - adult differences. According to the aspect under which children are being regarded, adults demand that children be different things (Archard, 1993) -- that they possess different competencies. Adults conveniently regard children as being competent and at the same time incompetent -- both knowing and ignorant. Mackay (1991) in his study of children's interpretive competence, illustrates this very paradox. He explains how adults assume children's competence to understand
underlying rules while at the same time considering them incompetent to respond:

On the one hand, the teacher relies on the child's interpretive competencies to understand the lesson but, on the other, treats him throughout as incompetent [i.e., she creates or gives the "correct" answers] (Mackay, 1991, p. 35).

If we see children as competent actors in the social world, we can begin to question how their actions have implications for others, like adults (Waksler, 1991). Ambert (1992), has written provocatively about the influence of children, what she terms "child effect", on the lives of parents. As Ambert accurately points out, clinicians are still firmly entrenched within the unidirectional causality path of parents "causing" children's problems. Analysis of the reciprocal affect between child and parent provides us with some insight into children's power to affect others in their lives. In short, her research demonstrates that within families children effect: parental health, activities and scheduling, employment, financial aspects, marital relations, human interaction (such as speech patterns), attitudes and beliefs, life plans, and feelings of control over one's life (Ambert, 1992). Another prominent area of child effect involves children's ability to give nurturance to parents -- children may raise parents' feelings of happiness after divorce for example. Based on Ambert's analysis one might conclude that children have the power to influence adult life in profound and enduring ways -- children may even demonstrate oppositional behaviour to the point of becoming more powerful than their adult caregivers. One disgruntled parent was reported by Ambert as commenting, "It seems the whole world belongs to children" (Ambert, 1992, p. 161). This adult sentiment with regard to children's power over adult lives is not unfamiliar. Many adults have difficulty accepting the belief that children are powerless in the world because their personal encounters with children often involve a feeling of loss of control. While adult experiences and interpretations of "child effect" are legitimate, these experiences do not necessarily
represent children's intentions or moments of felt power.

Ambert bases much of her analysis of "child effect" on the retrospective accounts of young adults attending University. This approach is limited since the assessment of "child effect" may differ for those who now possess adult privilege, status, and knowledge. It is important to appreciate that the present study is based exclusively on what children perceive as power and powerlessness in their daily relationships with adults. While adults may argue that children are misrepresenting reality by overstating the power differential or the seriousness of everyday events, this discrepancy in perception is of little consequence to the validity or the importance of children's self-reports. Waksler has also grappled with this issue, writing:

Adulthood is a perspective, a way of being in the world, that embodies a particular stance towards children, a stance that allows adults to deal with children in everyday life but that limits sociological understanding. To ask adults (even in the guise of sociologists) what children are like is on a par with asking jailers what prisoners are like or asking dog trainers what dogs are like. They are like what those doing the defining need to see them as like if they are to engage in the kind of activities that involve those others (Waksler, 1991, p. 67).

Child sexual abuse prevention programs rest on children's personal power to avert exploitive adults, therefore, it is essential that we understand children's own perception of their social power in relationship to adults. That is to say, adult opinions about children's experiences of power, powerlessness, and "effect" are irrelevant to the outcome of these programs. What matters is how children immediately perceive and experience their power in their relationships with adults. Retrospective accounts are less about children's interpretation of the world and more about adult understanding of children in society. Child culture is distinctly different from adult culture.

Understanding the social worlds of children requires looking at the process of socialization from the perspective of children themselves (see Waksler, 1991). Typically,
we focus on children's process of socialization in such a way so as to ignore the rich and varied interactions they engage in on a daily basis. My own assumptions as a researcher studying the lives of children are in keeping with those promoted by Waksler and her colleagues (1991). In particular, the distinction between examining the social worlds of children from an adult perspective versus a child perspective has been most helpful in clarifying my research philosophy. The adult perspective, while valid, is duly noted as only one way of interpreting children's social lives, and not the absolute truth (Waksler, 1991). The relevance of research which represents the adult perspective is marginal in the current study which attempts to view children as complete and competent social agents. Researching the lived experiences of children, from the perspective of children, is further elaborated upon in Chapter 3.

Section II

2.3 POWER, POWERLESSNESS AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: A FEMINIST SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Instrumental in the development of a framework for socially analyzing sexual violence in the lives of children has been radical feminist thought on sexual violence in the lives of women. Outlined here are the significant contributions of feminist theory to my thesis.

2.3.1 Examining the Connection Between Social Power and Sexual Violence

Radical feminists examining sexual violence often compare and collectively discuss women and children since both groups suffer under the same oppressive social structure, that is, patriarchy, or male dominance at a societal level (Wolfe & Guberman, 1985).
As groups [women and children], their positions in the social order are not dissimilar. Both are in subservient and vulnerable positions in the hierarchical family unit, and both are relatively powerless. In fact, children may be the only social grouping less powerful than women. As with women, violence is used to control and dominate children (Wolfe & Guberman, 1985, p.12).

According to this perspective, the role of patriarchy in society is paramount to the development of abusive behaviour by men toward women and children. The exploitation of women and children allows men to maintain a hierarchy that ensures their dominance (Sheffield, 1987), and the sexual availability of women and children. Abuse serves the function of intimidating, and controlling women and children, while establishing the power and dominance of men (Adams, Trachtenberg & Fisher, 1992). As such, patriarchy is causally related to the oppression and victimization of women and children (Solomon, 1992). Our society will continue to be an unsafe place for women and children so long as there is a hierarchical order which places men on top, women below them, and children on the bottom (Wolfe & Guberman, 1985).

Feminists maintain that incidents of sexual violence need to be understood and interpreted according to the social context within which the abuse occurs, while also recognizing the characteristics and motivations of the abusers (Adams, Trachtenberg & Fisher, 1992). When social context is ignored, acts of violence against women and children become mistakenly named as isolated incidents, resulting from the intrapsychic conflicts of a few sick individuals. The abuse of women and children is an insidious and extensive component of our social structure; an indication of unequal and oppressive power relations between male abusers and their victims. Men's assaults demonstrate power -- the power to overtake and use women and children for sexual pleasure and domination. Violence against women and children is, therefore, not just a personal or individual issue, nor is it purely about sexual desire, additionally it is a social and
political tool used for the maintenance of power (Wolfe & Guberman, 1985, Kelly, 1988; Sheffield, 1987; Solomon, 1992). Men's sexual violations are connected to the social, sexual, economic, and political inequality of women and children (Scully, 1988).

While women's and children's experiences of sexual violence can be compared, they do not equate fully and an analysis of one group's experiences does not necessarily work identically for the other (Wolfe & Guberman, 1985). Still, there are obvious parallels between the life experiences of women and children worth noting. Children, like women, for example, are easy prey for those with greater physical power. Children, like women, can not be sure when the behaviour of those in positions of power will escalate to abuse and violence (see Stanko, 1985), and they are virtually powerless to stop the abuse once it begins. As a social group, however, children experience complete dependence, and therefore have a slimmer chance than women of defending themselves against, or terminating, an abusive relationship. Because of their powerlessness both within the larger social order, and within the traditional family unit, children are amongst our most vulnerable victims (Wolfe et al., 1985).

Perpetrated primarily by adult males against female children (see Finkelhor, 1979; Russell, 1986; Badgley et al., 1984; Trocme et al., 1994), child sexual abuse, is a gender based crime. Due to our existing adultcentric social order, however, all adults have opportunity to manipulate, coerce and use children to their advantage. Based on the social power differential theory of child sexual abuse, one could surmise that all children are vulnerable to all adults.
Acknowledging that gender neutrality¹ is a considerable problem in existing violence literature (see Mitchell, 1991), I have nevertheless chosen to refer to the vulnerability of all children in this document rather than exclusively to girls. I have made this choice in order to emphasize the fact that all children, regardless of intervening factors (such as gender, age, or race), are accessible to adults for sexual abuse due to their less powerful social position. It merits mentioning again that children's actual exposure to sexual abuse varies according to these factors, with girls, in general, being most frequently targeted by male abusers. A female child, being both a female and a child, occupies a position at the bottom of the authority structure, while a boy has symbolic power represented by his future position as a grown man (Solomon, 1992). In this sense, girls are at the bottom of the age-gender hierarchy.

While recognizing that the overwhelming majority of perpetrators are men, I refer throughout this document to adult perpetrators since the social power disparity between adults and children is central to my analysis of child sexual abuse. In our society, children are at the mercy of all adults -- both men and women. Current sexual abuse research strongly supports men's greater role as perpetrators. Women perpetrators, although an extremely rare occurrence (5% to 20% according to a 1984 coauthored study by Finkelhor and Russell), are not completely absent from the picture, nor are boys free from sexual exploitation. Attacked by the adult abuser is the "child-status" or the powerlessness of these tiny victims (Mitchell, 1985). Children, as a social group, share

¹The term "gender neutrality" refers to the explicit omission of a group's gender, under circumstances when the phenomenon being discussed is gender specific. Gender neutral language in sexual violence literature, or the invisibility of sex, has been discussed by feminists as problematic because it serves to mask the fact that women are the victims and men the perpetrators. Through gender neutral language, the social context of sexual violence is concealed.
more in common than not -- they share their vulnerability.

2.3.2 Connecting Daily Experiences of Social Powerlessness To Acts of Violence: A Continuum of Powerlessness in the Lives of Children

The concept of a continuum of sexual violence has been a particularly useful framework for understanding children's social context, and the relationship between children's daily experiences of violation, and those more extreme forms of violation, such as sexual abuse. Kelly (1987) coined the term "continuum of sexual violence" while exploring the links between different forms of sexual violence, and investigating the idea that most women have experienced sexual violence in their lives. Dialogue about sexual violence in the lives of women is informed by the continuum of violence concept in two fundamental ways. First, the continuum is defined as a basic common character that underlies many different events. In this regard, the basic common character underlying sexual violence is that men use a variety of forms of abuse, coercion, and force in order to control women. Second, the continuum concept is also defined as a continuous series of events that pass into one another and which are not readily distinguishable from one another. This meaning enables documenting and naming the range of violations and abuses that women experience and helps us to illustrate the connection between more common everyday male behaviour, and those more extreme forms of sexual violence perpetrated by men. Through the use of a continuum concept we can begin to make links between "typical" and "aberrant" sexual behaviour (Kelly, 1987).

The continuum concept was not meant to be understood as a linear straight line connecting different events or experiences, nor was it intended to be used as a means for interpreting the seriousness or impact of different forms of abuse in women's lives. Rather it is a helpful model for drawing our attention to the relationship between
women's everyday life experiences and those extreme circumstances which society identifies as violence against women. Feminist researchers discussing rape, for example, have used the continuum notion to link rape to "normal" heterosexual sex (see Russell, 1975). Linking women's "ordinary" experiences with those more extreme incidents of abuse, provides opportunity for analyzing women's social status and the phenomenon of male violence against women. Stanko explains:

By separating women's experiences of sexual and or physical assault from women's experiences of sexual and or physical intimidation, as many are likely to do, we see each assault as an aberration or a random occurrence -- a "personal" problem. Alternatively if we link them together, we can create new information of the overall treatment of women by men. What emerges is not random or isolated. What emerges is a flood of common experiences (Stanko, 1985, p. 18).

A parallel feminist theory on sexual violence in the lives of children can be developed using this same concept. It is my view that the continuum which gives rise to child sexual abuse is children's social powerlessness. The basic common character underlying sexual violence in the lives of children is that adults use a variety of forms of control, coercion, and force in order to control children on a daily basis, thereby rendering children powerless to impose their own will over that of adults. It is my contention that social powerlessness in the lives of children prevents children from negotiating their safety with adults who abuse them, regardless of individual skills learned. Although there is a difference between children's daily experiences of powerlessness in their relationships with adults and the experience of child sexual abuse -- the difference is in degree only, not in kind (see Kelly, 1987). Herman (1981) aptly defines incest as "the farthest point on a continuum -- an exaggeration of patriarchal family norms not a departure from them" (cited in Kelly, 1987, p. 50).
When we link together the everyday social experiences of children, we can create new information about the treatment of children by adults. Through a social analysis of children's everyday lives we have opportunity to assess whether children's experiences of powerlessness in their relationships with adults are random and isolated incidents or common-place occurrences. The continuum concept, as applied to the lives of children has helped me to explore and document the critical connection between children's daily relations of social powerlessness and their availability for sexual abuse.

2.3.3 The Silencing of Victims and the Under Reporting of Sexual Violence: A Consequence of Social Powerlessness

When those who violate also name for their victims what constitutes harmful and harmless acts, the result is often feelings of confusion and self blame, along with the under-reporting of violence. Women's experiences of male violence are filtered through an understanding of men's behaviour characterized as typical, that is, flattering, non threatening, or unharmful, and aberrant or threatening and harmful.

The sexual advance by a male professor toward a young female student, the "rough sex", the slapping of one's wife, the wolf whistle on the street, the comments about women's physicality, the man brushing up against a female secretary's body in the xerox room (and on and on) are, most people accept, natural expressions of maleness. These expressions are assumed to be non-threatening to women, even, some would say, flattering. The vicious rape, the brutal murder of a woman, the cruel physical torture of a girlfriend are, we feel, the aberrant examples of maleness. In the abstract we easily draw lines between those aberrant (thus harmful) and those typical (thus unharmful) types of male behaviour (Stanko, 1985, p. 10).

By separating "aberrant" from "typical" male behaviour, women's own understanding of what is threatening or violent becomes lost. Cast in a mould constructed within male-dominated society, women's experiences of sexual and physical violation take on an illusion of normality or ordinariness (Stanko, 1985). Women have typically not defined for themselves what is threatening or potentially violent -- for example, male jurisprudence
considers flashing to be harmless, but for women this form of violation is reportedly experienced as extremely traumatic since it is a reminder of the potential violence lurking around every corner (Stanko, 1985). Our legal system was created by adult men for adult men and does not typically take into account the perceptions and experiences of women or children who are the victims of sexual assault (Wolfe & Guberman, 1985).

Surrounded by androcentric interpretations of reality, women tend to question their own feelings and perceptions of the world, internalising and silencing many of their experiences of sexual and/or physical intimidation and violence. This is why women's experiences do not show up in surveys about incidents of violence. A victimization study conducted by the Federal Ministry of the Solicitor General (1981), for example, suggested a non-reporting rate for sexual assaults of 50%, 60% and 85% for the cities of Montreal, Toronto, and Edmonton, respectively (Huntley, Hutchinson, & McDaniel, 1986). In a more recent Canadian survey on violence against women it was reported that 93% of women over the age of 18 who indicated an experienced incident(s) of sexual assault (N = 13,462), had not reported the offense to police (Statistics Canada, 1993).

Men are the gatekeepers who ultimately test the reality of women's experiences of sexual assault; the fact that the gatekeeper's interpretation often does not match that of the victim is manifested in women's reluctance to report incidents of sexual assault to authorities (Huntley, Hutchinson & McDaniel, 1986). The standard against which women have to measure aberrant behaviour toward them is a standard that does not come from women's experiences, but rather from men's perspective (Stanko, 1985).

Similarly, the standard against which children have to measure aberrant adult behaviour toward them comes from adults themselves. Children's disclosures of abuse are weighed according to adult standards, and the sexual intentions of accused adult abusers
are judged by other adults. As a result, childhood and adolescent victims of sexual abuse may not be heard when they do reach out for help, and may even be held responsible for the abuse (Ward, 1984; cited in Huntley et al., 1986). Male jurisprudence has, all too often, guaranteed that existing social structures remain undisturbed through the silencing of women and children who are their victims.

The extent to which information about children's social power is included in the development of sexual abuse prevention program concepts is considered in Section III.

SECTION III

2.4 INCLUSION OF A SOCIAL POWER ANALYSIS IN THE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE LITERATURE AND PRIMARY PREVENTION PROGRAMS

As explained, a fundamental criticism of child sexual abuse prevention programs is that children are powerless to confront and halt the actions of more powerful adults. How has concern over a child-adult power differential translated into child sexual abuse theory, and prevention program content? Contradictions in our thinking about the capabilities and incompetencies of children become clear in consideration of this question, as do some of the dangers associated with the incongruent expectations of adults in relation to children's personal power.

2.4.1 Theoretical Acknowledgement of an Adult-Child Power Differential: The Improbability of Children's Informed Consent in Circumstances of Sexual Abuse

A power differential between children and adult sexual abusers has become clear in the child sexual abuse literature in two fundamental ways. First, we have started to take into account the extent to which the child depends on the adult for survival, and falls under the authority of the adult (Herman, 1981, cited in Adams et al., 1992). In addition
to needing the care and nurturance of adults, children are generally not able or permitted to act against the wishes of adults without the threat of punishment or force. If the child even sees any reason not to agree they have neither the emotional nor physical strength to refuse the adult's demands. Consequently, children are easily exploited by more powerful adults. Based on this argument theorists and researchers caution that children are not to be held responsible for (Finkelhor, 1979), nor should they be expected to stop (Krane, 1989) their own sexual abuse because of the unequal distribution of power between themselves and their adult abusers.

...If the assailant is a member of her own family, she will have even less ability to fend him off. A child faced with a caretaker who wants her to perform sexual actions is faced with someone who is literally in control of her life. She is dependent on him for emotional and physical nurturing (Wolfe & Guberman, 1985, p.97).

A power differential is further apparent when we consider the fact that children are not sufficiently prepared to make decisions about sexual relationship because they are inadequately equipped with adult-defined sexual knowledge. A child is capable of understanding neither the sexual experience nor the consequence of the act, therefore, they are not responsible for their participation in such activities (Finkelhor, 1979). "No one can give consent to what they do not understand or what has been falsely represented to them" (Archard, 1993, p. 80).

Children are inherently vulnerable and unable to provide informed consent for their participation in sexual activities due to: 1) their respect for and dependence upon adult authority, and; 2) their limited sexual knowledge and comprehension about the consequence of their consent to sexual activities. Child victims are recognized as the vulnerable sexual objects that they are; tiny victims who are manipulated, seduced, coerced, and forced into meeting the sexual and emotional needs of their adult abusers.
As a social group children are recognized as innocent and vulnerable to adult abusers. Meanwhile, as individuals in situations of potential abuse, their ability to intervene on their own behalf is being strongly reinforced by prevention program messages. Reconsideration of the core prevention program principles and related expectations, offers some insight into the contradictory nature of adult understanding of children's social power.

2.4.2 The Paradoxical Nature of Children's Social Power: Prevention Programs Promote the Notion That Children Are Both Powerful and Powerless in Relation to Adults

By considering the core messages related to children through child sexual abuse primary prevention programs we can begin to identify our inconsistent assessment of children's social power, or their vulnerabilities and capabilities. Three core principles of prevention programs, (as delineated in Chapter 1, p.2), appear in Figure 1, along with the related expectations being placed on children who receive program lessons.

Figure 1. Three core principles and related expectation of child sexual abuse prevention programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Program Principles</th>
<th>Expectations Related to Program Principles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. program lessons teach children to identify inappropriate touching (the right to body ownership is reinforced)</td>
<td>children can accurately identify the motives/intentions of adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. program lessons teach children they should take action/resist if touched in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable (the right to refuse an adult is reinforced)</td>
<td>children can refuse adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. program lessons teach children to disclose abuse to a trusted adult (the right to be protected by adults is reinforced)</td>
<td>children can rely on the protection of adults</td>
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</table>
The first principle suggests that children will be able to accurately interpret adult intentions and actions that threaten the integrity of their bodies. In general, children are trained in programs to say "no" and avert adults whose behaviours fall within a specific harmful or sexual domain. A prerequisite to children being able to say no, or run and tell for that matter, is their ability to identify harmful or inappropriate adult behaviour. Sexual vocabulary and knowledge for identifying inappropriate adult touching is a key topic of discussion with program participants. However, in daily encounters with adults children may not fully comprehend adults' interpretations of reality therefore communication between adults and children is often unilateral (Furth, 1980). Furthermore, child sexual abuse prevention programs do not address the issue of sexual abuse within the context of children's own sexuality (Dube et al., 1988). Important issues like the fact that some touching may feel good to children, are not addressed at all since the subject of sexuality is more easily avoided (Dube et al., 1989). Although sex education may be the only context for understanding child sexual abuse, adults feel a strong need to protect children from this information. Therefore, our fortification of children's knowledge, and their ability to interpret appropriate and inappropriate adult behaviour, is limited to adult perceptions of what children need to know. Can children's social power really be increased under paternalistic conditions such as these?

The second expectation is that children can and will refuse powerful adults. As outlined in Section I of this Chapter, children are subservient to the authority of adults. Adults have a right to use force due to the belief that their actions are in children's best interest, and as well, can easily manipulate and coerce less knowledgeable children. The difficulty involved for children in overcoming the wishes of powerful adults is not well addressed in program content and remains the most criticised aspect of programs. Some
have pointed to a need to address each and every possible situation of abuse with children in behavioural training programs in order to shield them against the many strategies that are at the disposal of more knowledgable adults (Miller-Perrin, 1990). Will knowing more about the variety of ways adult perpetrators may use to try to entice them really increase children's power to say "no"?

Berliner and Conte (1990) in their work with children who personally experienced the process of victimization reported that few children felt that if they had said "no" the abuse would have stopped. These key experts believed that the abuse would have continued or that they would have been further harmed. Finkelhor and his colleagues confirmed that well trained children who experienced sexual victimization were more likely to have fought back, but were no more successful at stopping the abuse than untrained children and were at heightened risk for personal injury (Finkelhor et al., 1994). For these children, saying no and fighting back was not a successful means for stopping the abuse or protecting themselves from further harm. Is the message that children can refuse the actions of powerful adults placing children in even greater peril?

A most troubling backlash related to the notion that children can refuse an adult making sexual advances appears in literature which gives voice to the viewpoint of the paedophile (see Li, West & Woodhouse, 1993). A key premise of prevention programs is that children can and should say no to what they do not like. In this instance, we have deemed that children have the right and competence to refuse a powerful adult. However, based on this assumption, some argue that children's ability to say no to what they do not like presupposes an ability to say yes to what they do like (Archard, 1993). This argument has been taken up most readily by those who promote the notion that child-adult sexual relations are acceptable and not harmful. If children can say no to sexual
contact with an adult, they also have the related right and power to say yes to such contact (Li et al., 1993). Confusion about children's capabilities and power serves to fuel the position of self-serving adults who put forth their arguments under the guise of children's rights issues.

The inclusion of the concepts that children are not personally responsible for the behaviours of abusive adults, and that children should depend on the protection of trusted adults suggests an acknowledgement that children may not be able to prevent the abuse. The related expectation of this core principle is that children can depend on adults for protection. Almost all of the children who participated in Berliner and Conte's (1990) study believed that telling their mother or someone else right away would have stopped the abuse. According to the study conducted by Finkelhor and his colleagues (1994), victimized children who had been exposed to more comprehensive programs were more likely to disclose the episode to someone, indicating that the message to rely on the protection of adult caregivers is getting through to program trained children. Still, there is concern that program trained children may be inclined to blame themselves for any abuse they might encounter. After all, they are being instructed on how to identify and avoid such abuse. Is the additional message that children are not to blame for their abuse a responsible way to alleviate the guilt of children who are unfortunate enough to become victims of sexual abuse? Research has demonstrated that children sometimes blame same-age story protagonists who comply with the sexual advances and touches of adults. Miller-Perrin and Wurtele (1989) found one-quarter of their sample of 51 (4-to-12-year-old) children agreed that what had happened to a sexually abused story character had been the child's own fault. The youngest children were particularly prone to attribute blame to the child victim. As well, these authors reported that almost one-third of the
children felt something was wrong with the child and they would not want to be their friend. Such findings caution us that children, because they are receiving mixed messages about their personal responsibility in abusive situations, are at risk to perceive child victims negatively. Will the message that adults are responsible for the abuse counter-act victimized children's tendency to silence their stories of abuse and take on the burden of blame?

Silencing occurs when we fear not being believed because we see that our interpretation differs from the dominant group, and because we are not traditionally believed by those in positions of authority.

From the child's perspective, what happens when she is sexually assaulted by someone she knows is that someone who has power over her, whether that power is life and death control or the authority of a known adult male, makes her do something she does not want or something she may not know she will later want to stop. The force of will is an innately violent experience. It involves her body and another's. It involves sexual acts, and she is unable to prevent it. If she tells anyone about the assault, she may not be believed and may be punished (Mitchell, 1985, p. 98)

The message that children should tell, and keep telling until they are believed is commonly related to children in an attempt to overcome children's tendency to silence their voices. Sexually abused children are conditioned by their adult abusers, however, to believe that they wanted the sexual activity to take place. Under the illusion that they were able to say "no" to the abuser, sexually abused children blame themselves for the abuse. The potency of the abuser's power over the abused child becomes even more apparent when we consider the fact that self-blame amongst adult survivors of sexual abuse is pervasive even though, as adults, they have the benefit of recognizing the powerlessness of children in an adult world. Children may be confused by program messages which reinforce the notion that children have the power to say no, while at the same time, suggesting that the burden of guilt can not be placed on a child who is lacking
the power to refuse bigger, and more knowledgable adults.

A dual perspective of children as both capable and vulnerable is evident in this movement. Program trained children are both empowered to know and act on their own behalf, as well as in need of adult protection. Mixed messages about children's personal power and responsibility in abusive situations, may leave children uncertain about their own abilities and adults unclear about their related responsibilities to protect them.

SECTION IV

2.5 THE DIFFICULT TASK OF PROMOTING SOCIAL CHANGE IN ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS: BARRIERS TO CHILDREN'S EMPOWERMENT

The assumption that children are empowered by the provision of necessary information and words to prevent their own sexual abuse, is more closely considered in this final section. As explained in Chapter 1, what is meant by the empowerment of children has not been thoroughly examined within this movement. Implications of such limitations are discussed here.

2.5.1 Is the Empowerment of Children Feasible in a Paternalistic Setting Like the School?

Empowerment is the growth or development of something positive (i.e., resources, capacity, equity) whereas prevention connotes the blockage or stopping of something negative (i.e., dysfunction, illness). A complementary relationship between empowerment and prevention is possible, but the two may also be completely incompatible (Rappaport, 1987; Swift, 1984). The basic goals of the prevention model which are to encourage optimal development and the enhancement of coping skills are the same conditions that empower people (Felner, Jason, Moritsugu, & Farber, 1983). Preventive approaches which are paternalistic, on the other hand, may actually inhibit empowerment insofar as
the interventionist is portrayed as expert (Felner et al., 1983). Furthermore, a paternalistic model may essentially promote "victim blaming" and, therefore be far removed from empowering the targeted population. Skills and competencies must be provided to the individual in ways that do not perpetuate unequal power relations.

The idea is to help citizens become empowered by providing resources and support to enable them to activate self-corrective capacities. This is not incompatible with a preventive model which is focused on the enhancement of competencies (Felner et al., 1983). Skills and competencies can be provided to the individual in ways that do not imply unequal power between those impacted by the programs and those designing them. Education, however, is essentially a paternalistic project (Ellsworth, 1989) and school programs may further encourage relations of powerlessness for children. Powerlessness is the expectancy of the individual that his/her own behaviour cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes s/he seeks (Kieffer, 1984). This sense of powerlessness is reinforced by schools since these institutions generally function to suppress and control individual initiative and personal experience. If in-school child sexual abuse prevention programs are taught like other subjects children will not likely receive the opportunity to actually discuss their own experiences and ideas -- instead they will be told what their experiences and needs are by adults.

Children are embedded in a political and social environment and in studying possibilities for their empowerment we need to pay particular attention to their social status in the family, at school and in the world in general. Understanding the conditions under which empowerment takes place means studying the settings within which people live (Kieffer, 1984).
While it is true that childhood is a natural stage of physical and cognitive development it is also a social institution (Jackson, 1982). Children are not completely encouraged to gain independence or expertise -- in many instances, they are kept dependent much longer than necessary. According to Jackson, there is a prolongation of childhood, she writes:

Our children are asexual, apolitical, vulnerable, dependent, incapable of taking part in serious adult pursuits not because that is the way children naturally are but because that is the way they are treated (Jackson, 1982, p.28).

The issue of exposing children to the topic of human sexuality is important to consider given its relevance to children's vulnerability for sexual abuse. In this society, children are thought to be incapable of coping with sex, as if it required a special kind of maturity (Jackson, 1982). The question becomes whether adult censorship of sexual content in child sexual abuse prevention programs is truly a necessity or whether it is simply part of the paternalistic state within which children reside. Sexuality is a part of normal life that adults choose to conceal from children and so while we encourage children to know about the potential impact of negative sexual experiences, we hide from them the positive aspects of human sexuality. These programs offer children just enough information to be able to identify abuse -- but the information is generally not framed within the context of normal childhood sexuality.

In a paternalistic setting like the school, children are informed on a "need to know" basis as defined by adults. As a result, these programs are developed according to adult perceptions of children's sexuality.

... The injunction in many programs to children to trust their intuition is based on an assumption that children's social perception is similar to that of adults and that children find sexual arousal to be unambivalently displeasurable (Melton, 1992, p.182).
School prevention initiatives may not attain the desired goal of empowering children because teachers are placed in the position of "expert". Preventionists portrayed as experts who provide remedial skills or competencies need to put into play an empowerment model whereby children define their own experiences and solve their own problems and teachers merely provide the resources for them to do so (Rappaport, 1981). Programs need to incorporate a collaborative approach whereby teachers mediate over the groups and children generate their own themes for discussion (Middleton, 1989). The challenge will be to make this connection between prevention and empowerment for children being trained in a paternalistic setting such as the school.

Rappaport (1981) first introduced the concept of empowerment by emphasizing the rights and abilities of individuals rather than their deficits and needs (Kieffer, 1984). In this decade, the traditional paternalistic model of human services has begun to be replaced by the empowerment model and this shift in paradigms has meant that individuals themselves, rather than community experts, are consulted about their needs (Swift, 1984). Yet, child sexual abuse prevention programs, dealing with the vulnerabilities and abilities of children to stop sexual abusers, have generally been developed and evaluated according to the perceptions of adults (Kraizer, Fryer, & Miller, 1988). Children have been virtually left out of the process of program development, with an adultcentric view of their power being relied upon. Rarely is mention made of the importance of including the input of children in the development of these curricula. Children must be permitted to name their own experiences in the areas of adult oppression and sexuality. The empowerment of children could perhaps begin in the classroom -- adults both at home and school could facilitate the process. All adults interacting with children must begin to acknowledge the importance of children's
rights if we are to expect children to protect themselves from personal harm.

2.5.2 Is the Empowerment of Children Possible Without Social Structural Change?

One of the preconditions of child sexual abuse requires that the child's own resistance to the abuse be overcome by the abuser and it is this precondition that the in-school prevention movement is most strongly directed toward (Melton, 1992). Children are trained to be more assertive and resistant in the face of adult actions that are inappropriate or questionable.

It is important to recognize that this prevention initiative is primarily directed at individual factors rather than at the social or cultural level of explanation (Melton, 1992). In this movement, children's vulnerability for sexual abuse is linked to their limited competence; through skill training and education they are expected to become empowered. Person centred deficits, like assertiveness, are the focus of attention with structural issues affecting children's powerlessness being ignored. The root sources of children's victimization, such as adult power over them, have been left out of the picture, and theory on the process of empowerment is virtually absent from program development discussions.

As explained in Chapter 1, there is a difference between the individual's sense of personal control or feeling of being empowered and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights. The latter requires a modification to structural conditions in order to reallocate power. To be empowered, however, does not necessarily mean that people's actual social power has increased, a person may simply feel more powerful, or perceive themselves as being more powerful in shaping their world (Kieffer, 1984). Garber (1987) in a study on the empowerment of students and parents in an alternative school setting, for example, showed that some of the most successful action
came when students had relevant knowledge that school staff did not -- in this way students felt valuable and empowered. Even though their actual political power had not been altered, students felt they could begin to influence their immediate environment.

Perhaps by accomplishing the "feeling" of being more powerful, children can begin to participate in the process of empowerment. Finkelhor et al., (1994) in a recent study found that children who had participated in more comprehensive child sexual abuse prevention programs perceived themselves as having been more effective in keeping themselves safe and minimizing their harm. However, they were also at greater risk for experiencing personal injury as a result of having fought back. One might conclude from these findings that, while children may feel empowered as a result of lessons learned in programs, their actual power to refuse more powerful adults remains minimal.

Power politics are rarely added to the discussion about child abuse because "power" is a public word and "child abuse" is understood to be a private problem (Nelson, 1984). Government and community professionals are less likely to confront long-established power arrangements, preferring instead to focus on individual psychopathology. Physically and sexually abused women have similarly suffered from a focus which is exclusively on individual characteristics and behaviours rather than on those structural limitations placed upon the individual in a male dominant society. Woman abuse has been interpreted as being particular to the women who are themselves victimized; women who suffer abuse at the hands of male partners or rapists, for example, have been labelled masochistic, too sexually provocative, and weak for remaining within an abusive relationship. Meanwhile, those social conditions that allow for women's abuse by men, such as limited work opportunities, financial dependency, and poverty, have been minimized and, generally, have remained unaddressed. Feminists have fought to
disseminate the message that the abuse of women by men is less about individual pathology and more about male power and a patriarchal social structure.

Society's resistance to confront social structure is even greater when addressing power relations in the lives of children who are universally identified as being incapable of caring for themselves. Adult power over children is, according to contemporary standards, a social necessity. Children are not considered capable of looking after their own interests since they are less competent than adults. In the everyday world, adults, in contrast to children, possess physical strength, greater experience, and a more extensive vocabulary and conceptual development. As a society, we have agreed that children have rights and entitlements by virtue of their entry into the human world. This does not, however, preclude adults from having special rights over children (Gideonse, 1982). These entitlements often have nothing to do with children's needs.

Adults engage daily with children in ways that would be considered personal infringements by adult standards. An amusing story recounted by John Holt, the children's rights advocate, beautifully illustrates this point: while standing in line at a grocery store check-out counter Holt reached down and ruffled the hair of the child standing in front of him only to realize, much to his embarrassment, that it was not actually a child, as he had thought, but a midget (cited in Gideonse, 1982). Holt's gesture of physical affection toward a child he did not know would not have been considered socially inappropriate behaviour. Yet, his actions were interpreted as aggressive and intrusive by the adult who was treated like a child. This anecdote begins to demonstrate the disparity in the personal boundaries afforded children and adults, as well as the privilege adults have, within most cultures, to impose themselves on children's physical selves.
2.5.3 What Does the Empowerment of Children Mean For Adult Privilege?

At times, during the research process, it seemed ridiculous to be pondering over children's experiences of power and powerlessness in their relationships with adults. That adults are more powerful than children appeared to be such a truism. Furthermore, I had to admit that I could justify the necessity of this power differential on a number of levels; for example, children are socially, emotionally, and cognitively underdeveloped and therefore cannot be expected to cope on their own; they lack real world experience and require the nurturance and protection of adult caretakers. So, what was the point in documenting this power differential?

During the question formation stage, and intermittently throughout the research study, I confronted challenges from adults each time I began to articulate my interest in studying children's social power in relation to that of adults. Most notably, friends and family members who were themselves parents seemed particularly indignant at the suggestion that I was questioning children's powerlessness and searching for an effective means of facilitating children's empowerment in society. On more than one occasion I was, half jokingly, invited by parents to come to their homes to witness first hand just how powerful their children really were. For quite some time, I felt silenced and stifled because of the reactions of adults to my research thesis. Still, in part, their responses informed me about the importance of sharpening my approach to the topic of children's power. Reading the work of Nieuwenhuys (1994), an anthropologist struggling to document the lifeworlds of East Indian children, I felt further justified in my struggle to honour children's personal understanding over that of adult opinion:

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2The term "children's lifeworlds" is used by Olga Nieuwenhys in her book entitled, Children's Lifeworlds: Gender, Welfare and Labour in the Developing World.
It was not easy to adhere to my original views on the importance of children's work as the time spent in Poomkara progressed. As my presence gradually became accepted, I found it more difficult to persist in critically approaching the world of adults to which I, of course, belonged. The attitude towards children of those who became my friends, did influence me, and I often felt with them, that one should not attach too much weight to the opinions of youngsters. Children were believed to be very much subject to changing moods and to be too easily influenced by fashionable trends. Their immaturity would preclude their being able to distinguish sharply between fiction and reality. One could not expect them to act according to the moral standards of adults. "They are just children" was a commonplace used to brush off the responsibility of children for their acts as well as for the opinions they ventilated (Nieuwenhuys, 1994, p. 6-7).

Other researchers working to promote an awareness of children's lifeworlds have similarly felt questioned by their peers. Waksler (1991) writes:

To take children's ideas, beliefs, activities and experiences seriously, as real and as embodying knowledge, is to risk being taken for a fool ... When I as a sociologist take seriously that which in everyday life is not, when I question what all adults know, when I entertain childish ideas and immature formulations, my standing both as an adult and as a sociologist comes into question (Waksler, 1991, p. 62).

My personal experience of being questioned by my peers led me to further explore questions about the extensiveness and necessity of adult power over children, and the difficult process of social change where children's are concerned. A particularly insightful article entitled, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack", by Peggy McIntosh (1990), helped me to examine more closely the nature and extent of my own adult privilege. While McIntosh writes about racism, many of her thoughts are applicable to other forms of dominance. She speaks from the position of a white person, whose privileges over persons of colour are, more often than not, invisible to her. In her article she attempts to deconstruct or "unpack" her own white privileges:
Thinking through unacknowledged male privilege\(^3\) as a phenomenon, I realized that, since hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there was most likely a phenomenon of white privilege that was similarly denied and protected. As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage (McIntosh, 1990, p. 231).

When applied to the phenomenon of adult privilege over children, I saw that while adults may acknowledge that children are at a disadvantage in society, we are more guarded about admitting to our own adult privilege over them. As adults, we are socially conditioned to deny this privilege -- our power over children. Feminist theorist Karen Warren (1990) writes of a logic of domination used to justify the domination of certain groups over others (as well as the environment) on the basis of gender, racial/ethnic, and class status. Similarly, a logic of domination is used to justify the domination of the young by their elders. Children's difference from adults is used as a means of justifying and maintaining adult privilege and power-over. McIntosh succinctly explains the difficulty involved in acknowledging our privilege, and the role of our privilege in the oppression of others:

After I realized the extent to which men work from a base of unacknowledged privilege, I understood that much of their oppressiveness was unconscious. Then I remembered the frequent charges from women of colour that white women whom they encounter are oppressive. I began to understand why we are justly seen as oppressive, even when we don't see ourselves that way (McIntosh, 1990, p. 232).

I tried to follow McIntosh's (1990) method by asking, from my own adult experience, what it is like to have adult privilege; I began to add up the ways in which I enjoy adult privilege and have been conditioned to ignore its existence. My adult privilege, as a

\(^3\)McIntosh explains that unacknowledged male privilege refers to men's unwillingness to grant that they are over privileged, even though they may grant that women are disadvantaged.
white, middle-class, educated, un-married woman, result in some of the following conditions. I can:

- make personal choices and decisions
- earn and control my own money
- travel places alone (usually) and know how to avoid dangerous situations and have resources (such as money or a car) at my disposal
- feel confident that, on a daily basis, other people will not touch me or invade my personal space without my permission or without recourse
- speak up when I feel I have been unfairly treated
- feel certain that my grievances will be believed and acted upon
- trust that I will be able to easily gain access to services and institutions that will assist me
- be assured that I will not be forced, against my will, to change my neighbourhood, friends, or school.
- live in a world built for my physical stature and needs

This brief list is, of course, based on my own perception of adult privilege and is therefore nowhere near exhaustive. Adult privilege is intertwined with other forms of privilege such as gender, class, and race. Therefore, there are degrees of adulthood or adult privilege in society. For example, a single mother on Welfare would likely not construct a list of privileges similar to my own. She may not have the privilege of saying where she lives or exactly how she will spend her money. However, as an adult she would possess a good number of privileges that children do not share. The above list is based on my own experience as an adult, white woman -- through my personal knowledge I attempted to make the invisible visible.

McIntosh (1990) makes an important distinction between earned strength and unearned power. She explains that unearned privilege is systematically given to those in the dominant group. This type of privilege simply "confers dominance" because of one's group affiliation. Certainly, it is easy to note examples of earned power where adults are concerned. For instance, because of my greater life experience and knowledge I have the privilege of spending the money I earn as I please. Children will likely not learn the
necessary information for wise consumerism and budgeting, and therefore the privilege perhaps will not be earned until adolescence. Unearned privilege on the other hand, while it may appear as earned power, is in fact permission to dominate – these are negative advantages, which unless rejected will reinforce our hierarchical social structure. For example, the fact that I can be assured I will not be physically punished for my wrong doings should not be a privilege of adults, but for children as well. Similarly, standing up for one's rights and speaking out against felt injustice should not be exclusively the privilege of adults. These age advantages are argued as necessities for social order and child management, and while some forms of dominance are more visible there is also the invisible system of ageism. As with other forms of privilege and domination, there is an invisible system conferring unsought age dominance on adults, beginning in the years of adolescence.

Disapproving of the system is not enough to change it (McIntosh, 1990). Adults must work to spread the positive age advantages that are conferred upon us:

To redesign social systems we need first to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions. The silences and denials surrounding privilege are the key political tools here. They keep the thinking about equality or equity incomplete, protecting unearned advantage and conferred dominance by making these subjects taboo (McIntosh, 1990, p. 236).

Feminists and systemic theorists postulate that children's powerlessness in society allows for their sexual abuse by those in positions of dominance -- that is, adults. Although this notion is viewed by most as a legitimate explanation for children's continued victimization, the concept of power relations between children and adults is only vaguely discussed or ignored completely in prevention curriculum development (Krane, 1989). Children who receive sexual abuse prevention training are taught to protect themselves, as individuals in exceptional circumstances. Adult privileges over
children have not been addressed with adults themselves.

What no one, except the feminist community, has seemed to notice is that the state has done nothing which really challenges the social order that produces the violence in the first place (Wolfe & Guberman, 1985, p. 15).

Children's judgement of adult intention and personal risk, while a valuable skill, is of limited consequence without social change in the adult community. Once again, adult privilege has been successfully maintained, regardless of a few well intended programmatic inclusions in the schooling of children. Their social context continues to ensure their subordination to adults. The education of adults is starting to become more of a focus in programs. The question remains whether or not adults are prepared to forfeit some of their privileges so that children might gain real political status and greater freedom in society.

2.6 SUMMARIZING MY THOUGHTS, GENERATING FURTHER RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND CONTEMPLATING THE OVERALL CONTRIBUTION OF MY STUDY

It is assumed, by those who support this prevention movement, that children can be trained to be more powerful in defense of their bodies -- to disregard the wishes, threats and demands of sexually abusive adults. It is therefore important to explore children's actual perceptions and experiences with power and powerlessness in their relationships with adults and to further our understanding of children's vulnerability to adults in general. In exploring children's daily experiences of power and powerlessness in their relationships with adults the following questions will be addressed:
• Who do children perceive as having social power? How is adult power over children exercised? By what right? To what end?

• How do children come to understand, justify or challenge power inequalities between themselves and adults?

• When do children feel personally powerful as well as powerless in their relationships with adults?

The documentation of the social power differential between children and adults will allow for the examination of the congruency between children's real life social power experiences and core prevention program concepts. The goal of empowering children to prevent their own sexual victimization will be theoretically debated on the basis of these data.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH THEORY AND METHOD

3.1 APPROACH TO RESEARCH: MAKING LINKS BETWEEN PERSONAL VALUES, THEORY, AND RESEARCH PRACTICE

The research process occurs within the context of a researcher's personal experiences, general sociocultural framework, and philosophical traditions (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 35).

There is a vital link between the researcher's personal values, research theory, and chosen method of investigation (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Smith, 1983). In this Chapter, I make explicit the connection between my chosen approach to this piece of research and my personal values and research orientation.

3.1.1 Choosing a Topic of Investigation: My Interests and Inclinations

Approximately eight years ago, while completing my Master's degree in Child and Development Studies, I worked as an assistant researcher evaluating a high-school-based Human Relations course, which was developed to teach young people about parenting and to prevent child abuse in the future. During that project I became interested in the widely expanding primary prevention movement targeted at eradicating the problem of child sexual abuse. At first glance, in-school child sexual abuse prevention programs seemed both a viable and critical initiative in the fight against the problem of children's sexual victimization. According to early reports, child participants in these programs were being educated about sexual abuse, provided with the necessary words for describing their experiences, and trained to seek the assistance and protection of trusted adults. Children's vulnerability for abuse appeared to be addressed, and my interest was aroused. I knew that if I continued my studies I would further investigate the primary prevention initiative.
Two years after completing my Master's degree I entered a Ph.D program in Community Psychology with a study concentration in feminist theory at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). As a result of this chosen path, my thinking about children's sexual victimization was strongly influenced by radical feminist thought. In particular, I was attracted to the writings of women theorists like Elizabeth Stanko (1985) and Liz Kelly (1988) who drew attention to the critical connection between social structure, social power, and the sexual exploitation and victimization of women. Reflecting on their work, I recognized that a fundamental relationship between children's social context and their availability for sexual abuse had been overlooked in the development of the child sexual abuse primary prevention movement. At the very least, an in-depth social power analysis of children's lives was missing from discussions about children's sexual victimization and their prospects for empowerment.

My primary research question, (what are children's experiences of power and powerlessness in their daily relationships with adults?), is, in part, directed toward promoting a feminist social analysis of the problem of child sexual abuse. Moving away from the traditional search for individual characteristics and traits of sexually abused or at-risk children, I consider a social/political power analysis of the problem. Attention is directed toward identifying those social structures and conventions that are responsible for maintaining all children in the position of potential sexual victim. A fundamental assumption of this study is the notion that the problem of child sexual abuse, and therefore its prevention, cannot be understood in the absence of children's social context. Accurate and detailed information about children's social power is a necessary building block for effective child sexual abuse prevention program initiatives. Present day questions about the efficacy of these programs must be extended to include questions
about the empowerment of children.

Whether or not the empowerment of children is possible in principle is not my challenge, since it would be impossible for me to consider the authority of children outside the social context and generation within which they presently exist. I do question, however, whether or not the empowerment of children is feasible at present given the nature of current adult-child power relations. It is my contention that child sexual abuse prevention programs provide necessary, but insufficient resources to enable children to act against adults who abuse them. Empowerment requires resources (Kieffer, 1984) -- resources that children do not typically have at their disposal in our adultcentric society. Relative to adults children are less powerful -- quite simply, it is this powerless position that guarantees children's availability for sexual abuse by adults. As argued by feminists, such as Catharine MacKinnon (1983), the social structure itself must be challenged if we are truly interested in empowering those who are oppressed and victimized in our present society. It is my contention that a full appreciation of the social power structures at play in children's everyday lives is necessary in the evaluation and further development of child sexual abuse prevention/empowerment programs.

3.1.2 Adopting a Qualitative Research Approach: Learning to Listen To My Subjective Experience As Researcher

It was also during my Master's degree that I first began researching the lives of children; my thesis involved interviewing children who had witnessed their mother's physical abuse. A battery of tests was used to measure children's interpersonal problem solving skills in an attempt to identify a learning mechanism that might explain the cycle of violence phenomenon, reportedly present in families where wife battering took place. My approach to this piece of research was decidedly traditional, that is, according to the
positivist paradigm -- a choice which I did not hesitate over at the time. As a result of that work I began to question my role as researcher and explore ethical concerns related to one's chosen theoretical position.

Since the focus of my Master's research was not explicitly on children's home lives, I did not expect to contend with children's stories about their mothers' abuse. My line of questioning was not about this, so why would it come up? In only my second interview session, however, a young boy began to tell me about how he and his little sister had hidden in a bedroom closet while his dad "beat up" his mother. At the time, I was actually surprised by the fact that he had found an opportunity to report this traumatic experience even though I had not requested that he speak about his home life. My response, (I'm ashamed to say), was to silently ignore the boy's story -- I thought then, in an attempt to minimize his pain of having to dwell on this horrendous event. I quickly moved on to ask the next question. Thankfully, I walked away from that interview with a critical view of my behaviour and an important new insight.

I was only 25 years old then -- trained according to traditional or positivist research principles, and relatively inexperienced as a researcher. Eight years, and many research projects later, I have learned to be more reflective about the influence of the positivist paradigm on my research practice. At the time of my Master's work, I considered research to be a purely scientific endeavour, in the traditional sense. My expected role was that of the distant, unresponsive interviewer. I realize now that, because of this philosophy, I was not prepared to actually hear that young boy's experience of fear and pain. It had been my conscious decision to bury that child's disclosure. It was in my power to separate myself from his words; more important, I felt that I was expected to do so. I knew in my gut that my response was wrong -- exploitative at best and
psychologically damaging at worst. Shamefully, I had never even anticipated that my presence might elicit children's emotional disclosures.

Following that interview, I went to a member of my thesis committee who taught in the social work department and asked that he clarify for me my role as researcher. Wondering how I should have reacted to this young boy, he offered me some of the most liberating advice I have ever received as a researcher -- he emphasized the importance of listening to, acknowledging, and validating people's experiences. He further clarified for me that my silence at that moment of disclosure confirmed for the child the stigma associated with woman abuse; I was, in effect, reinforcing his silence about his mother's abuse.

I embraced this pearl of wisdom and felt relieved that someone had finally given me permission to acknowledge my feelings while in the role of researcher. No longer was I bound to simply be a human tape recorder whose only concern was that of documentation and maintaining professional distance. The comfort I experienced as a result of his advice gave me cause to consider why this response had not occurred to me beforehand. The answer was simple, it had not occurred to me because it was contradictory to a cardinal rule of traditional research -- the rule of "objectivity". A study is considered objective if the process and results are unbiased, that is, undistorted by the dispositions of and the particular situation surrounding the investigator (Smith, 1983). The positivist paradigm prescribes a scientific method (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983), one which makes a clear division between object and subject. For positivist researchers the extraction of information is the central issue of concern. The researcher is expected to eliminate all bias and not be emotionally involved with, or have a particular attitude toward, those they research. Knowledge generation, according to this approach, is dependent on the
researcher remaining neutral or objective and any blurring between researcher and procedures and the object of study would present such serious complications as to render the study pointless. Silence, however, is also an emotionally laden response in that failing to act on information serves to limit and shape the information being obtained. The notion of objectivity, therefore, is false in the sense that emotional distance is also a subjective response to the gathering process. The positivist paradigm reinforced the denial of my subjectivity and imposed a clear division between my intellectual and emotional selves.

Upon completing my Master's degree I continued to be involved in research, first in a university setting and later in the community. Because of my professor's earlier advice I now felt justified in giving those I spoke with something back: I answered questions, listened to problems, and offered encouragement and reassurance when needed. Even though my subjective self, my feeling self, had found a place in my research practice I never really acknowledged this philosophical shift. Nor did I rely on my subjective knowledge or "emotional intelligence" (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner & Steinmetz, 1991) for guidance in my work. It seemed that my research practice was in conflict with the positivist paradigm. While I was not able to articulate my dilemma at the time, I continued to be fearful that I was contaminating my data by allowing my subjective self to be present.

In 1989, when I enrolled in the Community Psychology program at OISE, I began to truly reflect on the limitations of the positivist research paradigm and to name the conflicts that I had been experiencing. Community psychology doctrine drew my attention to the power differential inherent in the research relationship, that is, the traditional researcher's expert status and privileged position to name and define the experiences of
others. I saw how a separation between researcher and researched helped to promote the "researcher knows best" philosophy (Lincoln, 1990; cited in Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). In response to this power differential, Community Psychologists advance the concept of empowerment in the research process. In the empowerment model, individuals themselves, rather than community experts are consulted about their experiences and needs (Swift, 1984). I recognized that, because of the power differential within the research relationship, I was able to disregard that young boy's words. I saw by example how one's philosophical position influences how one conducts research. Important shifts began to take place in my understanding of research and I felt that, because of the prescribed division between researcher and researched, the positivist framework was one to which I could no longer adhere. I wanted to conduct research "for" rather than "on" individuals and engage in a research relationship of reciprocity.

I discovered that the interpretivistic or qualitative paradigm was more in keeping with my beliefs about research practice and knowledge construction. Qualitative researchers, for example, maintain that it is impossible to separate the investigator from that which is being investigated. Reality does not exist independent of the researcher and objectivity, as conventionally defined, is not desirable or even assumed possible. Researchers observe nature exposed to their method of questioning, not nature itself (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); they are mediators of the phenomenon under investigation, and so another investigator might develop another theory (Rennie, Phillips, Quartaro, 1988). Knowledge for qualitative researchers, therefore, is descriptive as opposed to explanatory or predictive, with efforts being concentrated on interpretive understanding rather than on the creation of laws (Smith, 1983).

A number of qualitative philosophical orientations and methodologies have informed
my approach to this research; the teachings of phenomenologists (Valle & King, 1978; Van Manen, 1990), participatory researchers (Lather, 1986; Maguire, 1987), symbolic interactionists (Blumer, 1969; Payne, 1990), and feminist methodologists (Jacklin, 1987; Reinharz, 1992) are among the most influential. Consequently, my design, discussed in the remainder of the Chapter, consists of a mix of techniques associated with these various qualitative orientations and methodological approaches. Most notably, I have drawn upon those qualitative philosophies and techniques which help to promote an increased sensitivity to issues of power and control within the research relationship. I have challenged myself in the present study around the ease with which I have previously silenced the voices of children in my research practice. While my personal responses to what I see and hear might run counter to my beliefs (see Ely et al., 1991), I have tried to remain conscious of these differences and have worked to honour such differences in the research process. By making my subjective experiences explicit, through self reflection and journal writing, the relationship between myself as researcher and those being researched has remained at the forefront and available for analysis. Examples of my reflective journaling, which illustrate my personal process during the research endeavour, appear in this Chapter and again in Chapter 7.

3.2 CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

My focus in this qualitative research study has been on investigating the social power experiences of children in their daily interactions with adults. In this section I describe the steps undertaken during this research study. While this description unfolds in the text as a linear process, it is important to realize that this order "emerged" gradually during the study and was by no means a pre-set course. It was, more often
than not, unclear to me how I should best proceed. Unlike the process involved in conducting quantitative studies, there was no clear map from the start directing my actions or guiding my questions -- each step informed the next. In qualitative research studies, there is often an open emergent design which means that there is an openness to discovery as well as a lack of standardization and concrete research steps. The responsive nature of qualitative research sets the stage for unexpected patterns and new understandings (see Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Detailed below is my research process. Described is the participant selection criteria and make-up, and the development of semi-structured interview guides. As well, I offer some personal insights into the challenges faced by adults researching the lives of children.

3.2.1 Selecting Children to be Interviewed: Considering the Mediating Factors in Adult-Child Power Relationships

I began with the assumption that children, like other social groups, have more in common than not. Socially speaking, children are a homogeneous group in society, particularly when one considers their power relative to that of adults who make up the dominant age group. Such groups, however, are rarely culturally discrete and with the further consultation of qualitative methods textbooks, I recognized a need to carefully weigh the issue of participant selection in establishing the authenticity of my descriptive analyses on children's social power experiences (see Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Wehlage, 1981; Patton, 1980). Decisions about what one wants to say about the data, for what purpose, and with what degree of credibility are decisions that need to be made during the design phase (Patton, 1980). In deliberating over these questions, the issue of generalizability continually sprang to mind. In what sense could I generalize about children's experiences of power and powerlessness from my data? Should I even be
interested in reducing my understanding, based on a small group of children, to laws? Or was I simply trapped in the positivist mindset of my earlier schooling. I was reminded that the fundamental goal of qualitative research is to describe as accurately as possible the given phenomena of interest and not to predict:

The purpose of an in-depth interview study is to understand the experience of those who are interviewed, not to predict or to control that experience. Because hypotheses are not being tested, the issue is not whether the researcher can generalize the finding of an interview study to a broader population. Instead the researcher's task is to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects (Seidman, 1991, p.41).

Qualitative researchers have not dismissed discussions about generalizability, rather, they have re-defined the meaning. The concept of generalization has several meanings in interpretivistic research (Wehlage, 1981). First, there is the idea that the grounded propositions discovered during qualitative research will eventually become the building blocks in a theoretical tower. As well, there is the more limited notion that the generalizability of findings are limited to those cases being studied. Finally, there is generalization by analogy; that is, generalizing from the particular case being discussed to the class by analogous thinking (Wehlage, 1981). Generalization by analogy is most relevant for those engaged in collecting rich descriptions from participants. As alluded to by Seidman (1991) in the above excerpt, people receiving or reading the information are called on to project each new circumstance against that background of their own accumulated experience. The logic of this projection is reasoning or generalizing by analogy (Wehlage, 1981).

The consumer of the research, not the author, does the generalizing. The task falls to the reader to be on the lookout for analogous situations in which insights can be applied. ... It is up to the consumer to decide what aspects of the data apply to new contexts (Wehlage, 1981, p. 216).
By providing rich descriptions of children's lives, I hoped to draw on the readers' ability to generalize by analogy, but I as well wanted to address more directly the question of generalizability in my participant selection procedure. After considering which selection methods would best serve my interest, I chose to rely on a criterion-based selection process. Criterion-based selection requires that the researcher establish in advance a set of criteria or list of attributes that participants must possess (Goetz, 1986). The researcher's task, then, is to determine the groups for which the initial research question is appropriate and the contexts that are potentially associated with the question (Goetz, 1986). This process is subject to refinement throughout the research process.

Parameters identified as possible mediators of children's social power in their relationships with adults included: culture/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender. A brief explanation of the relevance of these characteristics is provided.

In response to my request for access to students, the Research Review Committee of the Toronto Board of Education suggested that the social variables of cultural background and social class were important to consider:

...the very small sample necessitates that you be aware of and very clear in your reporting about the limits of generalizability of your sample. ... It is particularly true in an area such as child-adult power relationships, which may be strongly influenced by cultural background, social class, education level, generation, etc. Especially in a city as multicultural and generally diverse as Toronto, such a caveat seems very important (Toronto Board of Education, Research Services, Personal Communication, 1993, p. 1).

Ennew (1986) has suggested that it is likely more difficult for oppressed groups, such as girls, black children, and children of lower socioeconomic groups, to refuse an adult male sexual perpetrator. It was important to remain sensitive to the possibility that children belonging to marginalized and oppressed social groups, such as visible minorities
and lower income families, might experience greater feelings of social powerlessness than those belonging to the dominant culture (i.e., white, middle class children). Not mentioned by the Toronto Board of Education was the influence that children’s gender might have on their perceived and experienced social power. Girls are located at the bottom of the age-gender hierarchy and are more often the targeted victims of sexual abuse. These social realities may lead toward girls experiencing a greater sense of powerlessness in their daily lives.

In selecting child participants I sought out an equal number of boys and girls who would offer variation according to the identified parameters of ethnicity/culture and socioeconomic status. This was accomplished primarily by focusing on a site that was culturally diverse and largely made up of lower to lower-middle socioeconomic status families. I later took opportunity to include children from more middle class backgrounds who were not part of this school and surrounding community (details appear in the next section). The intention was not to access a predetermined number of children from certain backgrounds, (e.g., a certain number of black male children from lower socioeconomic status homes), in order to represent the general population, but rather, to access a group of children who reflected diversity along the dimensions of ethnicity/culture and class. Details about the children are provided in the next section.
3.2.2 The Children

In total, seventeen 9-to-10-year-olds were interviewed as part of the study. Four of these seventeen took part in the exploratory interview phase, two of who (named Darlene, 10 years old; and Keith, 9 years old) were recruited as co-researchers and took part in the project from start to finish. The use of research participants as co-researchers is a strategy used by participatory researchers who work in collaboration with participants. The extent of their collaboration varies, as does the degree of social action undertaken by participants (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). As co-researchers, Keith and Darlene verified each step of the question development, data collection, and analysis procedure.

In the final data collection phase, fifteen children (8 girls; 7 boys) participated in interviews; the group included nine 10-year-olds (5 girls; 4 boys) and six 9-year-olds (3 girls; 3 boys). Children were interviewed twice, with approximately one week in-between meetings. These grade 4 and 5 students were interviewed between the months of May and December of 1993. The 9-to-10-year range was selected because this age group has been recognized as a vulnerable group for sexual abuse (see Dube et al., 1988; Plummer & Crisci, 1986; Roberts, 1983; Russell, 1986). Additionally, these elementary school students would be likely candidates to receive child sexual abuse prevention instruction. Finally, based on my own personal experience of having previously worked with this age group, I estimated that 9 and 10 year old children would be able to comfortably engage in some self-reflection and the in-depth interview process.

4To guard children's anonymity, pseudonyms rather than actual names are used throughout the text.

5Keith and Darlene were paid ten dollars for each of our meetings.
Overall, the group represented a variety of cultural backgrounds and ethnic descents including: 3 Vietnamese children; 3 Black Caribbean children; 1 East Indian child; 1 Korean child; along with 7 children of white European descent. All but two of the children were born in Canada, (six were first generation Canadian), both had been living in Canada for three years.

Eleven of the interviewed children attended a multicultural, Toronto inner-city school which was selected by the Toronto Board of Education. While this site provided me with a wonderful opportunity to speak with children from various ethnic backgrounds, there was initial concern that some of the children would have difficulty participating in an intense interview of this nature due to language barriers. On this basis, teachers were asked to hand-pick students who would be able to take part in the interview. English was spoken at home most often by all but two of the children who spoke their native languages of Cantonese and Chinese. It was determined by children's teachers and myself that all of the selected children had good English comprehension and language skills, and they were all easily able to attend to the task.

Selected school children brought home to parents information and consent letters (see Appendix A: Information Letters and Parental Consent Forms). All but two of the thirteen children approached within the school system were given permission to participate.

The eleven school accessed children were primarily from lower socioeconomic class homes as determined by the fact that most were living in the surrounding lower-income subsidized housing project. This observation was confirmed by the fact that, according to children's reports, low to lower-middle income jobs tended to be held by parents in these households. The jobs of fathers and mothers, respectively, as reported by this group of
children were: office secretary and housewife; front desk clerk and babysitter; stage hand and housewife; bakery owners; fireman (in Jamaica) and cashier/book keeper; hospital janitor and jewellery store clerk; factory worker and private nurse; unemployed carpenter and factory seamstress; restaurant owners; immigration office worker and clothing store clerk; social worker and babysitter.

Due to the fact that the eleven school accessed children were primarily from lower and lower-middle socioeconomic class backgrounds, four additional young people were interviewed. Through word of mouth and a snowball approach, I contacted three children whose parents' occupational status and educational backgrounds suggested a middle to upper socioeconomic background. Again, an information letter requesting children's participation was sent to parents after an initial telephone conversation was made to determine if they would be interested in learning more about the study (see Appendix A: Information Letters and Parental Consent Forms). Two of the three children contacted agreed to take part in the interviews. In addition, Keith and Darlene, the two co-researchers who had been involved in the study from the onset, were included in the final data collection phase. These four additional children were interviewed during the summer months at their homes and, to encourage their participation, were paid ten dollars for their time. In all four of these families both parents worked, although two were families of divorce and it was not ascertained whether financial support was being provided by the absent fathers. Fathers' and mothers' jobs were reported as: computer operator and union director; sales representative and government worker; researcher and university graduate student; architect and production manager. As already noted, two of these children were from homes of divorce, of which one had close contact with her natural father and the other, while having no contact with his father, was closely involved
with a stepfather. Two of the four children were single or only children and of the remaining two, one had a younger brother and the other an older sister.

Information about family structure provided further insight into the diverse social context of the children who were interviewed. Of the children from lower socioeconomic families four had only one sibling, four had two siblings, and three children had three or more siblings. Their location in the family varied, three being youngest, four being middle children, and four being the eldest in their family. In five of these eleven families fathers were not present due to separation or divorce; again, it was not clear whether or not these men provided financial support for their children. All of these children of divorce, with the exception of one boy, had some contact with their fathers, although it was described as being minimal.

The criteria of sufficiency and saturation (Seidman, 1991) were used to determine when I had interviewed enough children: "sufficiency" meaning enough children to reflect a range of different class and ethnic/cultural backgrounds; "saturation" meaning I began to hear the same information over and over again so that I was no longer learning anything new. When the process of interviewing became more laborious than pleasurable, it was time to stop.

3.2.3 Documenting Children's Lived Experiences: The Interview

Readers are urged to suspend judgement on the reality, truth, or correctness of children's views and to resist the urge to view children's ideas and actions as "simply a stage of development" or as something they will outgrow. In everyday life, adult biases towards children are both strongly pronounced and taken for granted. Vigilance is necessary if one is to avoid such biases and come to an understanding of children as children, in their own terms (Waksler, 1991, p. 119).
Researchers often fail to attend to children’s lived experiences. To a large extent, children have been studied as imperfect versions of adults, with little interest being generated toward understanding the experiences of this unique sub-culture in and of itself. The famous developmentalist, Jean Piaget, for example, spent considerable energy documenting children’s experiences in and perceptions of the world, devoting less attention toward understanding children's lived meaning than toward determining how children’s cognitive structures develop toward full adult functioning.

All too often, children’s lived experiences are minimized and we, as adult researchers, are in danger of engaging in a more traditional approach to research -- we risk taking on the role of "knower". With this in mind, I entered this research with children, conscious of my dominant adult status and my privileged position as researcher. I set out to find a technique that would honour my belief that children themselves are the only experts on their lives, and gave myself permission to listen to their voices.

**Interview Method and Question Development.** I recognized early on that children’s narratives would provide detailed descriptions of situations, events, and experiences without the burden of predetermined response choices. Qualitative, in-depth interviews with children would provide me with "thick data" (Geertz, 1973), that is, highly contextualized verbal descriptions of children’s daily lives.

In actuality, it took me a long time to get to the step of interviewing children. I continually searched for a definitive way to devise questions that would tap into children’s experiences of power and powerlessness in their relationships with adults. I reviewed the child sexual abuse literature over and over again and finally developed, what I termed sexual abuse constructs, or those characteristics that place children at risk for sexual abuse. (Those factors relevant to children's vulnerability for abuse appeared earlier in...
Chapter 1, p.25). The constructs I noted for the purpose of developing interview questions were as follows: most sexual abusers are known to children; children are vulnerable to the physical harm and manipulation of adults because of the relative size difference and knowledge difference; children have limited personal privacy in their daily lives, children are normally touched by adults, children are naturally attracted to adult friendship and attention -- particularly lonely children. Based on my review of the literature, it was my understanding that these social dynamics make children vulnerable for sexual abuse.

At that time, I also began to look at Margrit Eichler's (1988) work on defining equality in society. Eichler identifies twelve dimensions of social inequality with the intent of developing a comprehensive means for analyzing both inequalities and minimal stratification in society. Examples of her dimensions of inequality include: differences between individuals in their control over property; differences in control over one's body; differences in control over daily lifestyles. On the basis of her theoretical framework I was able to generate parallel themes of inequality in the lives of children, such as; resources/property rights of children; children's rights around their bodies; children's decision making rights, and so forth.

Integrating what I knew about children's vulnerabilities for abuse with the dimensions of social inequality, I was able to develop areas of interest that I needed to target in my interviews with children. Early questions were developed to address children's experiences of: body integrity; believability; personal privacy; decision making power; personal care; and their relationships with adults.

**Toward Developing an Interview Guide.** Initially, I created a draft version of a semi-structured interview guide which I piloted on four 9- and-10-year-olds, who I solicited through personal contacts and word of mouth. While it is generally agreed that children
are difficult to assess with the methods commonly used with adults (e.g., paper and pencil tests), the added difficulty of having children understand, and clearly respond to interview questions was not completely appreciated by me prior to these exploratory interviews. Although I attempted to emulate the interview techniques of others who had interviewed children about their social understanding (see Leahy, 1983; Furth, 1980) it was not without trial and error that I proceeded. The challenge for me as interviewer was two-fold. First, I needed to accurately consider children's verbal skills, attention span and, perhaps most importantly, their ability to abstract and participate in self-critical analysis. Second, I found that I had underestimated the influence that my own adult status and authority would have on the interview process.

With considerable reflection, I realized after my first interview that the questions I had formulated were too difficult for children. I was reminded that children have qualitative differences in their thinking -- they do not merely know less than adults. They are quite simply different -- they understand questions differently and their answers and response style differ from that of an adult (see Furth, 1980). It became painfully obvious after that very first interview that I had failed to produce a set of good questions for children. The formulated questions, I discovered, were both leading as well as too difficult; I was, in effect, asking children to analyze their social lives and inequalities rather than simply describe their daily life experiences with adults.

During my first exploratory interview, with 10 year old Ellen, I confronted perhaps one of the most insidious barriers to gaining knowledge about the lived experiences of children. It was during this interview that I was forced to acknowledge the influence of my "adultness" over a child and, in turn, the child's compliance. Furthermore, my questions were more directed at the belief that children are powerless in their
relationships with adult, than at my interest in documenting the child's personal understanding of her social reality. Uncovering the dynamics that occurred during that first interview and discovering the reasons for my uneasiness was a difficult personal process which taught me an invaluable lesson about the tendency of adults to shape and name the experiences of children. My journal entry detailing this insight follows:

Thinking back, I remember feeling myself growing very distant from the discussion as Ellen told me that her parents did not impose rules on her. Ellen's insistence on this point was not in keeping with my adult knowledge of how adults make the rules where children are concerned. From that moment on, as hard as I tried to return to the discussion, it was impossible for me. During that exchange, I determined that the interview was not working out the way I had anticipated -- I actually wanted to stop. Throughout the remaining 45 minutes I repeatedly asked myself: why she was denying her own oppression?; why she refused to name the power her parents had over her?; and, why she was protecting adults' right to this power? I became busy in my own mind going over the possible reasons for why I was so miserably failing to elicit the expected themes. I wondered whether this truly was Ellen's reality. Could it be that she, unlike other children, was not exposed to the rules and regulations of parents and teachers. Could it be my line of questioning was unclear to her? Perhaps she had never before taken the time to question the limits placed upon her as a child. Or maybe she was unable to confront her own powerlessness, much the same way many women are unprepared to name their daily oppression while they continue to walk along streets in fear. Explanations for her response continued to preoccupy my thoughts, meanwhile, the incongruity between my own understanding of children's powerlessness and Ellen's personal reality became greater with every question. I continued to try to elicit disclosures of powerlessness. In turn, my interview questions and probes became more and more leading. Ellen began to respond to my questions with nothing more than a curt "yep". I became frustrated, why was she not offering more detail? I was initially elated when Ellen changed her opinion at the end of the interview when I asked her what would be different about her life once she became an adult: "... Like, I don't know but my parents wouldn't set rules for me because then I'll be an adult". Finally, I thought, she admits the truth. Looking over the interview afterwards I realized that I was unable to determine whether Ellen's words were a reflection of her enlightenment, brought about by the conscientizing effect of the interview, or whether she

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6Conscientization, as defined by Paulo Freire (1973) in *Education for Critical Consciousness*, involves a depth in one's interpretation of social problems. The highest level of critical consciousness is achieved through the process of conscientization. At the highest level people scrutinize their own thoughts and see correlations between events (see Elias, 1994).
was simply saying what my questions and tone seemed to indicate I wanted to hear. Although I thought I was simply asking questions, now I see that I was actually demanding her compliance, her validation of my understanding. Ellen had no option but to bow down to my superior knowledge as an adult. The interview illustrated for me a child’s skill at reading the subtle tone and intention of an adult. In all honesty, I think that I was subconsciously aware at the time of the interview that it was mostly my adultness that was getting in the way of Ellen’s truth. In retrospect I see that I failed because I was not able to honour Ellen’s understanding enough to relinquish my own adult viewpoint (Radford, 1992).

By journaling about this relational experience, I was forced to face my adult privilege and my implicit authority to affect children’s responses. The interaction between the data gatherer and participant is inherent in the nature of interviewing (Seidman, 1991). However, as I learned through personal experience, the social desirability influence of the adult over the child needed to be reduced through conscious effort and proper wording of the questions (see Sudman & Bradburn, 1982). I needed to accept that children might reject my hypothesis, my understanding, and to instead focus my attention on finding more appropriate ways of exploring children’s own construction of their social reality.

I turned my attention to the methodological teachings of phenomenologists, being particularly attracted to learning more about the skill involved in researching the lived experiences of research participants. According to this approach, the child’s lived meaning refers to the way the child experiences and understands his or her world as real and meaningful (see Van Manen, 1990). This simple definition helped me to move from trying to encourage children to analyze their lives to having them honestly describe for me their lived experiences -- I could finally see how the two approaches were worlds apart.

Following that initial exploratory interview I had first hand evidence that my "adultness" had a profound impact on what I would hear and learn from the children I interviewed. I was able to use my emotional intelligence to gain insight into the power dynamics that were at play within the research relationship itself and develop an
interviewing technique that was more responsible to the children participating in the study. Children were more responsive when the question along with the purpose of the question was fully understood by them. Questions that made sense also helped facilitate feelings of empowerment (see Kidder, & Judd, 1986), as they began to see themselves as expert informers. With this in mind, I listened intently to children’s verbal responses, which were sometimes nothing more than a "yes" or "no", and paid greater attention to their subtle cues, noticing when they yawned, became distracted, asked that questions be repeated, claimed boredom, as well as when they had something substantial to say.

The final interview guide consisted of questions related to children’s: personal background, descriptions of their daily routines, their quality of life, feelings about being 9 or 10 years old, the authority they have in their lives, what becoming an adult means to them, their definition of power, perceptions about adult trust of children, and their feelings about their relationships with adults (see Appendix B: Interview Guides).

**Developing a Follow-Up Interview.** Based on what was learned during the exploratory phase, two separate interviews were developed: the initial interview, which consisted of a semi-structured set of questions (requiring 1 hour to complete), and a follow-up interview, administered approximately one week later which consisted of a set of questions designed specifically for each individual child according to their responses to the initial interview (requiring one-half hour to complete). During both interviews, children’s responses were spontaneously probed, thereby allowing me to pursue in greater depth any areas of interest. Instances of power or powerlessness were extracted from children’s first interviews and additional information about that experience was obtained in the second meeting. For example, if during our first interview a child spoke about being sent to their room because they had been bad -- I would take opportunity in our second meeting to
discuss with the child the meaning of that specific occurrence in his/her life; under these circumstances a child might be asked whether they thought such treatment was fair, whether parents listened to their grievances, and what they felt they could do during such circumstances. In this way children's experiences of power and powerlessness were more easily discussed with children because they had concrete instances to consider. (An example of a follow-up interview appears in Appendix B, Sample Follow-up Interview Guide).

This two phase interview strategy allowed for the questioning of children about the important theme of body integrity, or touching, which was not spontaneously or easily discussed by children during the initial interview. Children who took part in the exploratory interview phase showed considerable uneasiness responding to my direct questions about their bodies and personal boundaries around adult touching. Probing children, during a second interview, about any body or touching issues they had mentioned during their initial interview, proved a more comfortable and natural way to explore this important theme. This approach allowed the discussion to be grounded in the child's personal experience. As well, by the second meeting a relationship had developed and personal issues could be more comfortably discussed by children.

Early on in the research process, I wondered whether children's experience of speaking about moments of felt power and powerlessness resulted in increased consciousness about inequities and social injustices in their lives. Did children's analysis of their own social power expand as a result of speaking with me about their lives? Consciousness-raising has been referred to as a feminist method because it embodies principles such as enabling women to discuss and understand their experiences from their own viewpoint (Reinharz, 1992). Consciousness-raising in the child community seemed
particularly relevant since an awareness of suffered injustice is considered to be an important first step toward personal empowerment (see Kieffer, 1984). Curiosity over this point led me to ask children at the start of our second meeting if they had thought about our previous discussion at all during the past week, and if so what they had thought about. Most simply said they had not, and again the strategy of asking young children to analyse their thoughts about the topic of social power seemed to be inappropriate.

Evidence of children's conscientization about their social power was explored during the process of conducting interviews and again later during data analysis. The notion of consciousness-raising in the child community will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

The Research Relationship. Lessons learned about power and control during the exploratory interview phase helped shape my conduct as interviewer and inform me further about the power relations between children and adults. There seemed to be an irony embedded in my work with children. As adult and child, relations of dominance and submission were continuously being recreated. Often, it was only through careful reflection that these interactions became apparent, and even then there remained the question of whether my adult authority was, at times, a necessary element in my relationships with children. The following journal excerpt illustrates my deliberation during such a moment:

Yesterday 10 year old Stella, (who I had called down to the office to speak with me), insisted that she needed to go to her gym class instead of being interviewed. The adult in me struggled to convince her that I needed her to do the interview now -- (and not at her convenience). I was caught up in the moment, or maybe in the paternalistic atmosphere of the school setting. I knew that I had the power to take away her choices... but I thought I at least owed it to her (in the name of empowerment) to apologize for the fact that she was missing gym class... her favourite class. Somehow this little girl sensed my inner struggle -- something like an animal sensing fear in its enemy. My sympathetic tone gave her an opening -- power to speak and act on her own behalf. When I asked if we could do the interview anyhow, her answer was "no... can't I go to gym class now?" I was astonished and bewildered...
somewhat hurt by her response. I stammered looking for a good reason why she had to remain. "Well", I said, "the decision has been made... your class is gone by now, it's too late". I even went so far as to call up her classroom teacher to ensure it was too late. "Yep, no answer," I told her. She continued to stare at me, almost in disbelief. "But can I go to the gym," she continued. "Well, no," I said, "I think we should get this over with"; as if she was feeling pressure to get the interview task off her list of things to do. Her eyes, full of expression, told me that she would not cooperate... but I continued to defy the stare. "Shall we start!?" I said. No reply. "You don't want to do this do you?" Still, no reply -- just the stare. "Ok" I said, "lets do this another time. But if your class isn't there come back up ok". She nodded happily for the first time and bounced off, stopping in mid stride to shyly wave goodbye to me. I could tell from her behaviour that she too felt uncomfortable, uncertain whether or not she had gone too far. In that moment I realized what I had done. I had allowed a child to make up her own mind about her time... her day. As soon as she left, I told myself that I had done the right thing. After all, I am looking at children's experiences of power and powerlessness. Then the reality set in... oh no, I thought, what if I get into trouble for allowing her to leave. Should a child be wandering the hallways unescorted? What if her class is gone somewhere else and she wanders outside in search of them? What if something happens to her? Where does the facilitation of empowerment end and my responsibility to protect children from harm begin? (Radford, 1993)

How is it possible for those with power to study those without power in such a way that the powerless are in some way empowered rather than reconfirmed in their powerlessness? (Payne, 1990). As a community psychologist I believe that the process of conducting research is as important as the outcome itself. Conscious of the power differential that exists between myself and children, it was critical to continuously reflect on my relationship with those being interviewed. As well, I tried to incorporate empowerment principles at every level of the research study by: including an exploratory interview phase during which I spoke casually with children about their lives; reflecting on and analyzing my subjective experience (my feelings) as researcher and paying close attention to children's level of interest and sense of expertise; and by involving two children as co-researchers during the question development and data analysis stages.
3.3 MAKING MEANING

My methodological assumptions about reality and knowledge construction are in keeping with a symbolic interactionist tradition:

Symbolic interactionism sees group life as a process in which people, as they meet in their different situations, indicate lines of action to each other and interpret the indications made by others. This means, obviously, that their respective lines of behaviour have to be built up in light of the lines of action of the others with whom they are interacting. This adjustment of developing acts to each other takes place not merely between individuals in face-to-face association but also between collectivities such as industrial corporations or nations who have to deal with one another, and occurs also in the case of any one of us who gives consideration to the judgement of an outside audience or community in guiding his line of action (Blumer, 1969, p.52).

Human behaviour is not caused by internal forces (e.g., instincts) nor by external forces (e.g., cultural norms). Behaviour is the result of individuals' reflective interpretations of socially derived meanings. According to this position the social world of children can be understood through children's interaction with and interpretation of their social world (Jacob, 1987). Individuals make meaning through ongoing interaction with their social environment. In this way knowledge or meaning is made by community or the individual in relation to social context. The individual and society are inseparable units (Jacob, 1987).

Children's subjective meaning is the basic building block of their social world (Payne, 1990). Thick description of children's daily relationships with adults provides insightful details about the ways in which children experience, interpret, and interact with the adult social world. Symbolic interactionists try to understand the participant's point of view, particularly with regard to interactions. The goal is to make social relationships intelligible, by illuminating the processes by which "meaning" develops and guide actions (Jacob, 1987). I set out to organize my data and consider what I had learned about children's experiences of social power and powerlessness.
3.3.1 Qualitative Data Analysis: Defining My Data Organizing System

I approached the task of reducing or making meaning of my interview transcripts with some uncertainty about where and when to begin. There is disagreement about whether it is preferable to engage in data analysis while in the process of data collection or afterward (see Seidman, 1991; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Early on I decided to proceed along the lines of Seidman’s advice -- preferring to avoid any in-depth analysis of the interview data until I completed all of the interviews. I wanted to avoid imposing on the generative process of the interviews that which I had learned from my earlier participants.

Once all interviews had been transcribed, I began my analysis by reading through three interviews (three seemed like a manageable number to begin with) -- selecting and marking with pencil those excerpts which struck me as meaningful in the context of children’s social power. Judy Marshall (1981) writes about bringing to her data a keen sense of what is important; she affirms the role of her judgement in the process of meaning making (Seidman, 1991). I tried to trust myself as a reader believing that what was of essential interest would stand out in each of the transcripts. Reading through them I noted those chunks which seemed meaningful. My goal, as researcher, was to reduce and then shape the material into a form in which it could be displayed (see Seidman, 1991).

Excerpts from the transcripts were organized into categories. I began by naming each marked excerpt with an identifying word or phrase, a category name, that seemed to capture the essence of the excerpt. I did not begin to read the transcripts with a set of categories for which I wanted to find excerpts. Rather, the categories emerged from the text. Next, I noted each of these preliminary category names in a code book; listing each
category name and a summary about the particular statement that had encouraged me to code the excerpt as such. Upon completing the three interviews, I began to lay out each category page -- clumping any that seemed related. For example, I combined the category I had named "Conflict with Adults" with the category named "Dislike of Adult". In addition, I combined those categories that were opposites, for example the category named "Self Sufficient" and one entitled "Help from Adults". New category labels grew out of this sorting process.

At the end of this first winnowing phase -- I had created 18 clumps of data. Each of these data clumps was placed in a file folder and category labels were attached to each. Referring only to category labels, the data was again clumped resulting in four groups. I began again by reading the coding pages inside each file folder -- looking for the consistency and idiosyncrasy or characteristic nature of each idea. Themes running both within the category and between categories were noted.

Based on this preliminary analysis with three interviews, key "thinking units" (Loftland & Loftland, 1984; cited in Ely et al., 1991) within the data were identified. "Thinking units" refers to a set framework for organizing the data that may be conceptualized as broadly framed sorting files. Thinking units are useful for researchers who begin their final data analysis having already created rather spotty categories (see Ely et al., 1991), in line with the specifics of their studies. In this study, four thinking units emerged from my initial analysis of the three interviews and from my earlier review of the literature in the areas of sexual abuse constructs and the dimensions of social inequality. These key "thinking units" became my major categories and were labelled: 1) Power, 2) Adult - Child Resources, 3) Body-Integrity and, 4) Adult - Child Relationships. Using these four headings to guide my thinking, I was able to analyse and organize all of
the children's data.

The first thinking unit, named "Power", contained all children's statements about power and powerlessness. Sub-categories under this heading were labelled; definition of power; powerlessness; powerful people; kid power; and, resistance. Children's statements about what it means to have power, and who children identified in their daily lives as having power fell under these sub-categories. An example of a statement found under this thinking unit would be 10 year old Charlie's comment that his parents were powerful because, "they're adults and they tell us what to do." Children's examples of personal power and resistance, as well as their moments of felt powerlessness were placed under this thinking unit as well. Nine-year-old Linda, for example, explained that she experienced powerlessness when, "I get in trouble".

The second thinking unit, entitled "Adult - Child Resources", referred to children's independence from as well as their dependence on adults. The thinking unit was made up of seven sub-categories named; self-sufficient; adultness; being older; restrictions; skills; benefits of being a kid; and, decisions. The sub-category "Adultness", for example, contained those excerpts in which children spoke about taking on adult roles, such as in the case where children described their caretaking roles within their families and at school. Nine-year-old Nina, for example, explained how she had not had a good night's sleep the night before because of getting up to care for her baby sister. She said, "I don't want to wake up my mom cause she has the baby.. I don't wake up my mom and dad so I do all the work." In some instances children spoke about the benefits of being a child; Jennifer remarked, "I like, play a lot of stuff and when I get like, when I get 14 or 15 like, I can't play anymore." An excerpt such as this was included as part of the thinking unit called "Benefit of Being a Kid".
Thinking unit three, "Body Integrity", consisted of five sub-categories: physical or personal danger; hitting; physical affection; physical injury; and health/hygiene. Comments associated with children being in danger when walking home alone, or their explanations for why they kissed their relatives hello were identified as belonging within this unit. An example of a comment found under this thinking unit title would be nine-year-old Kevin’s statement, "They [adults] hit you because um they want to learn you a lesson and don’t always fool around."

The fourth thinking unit, "Child - Adult Relationships" contained 13 sub-categories: adult-kid friendships; adults know best; limits; talking to adults; helping adults; compliance; bossed around; conflict; trouble; believability; punishment; lying; and obeying. The sub-categories within this thinking unit were clearly divided into two distinct groups. The first six in the above list reflect children’s positive experiences with and attitudes toward adults. For example, nine-year-old Keith explains that his mother knows best because, "She's gone through the stuff and knows what it’s like and what happens if lets say I start smoking, she knows it's bad for me." The next seven sub-categories, beginning with the sub-category "Bossed Around", represented children’s negative experiences and opinions about child - adult relationships. A comment by ten-year old Elizabeth, for example, appeared in the file labelled "Trouble". She explained that kids get in trouble with adults because, "they do things they [adults] don’t like them to."

3.3.2 Beginning to Write: A Stair Step Approach

After grouping the selected excerpts or bibbits into each of the above mentioned categories and sub-categories, I read through each file folder noting, in my own words, the experience or sentiment expressed within each child’s comment. I used this strategy as a
means of checking on my previously selected sub-categories. The same themes and labels were occurring this second time around. Through these notes I saw the data begin to unfold. The meaning of children's experiences, both similarities and differences, the links between the different sub-categories, and some of the major themes began to emerge.

Returning to work with each of the four major categories, for example, under the category named "Adult - Child Relationships", I summarized each child's comment that appeared within each of the related sub-categories. This organizational step provided me with an overview of the information. Under the category "Adult - Child Relationships" and the sub-category "Conflict", for example, five pages of children's comments were summarized.

I felt ready to begin to write out in sentences what I was interpreting. Using my notes about what each child's comment told me about a particular sub-category I began to do some "hurricane thinking", as described by Kirby and McKenna (1989). On a large piece of paper I wrote each of the four category labels. Following this I placed each sub-category label on the page and made brief notes about the meaning of the label according to children's comments. For example, under the sub-category label, "Adults Know Best" I wrote the comment: adults have experience (protect you; listen to problems; know what's good for you). The next step involved drawing arrows from the different sub-categories showing which linked together. This became difficult because there seemed to be so many possible connections. For example, the previously mentioned "Adults Know Best" sub-category was linked to the "Compliance" sub-category, as well as to "Trouble", "Believability", "Bossed", and "Help Adults" sub-categories. By the time I finished my page had become a blur.

I tried again, this time with the knowledge that I needed to simplify what I was
seeing in order to write about it. I wrote down those sub-category labels that were most
critical to understanding children's experiences. I organized them on the page so that the
stronger, or most pertinent, sub-categories appeared closest to the centre of the page, with
the remaining subcategories appearing further and further away according to strength, or
relevance. The result was 7 sub-category labels in circles and close to the centre, these
were; Limits; Adults Know Best; Believability; Adult-Child Friendships; Compliance;
Trouble; and Conflict. Around these circled sub-categories I wrote in the remaining labels
and those ideas that helped clarify or added a new dimension to those seven labels. All of
the information appeared on one little page. I began to write about my findings.

3.3.3 Trustworthiness of the Data: Including a Member Check Phase

As a qualitative researcher I place importance on determining whether the findings
of my study are useful and trustworthy (see Seidman, 1991). One of the most beneficial
means of affirming the trustworthiness of one's data is by including in the data analysis
stage the opinions of those being researched (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). A member-check
will help verify that you have reflected the insider's perspectives.

As previously acknowledged, the thinking and processing abilities of children are
qualitatively different from those of adults. Such an understanding caused me to
carefully consider my ability, as an adult, to accurately interpret children's information.
There is limited knowledge as to whether data collected, coded, and analyzed by adult
researchers accurately represents children's social understanding (Shuart & Lewko, 1988).
Researching into this very question, Shuart and Lewko found that 12-year-old child coders
were able to perform the research task of constructing and labelling categories, a task
traditionally assigned to adults. It was reported that most child coders reproduced the adult researchers' categorizations despite the absence of a coding scheme or theory to guide their efforts. The differential grouping of data by some child coders, however, suggests that the adult researcher's interpretation may be divergent from some children's understanding. Their work illustrates that there is potential for children's involvement in the data analysis process, not only as a way of confirming adult understanding but as a means of developing new ideas and interpretations.

In response to this possibility, I included the two child co-researchers, Keith and Darlene, in a member check phase. Each child met with me for approximately one hour, during which time we reviewed together a number of extracted responses from their own interviews. They were asked to listen to each excerpt, offer a brief interpretation of what the excerpt meant to them, and comment on what I thought their excerpt meant. My introduction to the child co-researchers and an excerpt from Darlene's member check interview appear in Appendix C (A Member Check Interview). Discussions with Keith and Darlene provided both an opportunity to clarify the experiences they had recounted, as well as to verify the power dynamics identified in the data of all fifteen children.

At the end of each of the two member check sessions I read longer and more explicit vignettes developed from the two children's interviews. Specifically selected was emotionally laden information. Keith and Darlene were asked to comment again on the accuracy of the information, as well as on how listening to the text made them feel. Opportunity was also taken to speak with children about their perceived risk in having such information displayed in print, with pseudonyms attached rather than their own names. Both children confirmed the accuracy of the information and felt that my interpretation matched their own. As well, they indicated that they were comfortable
with their stories appearing in the final document provided names other than their own were used.

3.3.4 **Limitations of the Research**

Part of demonstrating the trustworthiness of your data is to realize the limitations of your study. Certain circumstances, although limiting, are unavoidable for the researcher. Detailing those circumstances helps readers to understand the nature of your data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

In the present study, only 9 and 10 year old children were interviewed in order to increase the likelihood of finding connections between children's social power experiences. It was expected that the inclusion of both younger and older children would result in difficulties due to their differing intellectual and verbal abilities. Discussion about children's experiences of power and powerlessness in their relationships with adults beyond this age group is speculative at best. This study does not provide a developmental perspective of children's lived experiences of social power. Rather it is a snap shot of the experiences and perceptions of fifteen, 9 and 10 year old children. One would expect this perspective to change with age since a child's conception of authority undergoes dramatic change and development in the period between infancy and adolescence (Damon, 1977).

Other limitations of the study are related to the fact that adults (i.e., teachers and parents) selected those children who would be interviewed. It could, therefore, be argued that the children interviewed did not sufficiently reflect diversity of opinion and experience in the area of social power. For example, Grade 4 and 5 children were chosen by school officials on the basis of English fluency. One might guess that teachers also chose those who were their better students. Furthermore, one could speculate that those
children who were preferred by teachers may have also been more inclined to comply with adult power, and hence would have provided this view of children's social power experiences. One could likewise argue that children whose parents permitted them to participate in the study may have been more inclined toward non-authoritative childrearing methods -- thereby resulting in the participation of children who perceive themselves as powerful. While these possibilities remain, children in this study were selected to reflect diversity in the areas of gender, social class, and ethnicity. Children were not selected to represent, in the traditional sense, all possible experiences.

Finally, some parents and school board officials were hesitant to allow children to take part in the study, due to the fear that child sexual abuse would be the topic of discussion. Heightened adult anxiety about children's possible exposure to sexual abuse information forced me to keep out of my interview any specific questions related to children's vulnerability for abuse or experiences of unwanted touching. This posture, in and of itself, is testament to the adult fear surrounding the subject of child sexual abuse, as well as to the authority of adults to define for children those social issues that are either harmful or beneficial.
CHAPTER 4

CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL POWER: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 ORGANIZATION OF THE FINDINGS

Discussed in the following three chapters is the information gathered during interviews with fifteen 9 and 10 year old children. Illustrated in this Chapter are children's extremely sophisticated definitions of social power, as well as their perceptions of the existing age hierarchy in society. Examples of children's felt power along with stories of resistance are offered in Chapter 5, while in Chapter 6 their accounts provide vivid and concrete examples of child powerlessness and adult privilege.

As demonstrated throughout these next three chapters, children have provided rich descriptions of their social relationships with important adults. In general, two kinds of information was obtained from children. First, children's explicit understanding of power and powerlessness were explored; this involved my asking children directly to define power, offer examples of powerful people, as well as disclose personal moments of felt power and powerlessness. Second, children provided pure descriptions of their daily life experiences without any explicit direction to discuss or analyze power. Based on these accounts, instances of power and powerlessness in child-adult relationships were extrapolated.

It became apparent as I reviewed the interview texts that children's responses were decidedly unlike those of adults. While adults easily pick up on open ended questions and speak spontaneously, and sometimes endlessly, on a given topic, children's responses tend to be briefer and more restricted. As a result, I had to do a great deal more probing than is required with adults. Therefore, in developing children's quotes for these chapters it became necessary for me to eliminate my many probes, otherwise the text would have
been extremely lengthy and less succinct for the reader. Leaps in children's texts are marked with three dots (i.e., text ... text), indicating that there has been a jump to another statement and my probe has been eliminated. Two dots in mid text (i.e., text...text) signifies a child’s pause during the statement. In a few instances it was preferable to use the entire interview dialogue, and in these instances my probes appear.

While these data are essentially descriptive, theory about children's social power begins to unfold, and the question of whether or not children can be expected to thwart the exploitative behaviours of adult sexual abusers begins to be addressed.

4.2 CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON SOCIAL POWER

4.2.1 The Difficulty of Defining Social Power

Scholars would attest to the fact that it is a difficult task to concisely define the concept of social power (see Wrong, 1979). A dictionary definition of power includes the following ideas:

*Power* 1. ability to do or act. 2. physical strength or force. 3. control, influence, or authority. 4. exercises authority or influence (The Random House Dictionary, 1978, p. 700).

In this example, power is defined as both personal choice and ability, and the possession of power over others which may involve the use of physical force. For the purpose of this study, and as explained in Chapter 2, social power has been defined in terms that are particularly relevant to the problem of child sexual abuse and its prevention. In this regard, the concept of power-over relationships and authority would seem most pertinent. Power and authority are referred to in this study as closely allied concepts.
To summarize, power-over may be understood as an overt act, in which the child is forced by a more powerful adult to do something which he/she would otherwise not choose to do. In a power-over relationship the adult has control over the child and can tell him/her what to do on the basis of: coercive authority (i.e., an adults' use of force or threats). The conflict perspective of power is commonly referred to as "power-over".

An adult's power over a child may also be less apparent, such as in the case when an adult uses persuasion or manipulation to obtain a child's cooperation. A child's desire to please an adult, for example, provides the adult with a certain degree of personal authority. As well, adults may reward children for their compliance -- resulting in induced authority.

Adult power over children may also be covert, in that the child is socialized to obey more knowledgeable adults -- in which case force, manipulation, or persuasion are not necessary to the demonstration of power. Rather, adult control over children can be achieved through social influence. Adults' greater life experience and knowledge results in their having legitimate and competent authority over children. The notion that powerful individuals use their greater status for the good of those with less power, is referred to as a consensus perspective of power. In the remainder of this Chapter, children's own understanding and definitions of social power are examined.

4.2.2 Children's Definitions of Social Power

Children's understanding of the concept of power was explored by asking each child the question: "What does it mean when I say that person is powerful or that's a powerful person?" No child was unable to answer this question, with very few hesitating over their answer. Overall, children's responses confirmed for me their ability to both think about...
the concept of social power in abstract terms as well as in terms of their everyday personal experiences. There were, however, a few children whose definitions of power were more narrow in scope than those of others their age. It seemed as though these few children searched through their vocabulary for examples of how the word power had been previously used; they offered explanations like, it means "psychic power", "love power", "medicine power", "magical power", or "a powerful writer". As well, a couple of children limited their definitions to the physical realm -- indicating that power meant physically "strong". Interestingly, when these few children were asked who in their family or school was powerful they were each able to accurately name powerful people. Once real life examples of those with power had been named, children were more easily able to articulate the meaning of power. In this way, those few children who were not initially able to clearly define the concept of power were able to explain, in personal terms, those who exemplified power in their lives and subsequently provide reasons why they perceived these people as powerful.

In most instances, children named familiar adults, like parents, grandparents, teachers, and principals as powerful people. In addition, children mentioned prominent community figures, like judges, politicians, and police officers, while some even named same age peers. Examples of their definitions included the following:

Maybe a judge in the court has power ... Cause like he's the judge and he judges if you're guilty or something he has the power over things.
Stephen, 10-year-old

Some kids have power if they're a bully or something.
Linda, 9-year-old

Principals [are powerful]. ... Because they know a lot and like they're the ones that tell us what to do and they set up meetings. They're responsible for what the teachers do.
Charlie, 10-year-old
My mom and dad [are powerful]. ... Cause they tell me what to do.
Anna, 10-year-old

Teachers [are powerful people]. ... Cause they um they always give all the work.
If you don't do it you're gonna have to stay after school.
Kevin, 9-year-old

Sifting through children's words, I noted that the majority of children provided very
comprehensive explanations and examples of social power. Overall, children's definitions
of power incorporated four key notions:

1. power means you possess physical strength and ability
2. power involves the ability to choose or decide for one self
3. power allows you to tell others what to do, and have others obey
4. power gives you the authority to punish others

Weighed next to text-book definitions, their insights into social power seemed
remarkably well developed. Clearly, children were aware of a range of social power
experiences in the world; they identified both power-over relations (i.e., commanding
others) and as well defined power in personal terms (i.e., making one's own decisions). In
general, their responses illustrate that children of this age have an extensive
understanding of the bases of power.

Many children made a connection between physical strength and power. Parents,
older relatives, and teachers, along with athletes who were talented and children who
were exceptionally athletic or bullies were designated as strong and, therefore, powerful
people.

My uncle has power cause he could lift up these big things. ... Julian at
school... um, he's a big kid, he could play basketball really good. ... Um, my
teacher [has power] cause he could throw balls really high.
Ken, 9-year-old
Power was attributed to those who possessed special talents, talents most children did not share, such as athletic abilities. Physical strength demonstrated an individual's competence, as well as their potential to use force with others. In almost all cases, children went on to add to this simple explanation of power, offering two or three of the four key notions in their final definitions. Ten year old Elizabeth, as an example, offered the following definition of power which, in part, included the idea of physical strength:

[People who have power] can do anything they want because they're older and they're stronger and cause they have a lot of power and they have a lot of money and stuff and so they can do anything they want and no one can stop them.

*Elizabeth, 10-year-old*

Central to Elizabeth's definition is the suggestion that power means being able to do as one chooses; a powerful person "can do anything they want". Influence over one's personal decisions or choices was recognized by a number of children as a measure of power.

[When you have power] you get to choose what you're gonna do or something.

*Jennifer, 10-year-old*

[Power] means they [powerful people] make the choices, they um they get to do what they want.

*Darlene, 10-year-old*

As discussed later in Chapter 5, very few children immediately identified themselves as powerful in their own lives. The majority defined social power in terms of a "power-over" relationship. Specifically, children said that power meant one could "tell others what to do", and therefore, make choices and decisions on behalf of others. As such, children felt they did not possess this form of power in their present lives. A "power-over" definition is clearly articulated in the following excerpts:

[Powerful people] they could tell you what to do, like our principal is powerful because she has the control of 400 kids.

*Anna, 10-year-old*
Prime Ministers are powerful cause they work hard for all that they become. And they get the top seating so usually they can be trusted. Usually they're good people. Sometimes they bomb countries and have wars. They don't necessarily start the wars, that's how they have power, they tell people below to do things.

Dennis, 10-year-old

Power] could like mean that he has power over people because like he's a policeman and he could tell people what to do.

Keith, 9-year-old

Principals, policemen, and prime ministers, all possess legitimate authority in society, since they have the right to command others. Norman, a 10-year-old boy, went a step further with this understanding of power saying not only that powerful people tell others what to do, but that people do as powerful people request or demand of them.

People who have power] can order people around, and they'll go do it.

Norman, 10-year-old

In part, powerful people are listened to because they have the power to discipline those who disobey or misbehave. Adults demonstrate their power, by example when they punish or threaten to discipline children.

People that are older than me [have power]. ... My grandmother, my grandpa, mother, father, and brother. ... [I know they have power] because every time I go and do something wrong they're always. .. I always get in trouble. ... [I] get grounded.

Kevin, 9-year-old

A teacher lets say has.. is very powerful because like if you.. they could be rude to you but you can't be rude to them, or if you're rude to them you get sent to the office.

Darlene, 10-year-old

My mom, my dad um my aunts and uncles, and grandma and grandpa [have power]. [I know they have power] cause they're older... because all of my aunts and uncles have kids. ... It's like... they have power when they're getting someone in trouble I guess. ... When they get you in trouble, they have power.

Linda, 9-year-old

A link between being older and being powerful was invariably made by the young people. See, for example, the above statements made by Kevin and Linda who identify
family elders as powerful. Whenever this notion arose, children were asked to further explain the association between age and power. Insights into children's understanding of adult power and an age hierarchy in society are further advanced below.

4.2.3 A Social Power Pyramid: Where Do Children Situate Themselves in the Hierarchy?

... Authority is the central social relation between children and adults. Prior to adolescence, children occupy an inherently subservient social position. Physically they are among the smallest and weakest members of society, and economically they are dependent upon others for their most fundamental needs. Consequently, the child has extremely limited social power and is generally expected to obey those with greater social power -- usually his "elders" (Damon, 1977, p. 167).

In the interactive world of adults and children, those who are older have power over those who are younger. Children appreciated this fact. Other researchers have suggested that children as young as 3 years of age understand relations of gender and racial inequality (see Katz, 1983). Nine-year-old Nina, in keeping with the opinions of her peers, recognised and named, in most simple terms, an age advantage in society.

The older people have the power over the younger people.

Nina, 9-year-old

Without access to those who are younger, Linda explained, adults would have no power.

... [Adults who don't have power are] the ones that don't have kids. ... Well some that don't have kids [also have power]. The teacher that doesn't have any kids, he still has power. But if they're not a teacher or mother or dad, they don't have power.

Linda, 9-year-old

This pyramid of power, based on age, held true even amongst children themselves. Having siblings who were younger in age, for example, resulted in children having a little power in their daily lives. Nine year old Kevin articulates this understanding:
Mostly no, [kids don't have power]. ...Because um if they have a younger brother they have a little power, if they are little or if they're born the last one they have no power. And if um there's a big person they have more power than you.

Kevin, 9-year-old

Children recognized that when they themselves grew older they would earn adult privileges.

[Adults have power] because they're bigger than us, and they know much more than we do. So, as soon as we get up, as soon as we grow up, we're just [the] same as them.

Nina, 9-year-old

One imaginative 10-year-old boy named Stephen provided me with the following story as an explanation for the power disparity between adults and children.

No, [I never feel powerful in my relationships with adults]. ... Because adults, they have like.. they took all the power, and when God gave kids a turn they could only take some of the power, right. And so the kids they grow up and the power spreads into their blood cells [and they become more powerful as they grow older].

Stephen, 10-years-old

Almost all of the children said that they would like to be older, if they were not their present age. Rarely did they wish to be younger. Rather, most desired the privileges of adulthood. Katz (1983) explains that the relative status that society confers upon groups is reflected in children's feelings about their own group. Therefore, male children rarely want to be female, or white children black. Much of a child's own developing sense of identity is based on knowledge of how the social world is organized (Katz, 1983). The children I spoke with saw from example that as they themselves grew older, they would be afforded more opportunities to learn, go places, and try new things.

[I like being 10 because] I get to try all the sports, and you're smarter. ... because you get taught more, you learn. ... I just have more fun when I'm 10 [years old] than [when I was] lower [in age], younger.

(Dennis, 10-year-old)
Children's preferred age ranged from late teens to early thirties, although, there were those who wished to be younger in order to receive attention from adult caregivers. The age of 13 or 14 was identified as a time when their decision making power would begin to change. They were aware that the boundaries of parental authority would be reevaluated and altered during adolescence (Holmbeck & O'Donnell, 1991). At the age of approximately 13 it was expected that they would be able to date, get their ears pierced, and walk home alone from school. This new found power would result because they would be more "grown-up" or "more mature". When probed further it was often found that it was unclear to children why the period of early adolescence was a critical developmental milestone with regard to power and privileges. The boundaries that separate childhood from adulthood were often unclear for children. Nine year old Jennifer, for example, was asked to speak about when she would be allowed to make her own decisions. She responded that her social power, in this regard, would improve at age 12. Questioned further about the differences that would take place in her life by the age of 12, it became clear that she was not certain of the social changes that would unfold. Her frustration over this line of questioning is apparent in the interview excerpt which follows:

Jennifer: My mother will say you can make your own choices now if you want to go play, go play. If I wanted to jump off the second floor, jump off the second floor.

Interviewer: Why will your mother say that when you're twelve?

Jennifer: Because um she keeps on saying you can't do anything until you're 12.

Interviewer: Why? What do you think will be different about you when you're twelve?

Jennifer: Um, I'd know better. I'll know like what to do and what not to do.

Interviewer: How will you know that?
Jennifer: Because um like probably we'll be doing like, [we're] gonna be learning what to do and what not to do in grade 4. I mean grade 5.

Interviewer: I see.

Jennifer: Ok, my friend knows what to do now, [and] what not to do because she was in grade 5.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. So that's coming, you haven't learned that yet?

Jennifer: Ya. I'm gonna be 10 when.. I mean.. ya 10 when I'm in grade 5.

Interviewer: So, maybe you'll know all those things when you're 10?

Jennifer: Right.

Interviewer: Not 12?

Jennifer: Not 12.

Interviewer: Then your mom will let you do it [make your own decisions] when you're 10?

Jennifer: No.

Interviewer: How come? How come 12?

Jennifer: I guess it's her favourite number.

When asked what would be different about them when they became older, children tended to focus on physical attributes, saying they would physically mature or simply change. A number said they would no longer get in trouble, or be told what to do by adults. In part this change would occur because, as adults, they would know better and would stay out of trouble. When older they would learn how to cook, protect themselves, drive a car, get a job, and pay bills. Knowing more and being more responsible meant being able to do more things, those things they were not able or allowed to do as children (i.e., stay out late or live alone). As well they would have greater power by virtue of greater resources, like money. In short, and as Darlene explains, when older life will be better:
I'd like to be 20 [years old]. ... Cause then you can get a job. ... and you could drive, you can do everything. ... then you can do everything in the car or you can get a lot of money from your job and you get a family.

*Darlene, 10-year-old*

When older they would: be physically stronger; have the power to say no to others; no longer be told what to do; make their own decisions and choices; and, avoid trouble and punishment. These changes in personal power would occur because, with age, they would gain knowledge, resources, and skills, and consequently, greater responsibilities. Until that time adults were, rightfully so, in dominant positions of power.

Age inequality seemed quite justifiable to these 9 and 10 year olds. Of course, there were exceptions to this opinion. (Children's experiences of conflict with adults are described in Chapter 6). To a large extent, however, children, regardless of group membership, believed that adult power-over children was earned because of adults' greater life experiences and knowledge. More specifically, children made sense of their lower societal location by drawing attention to the fact that grown-ups know more, are bigger and stronger and, as well, have access to important resources, like money. Dennis explains:

 Mostly all grown ups [have power]. [My] grandparents, they probably have the most power because.. I don't know, they're just older... [they] know more and [have more] money. ... People listen to them. ... I listen to them because.. just [because] you're suppose to. I don't know why they have power. They [just] have power.. that's all!

*Dennis, 10-year-old*

Two messages were apparent: 1) adults have legitimate authority in society in that children are simply expected to obey them, and; 2) adults know more as a direct result of their greater life experiences, and this competence provides them with authority over children. Consequently, adults have the social power to make decisions for children who are less experienced and knowledgable by comparison. Parents, grandparents, teachers,
and principals, for example, have the power or authority to teach children, and make decisions on children's behalf. This socially conferred power also forces adults to carry a substantial responsibility in the socialization of children (Rogoff, 1989).

[Adults are powerful] [be]cause they can teach kids.

*Jessica, 9-year-old*

[I know my parents have power because] they tell us what to do. [They] tell us what to believe.

*Norman, 10-year-old*

Parents [are powerful people]. ... Because they're adults, and they tell us what to do. ... [All adults are powerful] I guess [because] they know more than children. ... [Teachers are powerful] because they have responsibility to teach kids and like they control their temper very well.

*Charlie, 10-year-old*

Adult caretakers used their power and authority to encourage children to be smart as well as safe from harm.

When they [adults] were small they had no power, that's why .. when they grew up they have control of you. [It's good they have control over children]... they just want you [to] be smart and not dumb.

*Kevin, 9-year-old*

Not surprisingly, sex offenders often use their legitimate and competent authority to convince child victims of the valuable sexual training lessons they are receiving (see Chapter 1, section 1.1.4). Based on this "consensus" perspective of adult power, children typically did not interpret the decisions or actions of adults in a negative light. Rather, adults were seen as acting in the best interest of children. Children actively participate in their own socialization by seeking the assistance and advice of adults (Rogoff, 1989)

No one can [tell kids what to do]. ... Except my mom and my teacher cause they're looking after me.

*Stephen, 10-year-old*
My mom and dad [have power] ... cause they tell me what to do. ... And they always, they always go you know if you watch too much TV that’s not good. You should always be reading a book and I read books like practically every day.

Anna, 10-year-old

Children minimized, apologized, and rationalized adult transgressions of power -- stating that the actions of adults were for children’s own good. This was true even in cases when children said they had been physically punished, or felt emotionally frightened. Nine year old Ken offers his justification for his mother’s use of corporal punishment:

... Sometimes when I try to do things the wrong way my mom always spanks me. She scolds me when I do things wrong, not to hurt my feelings. she just scolds me.

Ken, 9-year-old

Adult knowledge and guidance was seen as necessary for children’s well-being and development. Children could not be expected to make decisions for themselves because they have no common sense and behave in silly or irrational ways.

[At the age of 10] you have common sense about [some things, like] not to drink bleach -- like you might when you’re a baby; or to [not] put your mouth on things you found on the street; or to touch really dirty dirty things. .. Like that. ...

[To help a child develop common sense, a parent] punishes them like.. tells them like that that’s not a good thing to do, and he tells them what common sense is. So a kid will know better.

Dennis, 10-year-old

These children seem to agree with the view that children merit paternalism both because they have not yet developed cognitive capacity and because of emotional inconsistency or variable decision making.

While supporting the need for adult power-over children, children also noted that there were certain adults whose power or authority they could more easily challenge. Those adults named as having limited power over children seemed to be adults who did
little in the way of punishing children, or who were peripheral in their lives. One child spoke of not having to listen to relatives who were generally absent from his life and who were therefore kind when visiting. Another felt that camp people, who rarely punished children, could be more easily disobeyed than teachers who are more inclined to punish disobedient children. Dennis, a ten-year-old boy, explained that adults who display anger and authority demonstrate the most power.

My mom [has power], my dad.. [has] a little bit. Um my teachers, my principal [have] an awful lot [of power], my vice principal. Except for one teacher doesn’t [have power]. My French [teacher] doesn’t. I don’t do what she tells me cause she tells me things that are dumb sometimes. ... I guess that all my teachers have power but this one [my current teacher] has lots of power. ... She gets more upset. ... She just can make people do things.

Dennis, 10-year-old

Unknown adults or strangers were consistently mentioned as adults having no or very little authority over children.

[You don’t have to listen to] the adults you don’t know.

Nina, 9-year-old

[You don’t have to listen to] someone you don’t know or.. something like that or someone maybe you do know but it’s just a friend or it’s someone bad.

Keith, 9-year-old

It was interesting to note, however, that many of the children, even during our first meeting, did not identify me as a stranger. Reasons for this included my presence in the school as a "kind of teacher" and the fact that I was trying to teach or help children. Linda explained:

You’re sort of like a teacher [so I have to listen to you]. ... Because you’re in the school and because you’re teaching kids.

Linda, 9-year-old

The fact that I was in their school, a location where adult authority remains largely unchallenged, suggested to children that I had the power to tell them what to do. It seemed as though I had gained the status of teacher because of my location within the
Laupa and Turiel (1986) showed that children, when considering the authority of an adult, take into account the location of the adult, as well as the command. They do not take a unitary orientation to authority. The school, however, does seem to be one location where young children place a great deal of confidence in adults. A case in point was a sexual assault incident which occurred at an Ottawa area school, against a six year old girl. The girl was on her way to the washroom at about 9 a.m. when a middle-aged man approached and identified himself as a doctor, telling the child that the girls' bathroom was broken and he would have to examine her in the boys' washroom. Later that evening she spoke about the incident with her parents. Subsequently, school authorities responded to the assault by increasing security within the school and putting into place a buddy system whereby no child is allowed to leave the classroom without being accompanied by another child (The Ottawa Citizen, 1994). Children's vulnerability to grown ups within the school, (whether they are known or strange adults), is apparent.

4.3 CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF ADULT POWER AND PRIVILEGE: CHAPTER SUMMARY

According to children's definitions, social power refers to personal power (i.e., physical strength, and the ability to choose or decide for one self), as well as power-over others (i.e., having the authority to tell others what to do, and being able to punish others in order to maintain dominance). Children's definitions of power were primarily focused on power-over relations, with many children using the actual term "power-over" in their discussions. Both in terms of personal power and power-over relations, children named adults as being more powerful than children. Children understood social power
inequalities and easily identified an age hierarchy of social power.

Figure 2 clearly depicts those adults identified as being most powerful in children's lives as "known" adults. Adults who were in children's daily lives, like parents and teachers, could instruct or guide children as well as punish them. Least powerful were strangers, although children's understanding of who a stranger is and under what circumstances they can be refused, deserves closer investigation.

Figure 2  The Power of Adults In Children's Lives

Children expressed a consensus view of adult power-over children – that is, adult power over children was considered to be in children's best interest. Adults have legitimate authority, or socially sanctioned power to oversee children's lives, as well as
competent authority with regard to their greater skills and knowledge. It seemed that
children were deeply invested in the logic of adult domination. In the remaining chapters
it will become evident, however, that children's social reality includes conflict and
resistance to adult power. Not all adult actions are interpreted as being in children's best
interest or fair. In their verbal responses to questions specifically addressing social
power, the logic of adult power over children seemed most apparent. Meanwhile, in
discussing concrete daily life experiences children expressed frustration, powerlessness,
and conflict in their relationships with adults. Clarification of this theme will emerge in
Chapter 6. First, children's reported experiences of power in their relationships with
adults are explored in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5

CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL POWER: RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 EXPLORING CHILDREN'S LIFEWORLDS

... One can find illustrations of the hegemony of adults over children. One can find differences in status. And one can also find illustrations of the unexpected competence, natural authority, resourcefulness, and power of children (Gideonse, 1982, p. 272).

Gideonse (1982, p. 276) has been somewhat alone in asking questions like, "In the interactive world of children and adults who has power?" In Chapter 5, children's own insights into their personal power are combined with my interpretation of their lifeworlds. In developing a clearer picture of children's social power I describe their experiences of feeling powerful, their competencies, as well as instances of resistance to adult authority.

5.2 MOMENTS OF FELT POWER, PERSONAL RESISTANCE, AND COMPETENCE

Children were asked if they themselves had ever felt powerful. A number replied with a resounding, "no, never", while others, such as Linda, provided me with rather disheartening sentiments. According to this nine-year-old girl, the right to say "no" is an adult privilege and not a child's:

Um... no [I've never felt powerful]. ...Not really. ... [I feel like I have no power] when I get in trouble. ... My mom tells me to go to my room and pray. ... [I feel powerless] cause my mom's telling me to do something and if I don't I'll get in even more trouble. ... [If I had power] I'd say no [to my mom]. ... When I'm older and she wants me to do something and I'm an adult and I don't want to do it, I can tell her that I don't want to. [But now] no [I can't do that].

Linda, 9-year-old

For many of the children, instances of powerlessness were more easily recalled than moments of felt power. Still, with considerable probing I was able to solicit from children the following accounts of personal power.
5.2.1 **Moments of Physical Power In Children's Lives**

In discussing their personal power, children often began by recounting times in their lives when they had felt powerful with other children rather than with adults. There was general agreement amongst children that they could be powerful in relationships with peers, such as when slightly older/bigger school children or siblings boss those who are younger or smaller. In addition to verbal bossing, the threat or use of physical force was frequently relied upon in the demonstration of power between peers. Ten year old Elizabeth spoke about the equity of power between same aged and sized children. She recounted an actual story about how she had felt powerful because of successfully fighting against her girlfriend:

[Children] have power against each other... Like if I have power against.. if I had a fight against Rita we'd both have [an] equal amount of power. Even though she is [a bit] older than me. We have [an] equal amount of power because... same height, same age, same weight... [I felt powerful] when I had a fight with my best friend [Rita]. Um, she may be older and um.. she was trying to beat me up because we were playing a game and um I was on time and she said I wasn't and I called Rita an over-lord and I got her down on the ground and I started.. and I got her outfit all dirty.

*Elizabeth, 10-year-old*

Both boys and girls recited times when they had felt powerful because of physically defending themselves against others their age.

Children's experiences of personal power were sometimes related to more positive forms of physicalness. A number of them stated that they enjoyed being 9 or 10 years old because of their ability, or their power, to play and be physical. Some recognized that, as children, they got to engage in activities that adults could not or would not take part in because they risked injury, or because it went against typical adult behaviour. Children saw that, with age, the rules around proper conduct would change their desire to play and have fun. In a sense, the ability to play was recognized by children as a type of power.
possessed by the young.

It's pretty fun being a kid cause you get to do stuff. ... [You get to] do kid things like crawl in the mud, and go down ravines.. like fall on the ground and go under tables and... [Adults don't do those things] maybe because they have jobs and they have like different kinds of clothes .. they have dressup clothes. ... Ya, and um when there's money on the ground you [can] pick it up [but] when you're older like... you don't want to be rude.

Stephen, 10-year-old

Some things about 9 is fun, you get to go on all the baby rides. The playing is fun, you get to go swimming, you get to do all these um activities that the grown ups can't do right.

Nina, 9-year-old

Personal power, as described by Keith, was related to his athletic ability:

[I felt powerful] well, when I hit the first grand slam on my T-ball team. ... Especially because I did the first thing [grand slam] on my team.

Keith, 9-year-old

Those who were unable to physically master sports activities sometimes reported these experiences as times of felt powerlessness. Similarly, feelings of powerlessness were expressed by those (particularly boys) who had been "picked-on" by bigger or slightly older school children. Peers who were bullies, although negatively perceived by many children, were consistently named as powerful people.

No children spoke about their use of physical power against adults. In fact, 9-year-old Ken, said that speaking back to adults would designate him as a bully -- a very inappropriate role for children to take with adults.

I'm not suppose to answer big grown ups [back]. ... Never. ... Because if I do I might be like a bully to them. ... They'd [adults would] feel real sad that I said that and then I'll have to go to the office.

Ken, 9-year-old

A most basic notion of prevention programs is that children can learn to oppose the demands and advances of adult abusers. Rarely was such power apparent in children's daily lives. David Finkelhor and his colleagues (1994) suggested that young people who
tried to fight back against sexual assault assailants were at greater risk of suffering injury. Nevertheless, these children reported that they had felt active in their defence, perhaps indicating that the emotional trauma suffered by these children would be less extreme due to their sense of agency in the protection of their bodies. The authors summarized their thoughts on this pattern of response as follows:

... Even if school programs did not help children to thwart victimization, they apparently helped children to feel more successful. This is very important in the light of literature that shows that when crime victims feel like they had some control over a victimization, they recover more quickly. It also allays the concern of some writers who have worried that trained children might, in the wake of victimizations, feel more discouraged than other children because they had been led to expect too much. This apparently is not the case (Finkelhor et al., 1994, p. 12)

According to this account, children can feel empowered through training programs without there being alteration in their actual position in society. Children may benefit from permission to physically fight against those who would harm them, in much the same way that women have been trained in rape prevention initiatives to fight back against their assailants. We cannot ignore the fact, however, that these well trained children were more likely to have suffered injury because of having fought back against more physically powerful adult abusers. There also remains the question of whether or not children always understand their right to protect themselves and, perhaps more important, if they are always able to predict dangerous situations?

Certainly, a few of those children interviewed spoke about a sense of personal power in those instances when they had defended themselves against others who were threatening to harm them. Their stories, however, involved their successful defence against aggressive peers and not adults. Charlie, for example, told about an occurrence when he had opposed the bullying of a peer and felt powerful because of his actions:
I was in this elevator and a boy kept me and a younger boy in the elevator. Um, he used his foot to block the door so we're closed [in] and we couldn't go cause the elevator was stuck. At first I pressed the button so the door would open and then I looked around like.. he was not there. So, the door closed again and I knew he was hiding somewhere and he kept the door shut again. So, I pressed the alarm button and like I press[ed] it for about five or six minutes. [But] he still wouldn't let go [of the elevator button] and the superintendent came up and explained to him.. and then he got in trouble. And he said next time you do that.. one more time and I can charge you. ... [I felt powerful because] I guess I knew [know] what to do next time. Like, I learned how to take care of myself.

Charlie, 10-year-old

For Jessica, knowing how to protect herself and her sister from hostile peers was related to her personal sense of power:

[I felt powerful] when I started like when someone started to teach me how to fight. ... Cause now I know that no one will touch [physically fight] my sister any more.

Jessica, 9-year-old

Power derived from physical attributes was experienced by children with other children, and not with adults. Clearly, those who are bigger and stronger can tell others what to do, or use their strength to enforce their commands. Children, whether knowledgeable or not, cannot escape the very concrete fact that adults are bigger and stronger.

5.2.2 Moments of Competence In Children's Lives

The possession of special or superior knowledge resulted in a feeling of power for a few children. Dennis explained to me that he felt powerful when he knew the right answer in class:

Well I felt like that [powerful] one time when I said something that the teacher didn't know. ... [She] said 01 centimetres and it should have been centimetres cubed and I said correct, cubed. She said right. ... [I felt powerful because] ... I knew something that the powerful person in the classroom didn't.

Dennis, 10-year-old
Children are powerful when they possess superior knowledge in the same way that adult authorities do. Intellectual attributes that place children in the role of knower were not, however, readily mentioned by children. In most cases children perceived knowledge would gradually develop with age. In general, they had adopted the belief that children are unknowing, unskilled and incompetent in comparison to adults.

While most children said they possessed a number of skills, and were good at things such as drawing, cooking, sports, spelling, math, reading, and writing stories, these abilities were not reported as accomplishments that made them powerful in their lives. They did not offer examples of their personal power in relation to their ability to take care of themselves on a daily basis. I, on the other hand, found their competence around personal care to be quite exceptional and beyond what I had imagined. As Gideonse advises:

...Our images of children's incompetence, lead us to believe that they are less competent than they are (Gideonse, 1982, p. 276).

Perhaps adult expectations of children's incompetencies influences children's own self perception of ability and dependency.

I was surprised, and often impressed, by children's self-sufficiency. A good number of them were personally responsible for getting themselves up and ready for school during the week. According to a number of them, they alone prepared themselves for school. The absence of parents during children's morning routines was more apparent in families with lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Many of these children explained that their parents, usually mothers, were prevented from attending to their needs in the morning because they worked extremely early or late, or because they needed sleep due to pregnancy or being up at night with younger siblings. A number of these mothers were single care givers. As a result, children in these households got up on their own, attended
to personal hygiene, (such as brushing their teeth, combing their hair, washing their face), got dressed, and prepared their own breakfast. In some instances, siblings woke one another up and made breakfast for each other. A few even managed to do household chores (like sweeping floors, and taking out the garbage) before heading off to school. Those who were from more middle class homes tended to describe routines in which their mothers and fathers participated; these parents woke children up, prepared breakfast, and sometimes drove them to school.

While children generally related details about their ability to care for themselves, almost all children said that parents monitored their bath and shower times. In particular, parents ensured bath water was the correct temperature, and that children had cleaned themselves properly. In this way, physical privacy was not completely established in the lives of these 9 and 10 year old children. A few even reported that their mothers continued to bath them. Clearly, young children’s dependency on adult knowledge with regard to bath-time safety and proper hygiene results in their physical availability for abuse.

Overall, children described a variety of competencies in their efforts to care for themselves on a daily basis. In the next section it will become evident how their ability to caretake at times extends into their relationships with adults.

5.2.3 Moments of Being Listened to and Obeyed By Adults

I probed children to speak about their experiences of power -- asking specifically for examples of personal power in their relationships with adults. Their stories often involved being listened to by adults. A few of the children spontaneously reported that they had a little bit of power at home and were listened to by caregivers. This experience
also tended to be related to socioeconomic class, with middle class children expressing this attitude more so than children from lower socioeconomic class homes. Charlie, a 10-year-old boy from a lower class family did, however, recount a time when he had felt powerful in his negotiations with his father:

Like once I was doing my work and I scribbled all over by book, um I guess I wasn't in a real good temper that day and my father came in [and] said what what are you doing like.. I don't have enough money to pay for that book. It's the school's, your teacher told you to bring the book home to do your work and you should just do it, you're not suppose to scribble all over it. So, I got in trouble and he said like, he told me what to do and what not to do and I started screaming back. I guess that that was very surprising that I started yelling back at my father. That was my very first time and I thought .. what a good experience.. I really felt good after I yelled at him. And then he said if you don't want me to yell at you what do you think I should do to you. Like what kind of punishment should I do to you? Give me one. I thought for a minute and I said write lines.

Charlie, 10-year-old

Charlie's description makes it clear that this experience was an unusual way for his father to behave when punishing him. In contrast, Darlene, whose family could be defined as more middle class, explained that negotiation is a part of her on-going relationship with her mother:

Well, I feel that at home I get.. I have pretty much half the power. ... Cause my mom has a lot and I have a little. ... Well, if we get into an argument, I can always speak out about how I feel.

Darlene, 10-year-old

Some reported feeling powerful when they were able to make demands, or tell adults what to do, due to special occasions or circumstances, such as on their birthday or when they were sick.

On my birthday [I feel powerful] when people.. who are my uncle and my mom and dad would buy me stuff and I'd tell them what to buy.

Norman, 10-year-old

One of the most interesting themes to emerge from children's interviews was that their personal power seemed to increase when they assisted adults. By helping adults at
school, for example, children got to avoid less desirable classroom activities. In addition, they got to be with friends and receive thanks from adults in charge. For Elizabeth, helping teachers at school meant she had the authority of an adult bestowed upon her, hence, other children would obey her.

When I help out with my teacher I’m powerful toward the kids cause teacher says I’m teacher’s helper. Like I help on trips because he’s new to the school and he doesn’t know very well [what to do], so I’m the helper and the kids have to listen to me and the teacher. But I don’t boss them around and tell them to do this, that, and this. I just tell them to try and listen to the teacher and stuff and behave.

Elizabeth, 10-year-old

Similarly, the benefits of helping adults at home resulted in children being listened to by adults. Most interestingly, a number of children explained that they had achieved a feeling of personal power by taking care of sick or emotionally needy adults, or by helping adults in the caretaking of other children. As caretakers, children were listened to by adults. This pattern was most evident amongst girls, who indicated that caretaking made them feel powerful because they could tell dependent or needy people what to do. In the quotes that follow Anna and Jennifer explain their feelings of being powerful when caring for those in need:

...She [my aunt] stayed in there [the hospital] for a month and they treated her. [Then] she stayed at my house and she had this nurse and then after I helped her out... I feel powerful when I help around. I get to tell my aunt what to do.

Anna, 10-year-old

Ya, I feel powerful when I watch [babysit] my sister and tell her what to do.

Jennifer, 10-year-old

A number of the girls, along with one boy in particular, expressed very adult-like concerns and nurturing tendencies for the adults in their lives: they worried about them when they were sick, saw to their needs, and offered understanding and reassurance to them in moments of distress. Nina, for example, described sentiments of concern for her
pregnant mother:

My mom gets especially worried because she's really pregnant right now, so she really gets worried right. Sometimes when people are sick they get really worried. So, my mom gets a lot [worried]. She gets like she gets so she like goes, oh what's gonna happen, what's gonna happen? I tell her to calm down and all this stuff.

*Nina, 9-year-old*

Upon analyzing the data I was quite amazed with how often I found examples of children's emotional and physical caretaking of adults. At that time I labelled these accounts as instances of "adultness" in children. Children described how they worried about and cared for family members who were elderly, sick, performed household chores, and looked after younger siblings to help alleviate some of the stress faced by their over-worked parents. It became apparent that these children were extremely sensitive to the emotional needs of significant adults in their lives. Based on their reports, it could be deduced that children's emotional sensitivity and caretaking behaviour was, in part, reinforced by the resulting benefit of feeling powerful in their lives while in this role. Additionally, children closely observe the emotional states of adults as a means of controlling their lives.

Like many oppressed classes and castes, children might be said to be far more knowledgeable about their oppressors (adults) than adults are about children. That is a competence we give them little credit for; without it, how many fewer would survive. Children are skilled manipulators and sharp social observers of the adult world around them. They are as quick, certainly, and often quicker in understanding the interpersonal dynamics of emotional danger, in and out of the home, than we give them credit for (Gideonse, 1982, p. 276).

In a less positive vein, children's desire to take care of adults may impede their ability to effectively separate themselves from abusive adults who convince children of their need for a child's special care and attention. Children rarely feel victimized during a sexual contact with an adult because sex offenders put so much effort into making children feel like sexual partners rather than victims.
It is not difficult to imagine how children's sense of being in control of adult emotionality and well-being could be used to an abuser's advantage. Such dynamics may provide clever adults with opportunity to manipulate children into believing their care and help is critical to the adult's happiness. The irony rests in the fact that children's sense of power, which results from their taking on a caretaking role with significant adults, may actually provide abusive adults with a means for over-powering children's defenses.

5.2.4 Moments of Resistance in Children's Lives

That children utilize their powers in often devastating ways -- for example, creative civil disobedience, the "buy-or-cry" extortion racket in toy stores, the manipulation of adult fears of embarrassment in public places -- seems clear once we start asking what children can and do instead of assuming that they cannot (Gideonse, 1982, p. 278).

Children's stories of personal resistance, those times in their lives when they had successfully said no to adults, proved most enlightening. Moments of opposition, while often only minor acts of defiance, stood out during the interviews because they were significant departures from children's usual compliance to adult authority. Appearing here exclusively are children's success stories. Children do not, however, experience a world in which their assertiveness is positively viewed or received by adults. Children's experiences of powerlessness when opposing adult authority are more thoroughly examined in Chapter 6.

Children spoke with some pride about those instances when they had successfully argued their point against an adult authority figure and won! They tended to say no to adults at home more than at school since the majority believed that there was little they could do when teachers asked them to do something they did not want to do. As Keith
explained, teachers are put in charge by parents, and so they have the right to punish children when they disobey. Others insinuated that there was a common alliance between adults, between parents and school staff. Children complied at school because they feared getting in trouble with school officials and subsequently parents.

Not much [you can do if a teacher asks you to do something you don't want to do] unless they say you have a choice. [Like] if you don't want to do it, stay here. ... [You can't say no to a teacher] cause a teacher um your parents ask them um and drop you there and say if you're bad you should listen.

*Keith, 9-year-old*

[If a teacher tells you to do something you don't want to do, you can't do anything] not really, cause um [you] can't really argue with a teacher. ...If you don't do it you could go to the office, but that's why I usually do it. what they say.

*Darlene, 10-year-old*

Still, some did report minor acts of resistance against school authorities, even when facing certain punishment. The following instances of resistance at school were offered by children: begging with a teacher not to be punished, resisting standing in the hall and agreeing to go to the office instead, and refusing, against the advice of school personnel, to go home when ill. Linda described her resistance of a teacher's seating arrangement:

In math I have to sit beside this guy Simon in my classes and he really bugged me a lot so I keep on telling my French teacher that I don't want to sit beside him [and I got moved].

*Linda, 9-year-old*

Greater creativity was apparent in their attempts to resist the authority of parents and guardians. Their strategies for saying "no" to an adults' request at home included: pretending to be busy with other activities, pretending they did not hear or had forgotten, or getting younger siblings to perform the task in their place.
Well, when I have to uh like clean ... my room, instead of doing that I use my sister. ... I hold her [in my arms] so that my .. I don't have to clean it. ... My small brother does it. ... I watch her [my little sister] so that my parents could see [that] I'm watching her and so I'm very busy so that my parents can tell somebody else [like my little brother] to do it.

Jennifer, 10-years-old

However, as 10 year old Norman commented, "mostly if my parents ask me to do something, they expect me to do it."

A few children felt that there was a limit to what they would obey, saying they would refuse an adult who told them to do dangerous or unsafe things, such as jump off a bridge or run into traffic. One little girl explained that she would not take a hot kettle off the stove, even when her mother asked her to, for fear of burning herself. This is in keeping with the findings of others who have studied children's patterns of obeying authority figures (see Laupa & Turiel, 1986; Damon, 1977). These researchers reported that under extreme circumstances children rejected the commands of authorities. For example, children believed that mothers could not tell them to steal or do something that would directly harm them (Damon, 1977). All children studied (4-to-9-year-olds in Damon's study; 7-to-11-year-olds in Laupa & Turiel's study) rejected extreme scenarios which were presented in hypothetical story situations. Findings suggest that children place boundaries on the functions of authority. However, as in the prevention program movement, we must be cautious about drawing links between knowledge and behaviour. Children may believe that they would reject commands that would place them in danger, while in reality it may be extremely difficult for them to act on such beliefs. Saying no to powerful adults may be difficult for children regardless of the command.
As stated in the previous Chapter, children believed that they could say no to people they did not know. Strangers were perceived as readily identifiable "bad people". Two young boys, Keith and Dennis, both from middle class families, aptly commented that it is good to be able to say "no" to adults, particularly bad adults who are offering them drugs or wanting to harm them.

What if some bad adult's trying to sell you drugs or something bad, like hurt you or something, you just can't say ok or something it's good to say no.

*Dennis, 10-year-old*

Dennis, in continuing this conversation, noted that it is difficult to say no to good adults like a parent because it hurts their feelings.

Sometimes it's hard [to say no] when they're good adults, like when you don't want to go somewhere like shopping and then um and like you say no. It's hard to say no to your parents, I don't know why, you think that you'll hurt them.

*Dennis, 10-year-old*

While strangers were identified as holding no power or authority over children's lives, community professionals such as police officers and doctors were deemed powerful people by children. Ten year old Jennifer told a story about how she had, out of fear, successfully refused to let a hospital nurse administer a needle. Having a powerful adult listen to her wishes seemed to be a rare occurrence for Jennifer. She told the story during both interview sessions, proudly offering this instance as a time in her life when she herself had felt powerful:

I went to the hospital, right. And I I use to have this kind of sickness [pointing to her stomach]. And then after [they examined me] they wanted.. they were going to operate.. [give me an] operation. And so after that they were gonna put a needle in it, in my stomach, so the pain would go away. And I said, "No"! I thought it was gonna hurt. So she [the nurse] got me.. she took.. instead of putting the needle in [my stomach] she took [got] a pill and told me to drink it.

*Jennifer, 10-year-old*

Jennifer's story of resistance is reassuring in that she was able to protect and decide on behalf of her own body. Interestingly, Jennifer's mother was present during this
ordeal, but, unfortunately, it remains unclear whether Jennifer's mother encouraged her rebellion against the nurse's authority or not.

Below I summarize what was learned about children's power and how it relates to their ability to protect themselves from personal harm.

5.3 CHILDREN'S MOMENTS OF FELT POWER: CHAPTER SUMMARY

Overall, children identified personal experiences of power in their lives which were closely tied to their definitions of power. Named as their moments of power were those times when they were able to: command others; successfully refuse or resist the commands of adults, and; demonstrate superior or special physical or intellectual skills. Even though children may feel powerful in these ways, there are associated risks for children who act in powerful ways but who continue to possess less power than adults. This point is further clarified according to the three kinds of power named by children.

A central theme related to children feeling powerful in their relationships with adults was their ability to command adults. Children commented, for example, that they felt powerful when adults obeyed them when they helped adults at home and school or when they looked after the needs of adults. Little girls in particular were sensitive to the physical and emotional states of significant adults. Such dynamics between children and known adults may help to foster an illusion of equality in child - adult relationships. As a result, adults who wish to abuse children can easily manipulate children into believing that they are powerful and therefore willing sexual partners in an intimate relationship. As explained in Chapter 2, children are not capable of consenting to such relations since they are dependent on adults and less knowledgable about the consequences of sexual
Children's actual power was most clearly demonstrated in their acts of resistance when they directly challenged adult authority. According to children's reports, being able to refuse adults was dependent upon: who the adult was (e.g., known adults like teachers and parents were harder to refuse than community professionals, while strangers were the easiest to refuse); the location of the adult (e.g., adults located in the school were more difficult to refuse than were adults who were in children's own homes), and; the commands of the adult (e.g., children believed they could refuse commands that placed them in danger). Generally, saying no to the commands of others was seen as an adult privilege, and was inappropriate for children. Most children did, however, feel both a right and a need to refuse the commands of adults who were strangers and potentially "bad" people. While children gave instances where they had successfully refused the commands of parents, teachers, and community professionals the threat of punishment loomed large. As detailed in Chapter 6, children's power to refuse adult commands is minimal in comparison to their experiences of powerlessness and compliance.

Superior physical abilities presented children with opportunity to feel personally powerful. Physical strength, for example, was used as a means of forcing or resisting the power of others, in particular other children. The use of physical force against adult authorities was not mentioned by any of the children. A question raised by the work of Finkelhor et al., (1994) is whether children who physically defend themselves against abusers, regardless of greater physical injury, recover more readily from the trauma because of feeling active in their defense. The extent of children's injuries and feelings of self-blame because of failed attempts to stop the abuse remain serious issues needing further exploration.
However mundane their experiences, children's stories of personal power illustrated their consciousness of social power dynamics in their daily lives with adults and peers, as well as an awareness about the limits of their power.
CHAPTER 6

THE CONTINUUM OF POWERLESSNESS IN CHILDREN'S EVERYDAY LIVES: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The continuum of powerlessness concept, (derived from the feminist concept of a "continuum of violence" in the lives of women), is a helpful model for theorizing about the link between children's everyday life experiences and those extreme circumstances identified as violence against children. The continuum concept helps draw attention to the fact that all children experience some form of powerlessness and adult power in their lives. As demonstrated in this Chapter, all forms of powerlessness are serious and impact children's self-perceived ability to protect themselves from adults. In this research study, I have explored and documented the common place, the daily social relations that take place between children and adults, in part, to illustrate how children's "ordinary" social experiences of powerlessness are related to those dynamics which give rise to children's sexual victimization. In this Chapter, children's accounts depict the ways in which adult power over children contribute toward making them available for adults who wish to exploit them. As discovered in the following analysis three social realities promote children's state of powerlessness: 1) children's dependence on adult guidance, decision making, as well as resources; 2) children's limited credibility or believability in the world of adults, and; 3) children's physical vulnerability along with the legitimate use of punishment by adults against children. The Chapter is organized around these three bases of powerlessness.

6.1 ADULT DECISION-MAKING AND CHILD COMPLIANCE

In this first section, I begin to expose those reasons why children comply with adult decisions and commands. First, I expound upon an earlier made point which was that
children attribute positive intentions to adults in positions of authority. As described in Chapter 4, children unanimously expressed the opinion that adults should make decisions on their behalf because they have more knowledge and skills than children. Children saw adults as competent authorities and deferred to these experts.

Limits and rules are imposed on children by adults because they have children's best interest at heart and want to keep them safe from harm and help them to develop optimally. Children's compliance frequently rested on assumptions similar to that expressed by Kevin:

Always do the things they [teachers] want you to do cause they want you to be smart and learn.
Kevin, 9-year-old

Children's compliance was also influenced by the fact that adults have resources that are not at children's disposal -- therefore, children are dependent on adults who possess money and have control over goods and services. Children who want to go to a movie, for example, might not get to decide which movie to see since it is an adult who is paying for the excursion. In this way, adults have opportunity to induce or reward children for their compliance.

Finally, and perhaps most important, children comply with adult decisions and demands because they are afraid to say "no". Adults are coercive authority figures. By complying with adults, children have a greater likelihood of avoiding punishment and the removal of privileges and, as well, are more likely to be praised for their good behaviour. As described in the previous chapter, children sometimes do resist adult authority, however, they know all too well that the price of such resistance is often punishment. Under such conditions the easiest path for children is the road of least resistance, that is, compliance with adult wishes and commands. These dynamics are described below.
6.1.1 Adult Competence: Children Depend on the Guidance and Decision Making of Adults

It would appear that there is a continuum of adult decision-making power and child compliance, with children's positive and negative sentiments about adult power appearing at the opposite ends of the spectrum. Along the more positive end of the continuum, children agree with adult decisions, showing no or little resentment or resistance to adult requests. The understanding that adults know best and the belief that the actions of significant adults are rooted in "good intentions", encourages children to comply with adult wishes. In this sense, children hold a consensus perspective of adult power. Those who hold this view of social power stress the good that the powerful can do to improve people's lives. On this basis, adults have the right to issue directives and children have the related obligation to conform. These instances, to a large extent, occur when children can see the reasons for adult decisions and when the decisions do not totally ignore children's own desires or needs. In these moments, children often express feeling grateful for the guidance of adults, whose intentions are interpreted as helpful and not hurtful.

Limits or boundaries are imposed on children by those who are older and who have authority in children's daily lives. In particular, children frequently spoke about parents and other family members setting rules and making demands on them. While it is clear that school officials, such as teachers and principals, also place limits on children, the school setting was less often mentioned by children in this regard. School rules are institutionalized and are therefore not negotiated on a daily basis with children. Parents and guardians, on the other hand, tend to set curfews and monitor time and children's activities but, at times, made exceptions. Children were required to come home for dinner and reminded to be in bed by a certain hour. Reasons for limits were clear to most children who agreed that decisions such as these, while they may not always like them,
were in children's best interest.

Children believed that they would make their own personal decisions when they themselves became adults at approximately 18 to 25 years of age. By that time they would know what to do and not do. Until then, adults got to make decisions because they have skills and knowledge that children do not possess. Dennis, quoted below, clearly expressed his desire to comply with adult decisions. Dennis, like other children his age, was able to see the value in adult decisions and therefore chose to comply with their requests:

... [I listen to what adults tell me to do] cause I agree with what they're telling me. Like it's ok. I don't care or something like that, or if I have to do the dishes or something... it's a job. It's like part of being in a family... even though I don't really want to [do the dishes].

Dennis, 10-year-old

Adults sometimes make good or fun decisions too, and on these occasions it seemed completely fair that they got to decide on behalf of children. Children's concrete egocentric focus on behavioral outcomes resulted in their perceiving adult decisions as fair so long as the choice had resulted in children having fun. Stephen described a moment of conflict between him and his mother. Having tried to oppose his mother's decision to attend a family picnic and instead visit with a friend, Stephen's words reflect his preoccupation with the outcome of the final decision more than on his right to make his own choices:

Well, I just went to the family picnic [even though I wanted to go to my friends house instead]. it [the picnic] was really fun. ... [My mom's decision] was good... my friend came over a couple of nights later...so... [it was] pretty fair. ... Because, well if I went to my friend's house well my whole family.. I'd miss out, miss out on a fun time. ... [If it hadn't been fun, it wouldn't have been fair] because I really wanted to go to my friends' place.

Stephen, 10-year-old
In addition to his having fun, Stephen's mother did not ignore her son's wish to visit with his friend and negotiated a later visit between the two boys. Attending to his desire to visit with his friend and having fun at the picnic resulted in Stephen interpreting his mother's decision as fair.

Although children generally provided rational explanations for why rules and boundaries needed to be imposed on them by adults, they were also clear that there were many instances in their daily lives when they did not like being told what to do by adults. Toward the other end of the continuum were more negative sentiments. Children said they disliked being 9 or 10 years of age because they felt subordinate to adults, saying they were often times "bossed around" by those who were older and in positions of authority. In these instances children held a conflict perspective of adult power -- identifying the power inequalities between themselves and adults as unfair.

Children resented being bossed by family members, including older siblings, parents, and grandparents, and expressed frustration at being told to do household chores, go to sleep, be quiet, or go to school, when they did not want to. Being bossed by adults at school, such as teachers and principals was, again, less frequently mentioned by children. It seemed that young people experienced more free will at home than at school, and were therefore more likely to oppose or contradict the authority of adult family members than school officials. It was my impression that children's compliance was more rigorously enforced within the school system and was not labelled by children as being "bossed" but rather, as normal institutional protocol.

In those more extreme circumstances children felt helpless and unable to say no to adults, unable to argue in their own defence when wrongly punished, and unable to
oppose or express their anger toward adult authority figures. In short, children described
daily experiences in which they complied with adult demands, often against their will,
because their experience in the world had taught them that to do otherwise would be
futile and merely lead to trouble and/or punishment.

Adults decided on children's behalf, often dictating choices that went against
children's personal preferences. While children began by saying that this fact was unfair,
many went on to contradict themselves by defending adults' right to choose or decide on
behalf of children. A duality in their understanding of adult decision making power
became apparent. It seemed that children had blurred boundaries when it came to adult
decision making power; while they expressed their resentment and frustration in certain
situations, they also defended the right of adults to make these choices for children.
Often, children stated that adult decisions were fair, while at the same time describing
their felt powerlessness. Nine-year-old Linda talked about being bored in choir practice
and singing songs she disliked. She concluded, however, that it was fair for teachers to
decide on the songs without consulting children. Her tone of despair and even anger
about the experience are opposite to the message she imparts:

*Interviewer:* What was the worst thing that happened to you today?

*Linda:* This morning, all morning, I went with the primary choir and we had to
sit there and listen to the other people and then we had to sing.

*Interviewer:* Why was that the worst thing?

*Linda:* Cause it was so boring.

*Interviewer:* Why was it boring?

*Linda:* Cause all the songs were.. I don't know, they're not nice, I don't like them.

*Interviewer:* Well, who gets to choose the songs that you sing?

*Linda:* The teachers.
Interviewer: How come the kids don't get to choose?

Linda: I don't know, cause the teachers are older I guess.

Interviewer: Do you think that's fair?

Linda: Um... ya... I guess... ya.

Children were probed to speak about the kinds of personal decisions they got to make for themselves. A number said they usually chose what they would eat for dinner or wear. Although, in most instances, parents had bought and therefore selected their food and clothes for them. There were those children, like Jessica, who spoke of their frustration when they experienced moments of conflict with mothers who insisted on their attire:

Sometimes you can't get your own way. ... Like we have [recently] bought new shoes. Um, my mother wanted to get us strap shoes. But I said no way I'm not a baby any more because um she still wanted to get strap shoes. And they didn't have a size, my size and Debbie's size [my sister] and I said great.

Jessica, 9-year-old

Children, like Jessica, reconciled themselves with the thought that they would make their own choices when they were older and had their own money to buy their clothes and shoes. Being bossed around or told what to do was considered to be an age specific experience -- children believed that they would no longer be bossed once they themselves became older. Being bossed by elders, however, was simply a childhood reality:

Sometimes people can boss me around. ... My parents tell me what to do. ... My parents tell me go to sleep and I have to. ... Once I get to fifteen, fourteen I don't have to go to sleep right away.

Jennifer, 10-year-old

In children's terms adults make good and bad choices on their behalf and they simply have to take the good with the bad.
Sometimes they [adults] decide for me good things, sometimes they decide some bad things. .. When they do that.. if they decide something good, I feel good and when they're doing something bad, I feel bad.

*Jennifer, 10-year-old*

Children’s understanding of adult resources and their compliance as a result of this form of adult power is discussed in the next section.

6.1.2 *Adult Induced Authority: Children Desire Adult Attention and Resources*

In addition to protecting and teaching children adults provide children with an opportunity to experience the world -- without adult resources, such as money and transportation, children have virtually no access to certain experiences and pleasures.

Um, you can do a lot of stuff with adults. Go to the movies, drive around, that's about it.

*Norman, 10-year-old*

[I don't like being a kid] cause like when I really want something and I have the money for it I can't like just get in the car and drive away. ... Cause I'll get stopped. ... [Kids can't drive] cause they don't have their license to drive.

*Stephen, 10 year-old*

Adults have the power to manipulate or induce children's compliance because they have resources and can bribe children with money or special outings -- luxuries which are typically not at children's disposal. Elizabeth described her vulnerability during a situation in which she was being bossed at home by her older brother, who was left in charge while her mother was out. She explained her reason for complying with his demands during our second interview:

[I don't like being 10 because] you get bossed around by your older brother. ... Sometimes when mom's out my brother will give me two dollars for the whole night for me to do everything for him. Get him a cup of juice, get him some ice cream.. change the channel for him. ... He doesn't do that anymore [pay me money to do everything for him]. Because sometimes my mom only goes out for 5 minutes and she says she's going out for half an hour and she comes back and she sees me doing this stuff and she whispers to me in the kitchen what are you doing. I go Bob's gonna pay me two dollars to do this. My mom walks over
[and says to him] what do you think you're doing with Elizabeth? And then it's over. But he doesn't do it anymore. ... [I went along with him when he did it] cause I was only small and, it was stupid, I wanted the money.

Elizabeth, 10-year-old

In addition to resources, adults also possess personal authority -- children want to please adults who they admire and love. Children's actions, often times, seemed to be motivated by their desire to make adults happy, to not worry adults, or to comply with the wishes of adults. A few girls, for example, commented during their first interviews that they kissed parents good night, to make them happy, or when they were sad. In the second interview, I took opportunity to question them further about kissing adults, and social mores. All three girls believed they could refuse to kiss an adult who requested a kiss, although they agreed that this had never happened to them and that there were no adults in their lives they would not want to kiss. One little girl said that while her mother did not tell her to kiss visiting relatives, she knew that this was an expectation of her mothers.

[I kiss my aunt] because um I ... I don’t really see her that often because she lives in Windsor. So I just said [to myself] who cares. I hold my breath. ... No, [no one asks me to give her a kiss] just someone inside me says give her a kiss you don't see her too often. So, I say all right.

Jessica, 9-year-old

The most insidious component of offender strategy is perhaps the least amenable to education: children's vulnerability to adult attention (Berliner et al., 1990). Children said that they would be friends with adults who: were nice to them, knew them, bought them treats, did things with them, taught them, talked to them, and were like idols. While the benefits of having an adult as a friend were apparent to children, most said they preferred same age friends. A number of those interviewed felt that children who were lonely or without friends would be most inclined to pursue a friendship with an adult. A few reported that having an adult friend was no different than having a same age friend, but
most felt it would be different because you could not play with adults in the same way. Children also noted that adult friends would not have the same personality as a child, and that they would not be able to talk about shared interests such as school.

A key difference between adult-child and child-child relationships was that of trust. One child said that you would have to trust adult friends more than same age friends because they were older. He explained that if they told you they were busy working, you would have to trust they were telling the truth. Another child felt she could not completely trust an adult friend since they may know her mother and tell her secrets -- according to her, adults are aligned through their common dominant culture. Common to both of these children was the feeling that one needed to use caution when interacting with adults who have the power to punish or get children into trouble. Further discussion of children's fear of trouble follows.

6.1.3 Adult Coercion: Children Comply With Adult Wishes In Order To Avoid Punishment

Adults value and reward children's respect, assistance, but most of all, their compliance. Parents and teachers were perceived by children as being happy when children: obeyed them, helped out, kept quiet, listened, and succeeded at school. Those children who helped adults at home and at school were positively rewarded by adults. Also, as explained in the previous chapter, children gained a sense of personal power when assisting adults. At home, some children were required to do household chores, like: clean their rooms, help with dishes, and monitor younger siblings. In a few instances children said they were given a small allowance for their work. At school, children were asked to take things to the office for teachers, help with special assemblies, and assist teachers who were caring for younger school children.
Children's option to refuse or say no to adults requesting their cooperation and assistance was described as being minimal, if not entirely absent. Some resorted to more passive strategies in an attempt to avoid work -- such as pretending they did not hear the adult, or promising to complete the task later. While their resistance strategies demonstrate some degree of personal power, it is important to recognize that such instances of refusal generally led to conflict in the lives of children -- meaning, they got into trouble.

Most of the time I'll get in trouble for saying no to an adult. Most of the time.
Linda, 9-year-old

At school you have to do everything the teacher like [says].. she'll send you down to the office [otherwise].
Stephen, 10-year-old

On the other hand, as Jennifer points out, obeying the commands of adults ensured harmony:

If you disobey adults you might get in trouble and if you do obey an adult you won't get in trouble.
Jennifer, 10-year-old

According to their accounts, children have very little power to oppose adults who make demands or punish them unjustly. Furthermore, they are generally unable to predict when opposition to adult authority might lead to conflict and trouble. Children coped with their vulnerable position in a variety of manners. Anna and Stella, for example, found subtle ways to impose control in situations where adults were making demands on them -- by doing it in their own time, and by getting the task over with quickly. In their words:

Most of the time they [adults] tell you [to do something] and you do it and then other times I sit down and ignore it. ... Then I get bored.. so I just do it. ... Or I can say I don't feel like doing it right now but I'll do it later kind of thing.
Anna, 10-year-old
I just um, do it fast.
*Stella, 10-year-old*

Other strategies for coping with adult dominance included children's conscious decision to silence themselves by going to other rooms to scream or calm down in private. Openly expressing their anger was unsafe:

[When I'm upset] well, I go to my room and yell so my mom doesn't hear me. ... Oh, I yell 'this isn't fair, this isn't really fair, I want to go to the park and I have to do all this stuff that I could have done when I came back in'. ... I told her I could have done it afterward but she said I had to do it then so I couldn't do anymore. ... [She made me do it then because she would] just think that I'd forget [to do it when I got back from the park].

*Elizabeth, 10-year-old*

Well, my mom came home... she, she's a little mad at me [now]. ... Because I played Nintendo. ... I tell her that my aunt she said she wants me to play it. ... My mom said don't play it again ever. ... [That makes me feel] a little sad because my aunt says I could play it and my mom says no. ... [I feel] a little frustrated. ... The one thing for me to do [when I feel frustrated is]... I just go in the room and wait for a while until I cool down.

*Ken, 9-year-old*

Some reasoned that they gave up during fights with adults because they wanted parents or teachers to feel good, or because they did not want to argue with adults. They rationalized that they gave into adult demands in order to maintain peace:

[If an adult like my mom asks me to do something I don't want to do] I usually say I don't want to do it. ... Occasionally [it works]. Sometimes it does. We get... usually my.. me and my mother get into a big fight [about it]. ...She wins. Um I usually give up. ... Because I wanna make my mother feel good after a fight.

*Jessica, 9-year-old*

... I'm not suppose to answer no one that's grown up. Well sometimes I'm shy to say things to other big people that I was innocent. Like you try but I'm too shy. ... Cause you're picking on a big grown up that is older than you.

*Ken, 9-year-old*

More important, many saw first hand that "talking back" to adults resulted in greater problems, and that trouble would escalate if they asserted their opinion during conflicts with adults. This seemed less true in the home than in the school environment,
although, children's experiences varied. In general, however, pursuing an argument with an adult authority (i.e., parent, teacher, principal) was perceived by children as resulting in greater trouble. The avoidance of trouble was a central focus in the lives of children.

Some rationalized their conflicts with adults by saying their punishment was for their own good, or by stating that the adult had a right to respond the way they had. Others, like Anna, seemed to simply ignore the conflict:

[When adults get grumpy with me] I just ignore them.
Anna, 10-year-old

I think when I get yelled at sometimes it's for my own good. ... And if I don't do nothing wrong and they just yelled at me I feel a little mad.
Ken, 9-year-old

In actuality, children's passive responses to conflict with adults was frequently born out of a sense of helplessness. In their stories they described how they: simply sat there, tried to ignore the adult, or remained silent due to fear of getting even deeper into trouble. Ken, a soft spoken almost withdrawn child, made it his practice to be compliant and quiet:

I'm doing fine in school because um I don't get in too much fights and I do my homework every time. And and even in assembly I don't like um talk. ...I make my teacher happy because I don't get my name up on the board and um I don't fight other people in the classroom.
Ken, 9-year-old

Darlene provided a particularly heart-rending description of her helplessness as a child being exposed to adult anger:

[When teachers yell at us] I feel like crying. ... [I'm afraid] that they'll yell at me. ... I don't know [what I can do about it. ... Maybe my mom. I'll tell. ... I'd tell other kids. ... But the teachers can't get in trouble for yelling. ... If they like hit you or something, they'll get in trouble.
Darlene, 10-year-old

In times of conflict children talked to friends, siblings and, if the situation got bad enough, parents.
[If a teacher was being unfair I would tell] my friends. ... They'd just cheer me up. [Or I'd tell] my brother. ... [I would tell my parents]... when they're [teachers are] being too bad.

*Jennifer, 10-year-old*

I told my mom [that the teacher blamed me for something I didn't do]. ... She said if anything happens like that you just tell the teacher exactly what really happened.

*Ken, 9-year-old*

After talking with their mothers about such conflicts children said they felt better; mothers’ advice, as recalled by children, was generally vague and typically confirmed children’s need to get along in the given situation. As well, mothers encouraged children to address the problem with them again in the future should a similar conflict arise.

Talking to mothers, while an active strategy, was not terribly effective in resolving children’s conflicts. For some, like Elizabeth, the fear of getting into greater trouble prevented them from speaking to parents at all:

I had an argument with my teacher. My teacher doesn’t do math in our class, once a month we do it like once every two weeks. ... Two sheets every two weeks. And they’re both together on the same day. ... Well, we [the teacher and I] started arguing and I said fine I’ll do it your way. ... I didn’t feel very good when he [my teacher] said that we weren’t um we were just gonna do what he wanted to do. But to me it made me feel like he wasn’t being fair. He wasn’t doing different stuff, he was just doing his regular stuff. ... [I can’t do anything about that] because I’m only a kid, I can’t do much. I can’t get my mother involved. ... [Because] that would cause a lot of trouble for me and my mom, [and] the school board. I’ll get stuck right in the middle of it.

*Elizabeth, 10-year-old*

The belief that parents are also subject to the authority of school officials, along with the expectation that adults are aligned, may prevent children from reporting daily injustices to parents.
6.2 ADULT BELIEVABILITY AND CHILDREN'S FEAR OF PUNISHMENT

Children characterized a world where they are often not listened to or believed by adults. The social norm is to believe those who are older and more experienced in the world. Some identified times in their lives when they had been blamed unjustly. Quite disturbingly, many silently accepted their punishment, fearing that any opposition to adult authority would result in even greater punishment. In their attempt to stay out of trouble, children frequently take on a passive role during times of conflict; they accept blame and may even lie to avoid getting into further trouble. In this section, children's experiences of not being believed by adults and their feelings of being silenced and invisible are described. Re-examined is children's ability to weigh the emotional state of adults, a skill that perhaps meets children's need to predict their own limits in their relationships with adults.

6.2.1 Conflicts With Adults: Children Are Not Believed By Adults And Fear Getting Into Trouble

The attitude that adults are believed over children was expressed by many of the children. Children held the view that they are not believed because: they tell jokes, have too much imagination, have previously lied or made mistakes, have "cried wolf" too often in the past, or because adults simply don't listen to children. In their words:

[Adults don't believe children] cause they think that kids lie too much. ... [Kids lie] to get attention [and] ... to keep from getting [in] trouble.
Norm, 10-year-old

Kids are kids and adults don't really believe kids.
Darlene, 10-year-old

Guess they [adults] don't believe us because they still think we're young and watch a lot of movies and make things up.
Charlie, 10-year-old
Adults, on the other hand, are believed because they have power and experience, they know what getting in trouble means, they can lie more convincingly than children, and they have the ability to get children in trouble.

... An adult [is believed more than a kid]. ... Because most of the time an adult has power I guess. ... Like most of the time I don't know.. people believe adults more because an adult has gone through life or something and they know what getting in trouble is or something like that.

Linda, 9-year-old

Cause if an adult tells one thing and a kid tells another they usually believe the adult and the adult may be lying and the kid would be telling the truth and the.. the kid maybe the kid had maybe lied before and this time is telling the truth and they don't believe him cause he lied before.

Elizabeth, 10-year-old

Teachers were identified as having much authority in the lives of children, to a large extent, because they had the power to "get children in trouble" or punish them.

At school you have to do everything the teacher like [says] .. she'll send you down to the office [otherwise]. Not that the office is bad.. he just gives you a lecture and that's your punishment.

Stephen, 10-year-old

Parents were also seen as very powerful, although there seemed to be less fear expressed around getting into trouble with parents than with teachers and principals. A few children, for example, mentioned getting into trouble at school and being sent to the principal's office, without being aware of the reason for their being disciplined. They described the situation as most anxiety provoking since they felt extremely worried and unable to defend their position. Anna gave details about such an experience:

At school, anytime.. anytime I get called from Miss Taylor's [the principal's] office I get really scared and then I'll have to go to the washroom. Like five times.. Like one time there was this play and I thought I did better than this girl and I didn't get to try out for the play, everybody else did. So I went back and said everybody else gets to try out for the part but me. So the little girl heard that I was mad cause she got the part instead. She went to tell the others I was bugging her by saying that I wanted the part. And then when I got to the office I sat there until quarter to four. From one o'clock in the afternoon thinking what did I do, what did I do? And I did not know what I did
until I got to the office like in the principal’s office. I didn’t know what I was
getting sent for. And she said now sit down and try to think [what you did]. I
was trying to think of what I did and I didn’t know what I did. ... Well, if I
knew I went to the office for a reason then I would be scared but if I didn’t
know why I was there.. that’s like scared. ... They should have told me why [I
was there].
Anna, 10-year-old

Being wrongly punished for things they did not do resulted in a host of negative
feelings for children, including emotional responses such as sadness, fear, and anger. The
following excerpt from my discussion with Jessica clearly relates her sense of
powerlessness and anger at being wrongly blamed and punished:

Me and Ellen was only telling Dave not to write cause the teacher was talking
and they.. he wrote our name on the board. And Sheila, I was just telling to go,
not to fool around and then he [the teacher] wrote her name on the board. And
that got me really upset and I said oh my god, I'm not going tonight [to
detention]. ... I’m not going to the class room tonight cause I didn’t do anything
wrong. I was only telling Dave not to write on the piece of paper when the
teacher’s talking. ... We had to go [to the class room for detention]. ... Cause if
we don’t go um like once if our names are on the board, if we don’t go that time
we have to go in twice. Like there was a name on the board that had to go six
times. ... We tried to tell the teacher [we were innocent]. He didn’t listen. ... That
really makes me feel like I want to kick his butt. ... [But] I don’t want to
get in worse trouble. ... If no one’s around and he was a baby I [would] kick his
butt. ... Ya, if I knew him as a baby and I was his baby sitter. I wish I was a
teacher and he was a student so I could make him stay in every night.
Jessica, 9-year-old

Jessica’s desire to be older than her teacher, so as to be in authority, clearly suggests
her perception that adults are physically in control of those who are younger.

Furthermore, this young girl draws a connection between adult power and the right to
physically hit -- in all likelihood, an indication of her personal experience as a child.

When not believed or when blamed unjustly, children typically responded in passive
ways -- saying they withdrew from the situation or tried to forget about the event.

Otherwise, they risked getting into trouble for arguing with adults.
[If a teacher blames me for something [I didn’t do] I’ll stay quiet then we won’t get an extra twenty minutes.

Nina, 9-year-old

[When an adult doesn’t believe me] I ignore it.. I move it along. ... I can’t do anything because if I do.. if I continue on the story I can get myself in trouble. ... Um I might get suspended for carrying it on and not dropping the subject when the principal said drop it. And um, or I’d get in a lot of trouble by my mom cause they’d phone my mom.. that stuff.

Elizabeth, 10-year-old

Fear of being sent to their room or detained at school resulted in their passivity when confronted with unjust or unreasonable demands.

...Like it was a really good movie on, right. ... And then my parents said it was time to go to sleep but I didn’t really want to go to sleep so I felt angry. ... [I] just do what they say.

Jennifer, 10-year-old

Opposing adults means that children’s already limited personal power may be further jeopardized. As 10-year-old Dennis commented "it takes guts to say no to an adult." Charlie, also ten, describes the debilitating role that fear plays in his remaining silent in the face of being wrongly blamed:

...The teacher said I was talking [and I wasn’t]. I wanted to do something about it, but I couldn’t think of anything. ... Well, I could have said it wasn’t me. ... [I] guess I was in that kind of a situation, I guess [I wasn’t thinking] fast enough. ... I was worried that I would get in trouble and when you're worried you couldn’t think that fast.. so, cause you're busy thinking that you're worried. You're gonna get in trouble or he’s gonna call your parents and you're trying to think of something else.

Charlie, 10-year-old

Children, like Anna, described even more extreme situations where they willingly accepted blame for things they did not do, simply because they felt their reality would not be believed by adult authorities.
Well I spilt some shoe polish right. And my sister, it wasn't [me].. my sister spread the shoe polish on near where you walk into the kitchen. Like it wasn't shoe polish it was um soapy stuff. She was wiping it off, the dust and everything. It was really dirty and she coughed into it and she threw it all over the carpet. And then she told my mom how I did that. And I didn't do it and I got in trouble for it. ... I told her [mom] I didn't do it. ... Actually she didn't believe me cause I did spill some polish before.

Anna, 10-year-old

Interestingly, a good number of the children said they would try to prove their innocence or case by providing concrete evidence to adult authorities when wrongly accused or blamed. These children believed they needed proof or witnesses when confronting an adult who was wrong in their convictions or actions. Strategies of self defense in such cases included showing adult authorities at school the red mark which had resulted from a blow, or seeking the corroboration of other children who had witnessed the event in question.

[If a teacher hit me one day] soon as the teacher hit me I'd run down stairs. The red mark would still be there so I could prove [he hit me]. Cause if I waited a little while the red mark would disappear and I couldn't prove it.

Elizabeth, 10-year-old

[If an adult doesn't believe me] I could ask my friends that heard. ... They'd tell the truth. ... To the teacher. ... Maybe he'd believe me, I'm not sure. ... Ya, cause they are more wicknesses [witnesses].

Jessica, 9-year-old

Without evidence or witnesses, children perceived their word as being less believable than that of an adult. They saw, by example in their daily lives, that their word was not enough when confronting the word of an adult authority figure.

6.2.2 Assessing the Emotional States of Adults: A Child’s Strategy For Overcoming Powerlessness

Children felt confident that adults would listen to them when they themselves became a part of the adult culture. As children, however, they believed that adults rarely
They [adults] think that kids don’t know much stuff anyway. ... They don’t understand kids. ... [They should understand] how kids feel when their when their parents or an adult is doing something they don’t like. ... ([Kids don’t tell adults how they feel] because adults just don’t listen. [If I tell an adult what I want] they might let me, they might not.

*Jennifer, 10-year-old*

Darlene, in telling me why she would like to be 20 years old, offered a poignant description of how children are sometimes invisible in the world of grown-ups:

... I won’t get bossed around as much [when I’m 20]. ... [Bossed] by like the teachers and my mom sometimes and like when you’re in like.. waiting for something like at a store you’re too short .. they [clerks] can’t even see you over the counter. [Laughs]. And you never get served when you’re that short. ... Cause they can’t see me.. like the counter’s here and I’m here [indicating with her hands]. ... [If I’m ignored by a sales clerk] um, I’d probably wait ... ‘til the store closes [laughs]. ... Just cause they’re adults they think they can ignore us.

*Darlene, 10-year-old*

The extent to which adults listened to children, and the rules and limits placed upon them, would sometimes vary depending on the mood of the parent or teacher. It seemed that children’s personal power increased when adults were in good moods:

At dinner time right, my parents said that.. my dad said that it’s the most like we [the family] sit together and we get to talk and everything. So [I have to come home on time for dinner] ... But sometimes he lets me choose what I want to do. ... When he’s happy.

*Jennifer, 10-year-old*

Children recognized that they could be punished or given greater liberties depending on the emotional state of adults in charge. Perhaps for this very reason, children seemed particularly adept at assessing the emotional moods of adults.

In part, children’s attempts to tune into adult moods and intentions was apparent to me during the data collection phase of the study. In forming my questions and interacting with children I had to remain cautious about not encouraging children to follow my subtle leads. Children seemed to try to anticipate what I wanted them to say;
while I tried to keep my line of questioning neutral, they appeared to be constantly searching for what I wanted to hear from them. Upon analyzing these data, my caution during the data collection phase seemed most legitimate.

According to children's accounts, they tend to keep their feelings to themselves if they think it might hurt an adult's feelings, a concern which may be related to their fear of getting into trouble for opposing adult wishes or expectations. The potential anger of adults serves to control children's behaviour. Their sensitivity to the feelings of adults perhaps resulted in their expecting adults to demonstrate the same sensitivity in interpreting their feelings and needs. In the vignette which follows, 10-year-old Charlie shows his disappointment in his parents' insensitivity to his fear of haunted houses; he explains that they should have known he would be afraid. Later, he changed his interpretation and accepted personal blame for the misunderstanding, saying he had probably not expressed his fear out loud, but rather, had said it in his own head:

Me, my father, my mother, and my uncle that is um.. living in California, and my two smaller cousins went to Disneyland and we went to this haunted house and like I was .. it was really haunted. It was only for children from um.. 10 and um and I'm 10 so I went in and I guess I was very scared so I covered my eyes and covered my ears. I wasn't looking, I didn't hear anything, right, and I crawled under the chair so when the ride was over my parents got up and I was still under the chair. I didn't know what.. that they got off. Next people came onto the chair and I'm like ouch.. somebody's foot just kicked me. I peeked my head up and went, wow, somebody else is here, my parents are gone. I'm like where where are they? Well, when the ride was over [a second time] I came out and I told the person who collects the tickets, right.. I told them that I was lost and they took me to this place um where they keep lost kids, right. My parents knew that they forgot me cause I was like.. I'm missing. Um, so they went to this um it's something like a little portable and they went in.. they saw me and uh, I think it was a policeman or someone or security guard. They told them to sign their name on the paper, and where they live what their telephone number was, and address and everything and then we went home. I don't think that was very nice. ... I thought that um I'd never be found.. stuck in there forever. ... Well, they said where were you in the ride we couldn't find you when we came off, where were you. I'm like well I couldn't be hiding among the bodies or anything, the ghosts in the haunted house. I was hiding under the chair because I was scared and I didn't want to see anything. Usually that's what I
do when I get into haunted houses. I always disagree when we go to haunted houses and they just took me in. ... I don't know [why they took me in], guess they wanted me to. Probably they couldn't hear me cause there was a lot of noise there, well I'm not sure that's exactly the reason. ... Well, I guess that I was just saying it [that I didn't want to go inside] in my mind and I thought I was saying it out [loud]. ... But probably my parents didn't hear me or like.. they were just .. they wanted to go [and] they were busy like buying tickets and giving the tickets to the man. Probably [they] didn't hear me.

Charlie, 10-year-old

Charlie learned first hand that adults do not always accurately interpret children's signals, nor do they always successfully advance what is in children's best interest.

As already mentioned, children are attendant to adult moods. Girls, in particular, were preoccupied with the caretaking and nurturing of adults. Their sensitivity seemed to encourage the forgiveness of adult behaviour almost to a fault.

... He [the teacher] usually listens to me. Like if I say I was only trying to tell Steve not to draw on a piece of paper he usually believes me. Cause I usually listen. ... I still like him cause [of] how fun he is. Like he can play a lot of games. And he's fun. But he shouldn't have been blaming me. Cause he.. I know he was listening. Cause he was facing me, he was close. ... I think he's a little bit deaf. Cause he was looking at me and no one was talking, no one was asking any questions.

Jessica, 9-year-old

Similarly, Darlene talked about a "screaming" teacher who she perceived to be frightening, while at the same time suggesting reasons for her teacher's behaviour -- one of which included children needing to be better behaved:

Like um Mrs. Ball... this year um she has a boy in her class and the first day we're um ... she was giving out cookies and if you didn't take the one right beside you she'd yell at you. And she did it to that boy cause he went like this [reached across the plate of cookies] to get another one. And she goes wait don't take the [cookie]. I forget what she said but she screamed at him for like nothing. [Her screaming could be stopped by] kids be[ing] better [being good] I guess. ... Or, if there's not as many kids in the class. ... [If they went to the principal about her screaming] nothing [would happen]. ... Because she didn't do anything really bad. She just.. she just has a lot to do.

Darlene, 10 -year-old
Children often rationalized and legitimized the behaviours of adults, trying to interpret their intentions as good versus acknowledging the negative impact of adult actions.

In this last section, I describe children's daily dependence on adults for protection from harm and also, at the other end of the spectrum, some children's experiences of threatened and actual physical assault by adults in positions of authority.

6.3 ADULT PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN

During the exploratory phase of this study I tried to find a method to comfortably address with children the topic of body integrity. Unfortunately, I was met with blank stares and uncomfortable pauses when my line of questioning became too direct. Questions related to children’s experiences of privacy or adult touching, for example, were responded to with one word answers. Social taboos around issues of talking about one’s body and its functions seemed well instilled. Their reactions made us both feel uneasy.

As an alternative to addressing this topic directly, I took opportunity in my second interview with children to pursue any issues related to their bodies mentioned during the first interview; children who, for example, spoke about being hit or grabbed by an adult during our first meeting were asked in our second meeting to reexamine the event and answer further questions about their body integrity (see Chapter 3 for details regarding this strategy). By using this more cautious approach to the topic, a subgroup of children spoke with me about their physical vulnerability.

In addition, I learned first hand about children's discomfort with speaking about their bodies, an insight that should not be surprising given the adult stigma associated with the topics of human sexual development and sexuality. Central to our
understanding children's daily life experiences and their ability to break silence around sexual abuse is their related discomfort with these topic areas. As discussed later in this Chapter, children are often unable to tell about physically exploitative events in their lives.

### 6.3.1 In Harms Way: Children Depend on Adult Protection

Safety was an issue of personal concern for most of these 9 and 10 year olds. Most notably, the majority had well established safety measures for walking to and from school: they walked with siblings or friends, were picked up by older peers or parents, and were watched by a parent from a distance (such as from a balcony) while they walked to school. Many said they were not allowed to go out after dark and/or alone due to danger.

Interestingly, almost all of the children I interviewed, both girls and boys, said that they feared being kidnapped or abducted by strangers.

[Mom picks us up after school] because she um doesn't know what will happen to us.. we might get caught by strangers.  
*Ken, 9-year-old*

Being kidnapped, getting stolen, going missing, or getting lost, were explained as reasons why guardians, parents, grandparents, and babysitters, picked children up at school and escorted them places. Children also saw that by walking with peers they were in less danger.

I'm not allowed [to walk home alone from school] because somebody could just come up and pick me up and just leave. So my mom.. [says I can't walk alone] cause she wants me to be safe.  
*Dariene, 10-year-old*

The danger of being alone in the world was well understood by children. Children, much like women, fear being assaulted on the street by those who are bigger and stronger. This fear was not exclusively based on educational campaigns about stranger
danger, but on personal exposure and children's real life experiences. A few told of times when they had been warned to beware of dangerous sexual assailters seen in the vicinity, had heard about children being abducted in their neighbourhoods, or had seen actual cases about child abduction discussed on television. Jessica and Stephen explained how child abduction and molestation had become a reality in their young lives:

[Mom walks me to school] cause um we've been hearing stories about [how] there's a sex assaulter around here, and my mother's really protective too. ... She doesn't want us to have to do.. have to go through that. ... She doesn't want anything to happen. ... Like kidnapping. Cause there's a blue, I think it's a blue car, driving around and taking kids. ... Last year there was a note going around [at school]. [I mean] this year .. to keep kids safe.

Jessica, 9-year-old

There's that field like behind our school ... ya that park. Well did you hear about that girl that got kidnapped from there and she was screaming, but somebody helped her and he just ran away. So we [my sister and I] don't want that happening to us and so we just walk home [from school] together.

Stephen, 10-year-old

Nina, a 9-year-old girl, told of an incident in which she had personally felt in danger of being abducted.

One day I was coming along [home] and uh ... um a stranger came up and he said you're Nina, and I said I'm not allowed [to talk to strangers] I have to go home and he kept on following me. ... I felt like, I felt so scared. Like I thought this is my last time .. right .. this would be my last time. ... Of my life, right. ... I got really scared because there's like lots of murders and stuff and I get really scared, so that could be the end of my life, right. And then finally he said.. then my dad came up right .. then I found out it was my dad's friend. ... And he [my dad] said, no, he's my friend. He came to pick you up. ... [I don't think my dad should have done that] cause I.. he knows I get scared of lots of stuff.

Nina, 9-year-old

Most children thought that close adults in their lives worried a great deal about their personal safety. In Nina’s case, she felt disappointed that her father had not realized that a stranger approaching her on the street would result in her feeling afraid.

In most instances, adults were identified by children as having greater knowledge than themselves about what is dangerous for children.
[Kids need adults to take care of them] cause they don't know what they're gonna do like, they don't know what's gonna happen to them so they have to listen to adults.
 Charlie, 10-year-old

Two boys from middle-class families, however, seemed somewhat naive about their personal risk, believing they could identify any "bad adults" who should be avoided.

Bad adults look weird, good adults don't. Bad adults.. if they say try some drugs or come with me or come in my house.. good adults wouldn't do that. ... I don't think I know any really bad adults.
 Dennis, 10-year-old

These same boys commented that it would be less dangerous for them to go out alone once they were older. Both mentioned 12 years as the critical age when their vulnerability would lessen:

[I'll be able to go out by myself] probably when I'm about.. I don't know, 12. ... I'll be more developed, my brain will be uh.. I'll be like I'll probably be bigger. .. [It will mean] that I'll be basically stronger and so I'll be able to protect myself better, [it will be] less dangerous.
 Dennis, 10-year-old

Generally, children felt that, at present, they needed adult limits and rules in order to remain safe, and saw that they themselves could not always be trusted to make rational or good decisions in this regard. It was articulated by a few children that they do not always think about the consequences of their actions, hence, adults think of consequences on their behalf. Adults ensured children did not engage in "silly" or dangerous activities.

[Children aren't allowed to make choices for themselves] because um they might begin to make something wrong if they play with matches then their apartment will be burnt. [Children can't make choices for themselves because] they might get in trouble.
 Kevin, 9-year-old

Adults demonstrate their power in their ability to be independent and avoid danger.

Children, on the other hand, do not yet know how to keep themselves safe from harm.
[I know adults have more power] because they can travel the world and they... kids can too but kids like ... well kids they don't look out when they're safe. ... you know when you're travelling around the world it's a big world and you're just a little kid.

*Stephen, 10-year-old*

Due to the longer life experience of adults, children believe that adults, such as parents, close relatives, and teachers, know what is good for them.

Because they're [adults are] older than you... they have more experience of life [so they know better than me].

*Stephen, 10-year-old*

The rules and precautions placed on children by adults were seen as a means of protecting them from harm; again, a consensus view of adult power was expressed by children. A primary motivating force behind the actions and rules of adults, according to children, was children's well-being and safety.

6.3.2 **Abusive Adults and Passive Children**

Although I did not ask children directly about their experiences of having adults use physical force against them, at times it came up spontaneously and I took opportunity to probe children around this topic whenever it arose. Some spoke hypothetically about such occurrences, while others gave details about an experience they had personally had with being hit, or grabbed by an adult. Children told of being physically assaulted, to varying degrees, by older brothers, teachers, parents, stepparents, and principals.

There were those who maintained the view that the use of force against children was justified since it was for children's own good. Explanations for why adults hit children varied from using force to get children up in the morning, to wanting children to learn and stop being bad:
It's whenever they're [children are] bad. They [adults] hit you because um they want to learn you a lesson and [teach you] don't always fool around.

*Kevin, 9-year-old*

There were also those who recounted personal stories of adult coercion and abuse and who adopted the view that the use of force was not appropriate. The accounts of Elizabeth and Keith, which follow, offer particularly vivid description of the helplessness and silencing experienced by children when confronted by adult physical dominance.

Appearing first is Elizabeth's story about being physically struck by her stepmother. Elizabeth explained that her silence at the time was based on her understanding that doing otherwise would simply result in her further abuse:

... Sometimes me and my brother would talk too loud cause we'd let my dad sleep in on Saturday mornings and um he'd.. we'd talk too loud a little bit and Martha [my step mom] would come in and tell us to stop -- once, and then twice, and the third time she [would] come in and smack us and I didn't like that. ... I just shut up. I didn't want to say anything cause she'd hit me harder.. she would.

*Elizabeth, 10-year-old*

In our second interview I reintroduced this story and asked Elizabeth how old she would be before adults would stop hitting her in this way. She began by clarifying that no one was presently hitting her, and that those incidents were exclusively related to her father who was now removed from her life. But if he was still in her life, she continued, the hitting would stop when she was about 18 or 16 years old. The exchange which follows provides further information about how children's real life experiences inform them about their social power to act against powerful and abusive adults:

*Interviewer: Why would they [adults] stop [hitting you] when you got to be 16?*

*Elizabeth: Because I could put them in jail for abuse.*

*Interviewer: Why couldn't you do that when you're a kid?*
Elizabeth: Cause I was only small and they [other adult authorities] could take the adult side and they could say I was lying.

Interviewer: Do you know anyone that that's happened to?

Elizabeth: No.

Interviewer: But adults say that kids are lying about things like that?

Elizabeth: [Indicates yes]

Interviewer: How do you know that?

Elizabeth: Um, cause one time um a very long time ago um .. my dad um he he hit me really hard and I had this red mark right across here on my leg and my mom when my mom was giving me a bath when I was small she noticed it and she goes, 'what happened?' I go, 'dad', I go 'daddy hit me'. And then my mom called, my mom called [him and said], 'why did you hit Elizabeth?' He goes, 'I didn't, she fell', and my mom wasn't sure who to believe so she just left the story alone.

Keith's story illustrated a similar level of helplessness and suppression. He spoke in a somewhat shameful tone as he told of an incident when his principal had grabbed his face in a moment of frustration. Keith began his disclosure in a seemingly harmless fashion -- stating simply that he did not like his principal. My probing into his reasons for not liking his principal led to the following account of his abuse experience:

... Well, um .. I just don't like her [the principal]. Once she goes to me you're late! Right. So she goes here sign here then she said not here on the other paper. So I signed my name. She pulled me and said you didn't finish signing your name. ... She didn't really pull me. She squeezed me like [Keith places his entire hand over his lower face and pinches his cheeks hard].

Keith, 9-year-old

I asked Keith what he would have liked to have done in that moment. His response was; "Ask her to stop, but then she'd get even madder." To speak up in a moment of abuse would only lead to more trouble for Keith. His silence and lack of resistance was not due to his believing that he was rightfully being punished, but rather due to his feeling powerless to oppose the actions of the principal. Asked what he would say to his
principal now if given the chance, he replied:

She shouldn't have done that to me cause it's not nice and that... just cause I made a mistake or [wasn't] listening to what you were saying .. you shouldn't do that to me.

Keith, 9-year-old

The following exchange occurred during our second meeting and helps to clarify Keith's view of his power to protect himself from abusive authority figures:

Interviewer: Do you think adults have the right to pull and push kids?

Keith: No.

Interviewer: Why not?

Keith: Because no one really has the right unless you're attacking an adult, like trying to steal their money.

Interviewer: When will adults not be able to pull and push you around any more?

Keith: I don't know.

Interviewer: Do you think she [your principal] will always be able to do that to you?

Keith: Not when I get older.

Interviewer: Like how old?

Keith: I don't know, when I'm an adult.

Interviewer: And when will that be?

Keith: Um, I think 18 or 16. I'm not sure.

Interviewer: So, why will she not be able to do it when you're an adult?

Keith: Because I have the right to move back or something without her being able to do anything to me.

Interviewer: You have the right to move back -- step away from her you mean?

Keith: Ya.

Interviewer: And now you don't have that right?
Keith: Um, I do but I couldn't really.

Interviewer: And why couldn't you?

Keith: Cause I'm younger, I just couldn't [sounding upset].

Keith also expressed his belief that no one would have done anything about the principal's behaviour had it been witnessed or reported by him:

Interviewer: Do you think anyone said anything to her [your principal] when you got pulled [by her]?

Keith: I don't know, I don't think anyone really was there. Like, saw it. There were other people in the office but they were on the computer.

Interviewer: So, if you went to a teacher and said, 'this is what the principal did,' do you think they would have believed you?

Keith: Maybe. But I don't think they would have done anything.

For both Keith and Elizabeth the assistance of trusted adults was not demonstrated at times in their lives when they required adult protection. Others, like Darlene, spoke about experiences where school children had reported the inappropriate behaviours of teachers to those in authority, such as principals.

Well, there was this supply teacher I had in grade um three and she said that the boys are really dumb and that stuff, so um the boys told um our principal and I don't know what happened after that. ... She's still teaching at our school. ... She's really mean too.

Darlene, 10-year-old

In all cases children reported that nothing had come of their complaints or that they were uncertain about the outcome of their appeals. Darlene spoke further about how school children suffer from teachers' threats of punishment and humiliation:
I'm good at swimming but I don't like really swim much anymore. ... Because the swimming teacher is really mean. ... Well, she just embarrasses you, like if you do something wrong she'll yell at the whole class that you did it wrong. So, I didn't like that. ... I remember what she did to my friend once. ... Well, like she [my friend] sits like this and does that [holding her feet and bending forward]... to keep herself warm and Ann, this woman teacher, says stop picking your toes and all that. And everybody started laughing and she [my friend] didn't like it. I felt sorry for her for being embarrassed. I thought it wasn't nice to say that. ... I'm always afraid if some teacher starts yelling. I'm just afraid when people start yelling and screaming. ... When you're just like sitting there and then she goes [loudly] 'stop that', [it] makes you jump and you're scared thinking she'll yell at you.

_Darlene, 10-year-old_

Like both Keith and Elizabeth, Darlene believed that no one would do anything about the adult's behaviour. I asked Darlene what would have happened if the child had defended herself against the teacher's statement. Similar to Keith's understanding, Darlene explained that speaking defensively to an authority, such as a teacher, meant further trouble for children. Speaking up for oneself was expected to lead to a detention or some other form of punishment. The incident was resolved for Darlene by her dropping out of swimming classes and avoiding this threatening adult altogether.

Early on in this Chapter Darlene's description of her helplessness as a child being exposed to adult anger was cited in which she stated that teachers cannot get in trouble for yelling at children. Only if they hit children would a problem result. In Darlene's mind hitting is a boundary which should not be crossed by adults, however, as noted in previous children's accounts, it is at times crossed. Whether Darlene would be more inclined than Elizabeth or Keith to report any such experiences remains to be seen. In general, however, it appears that children rarely report adult transgressions of power and when they do adults respond in ways which minimize children's experiences and needs.

I asked Darlene additional questions about her experiences with teachers and she commented on how her present teacher was really nice. She explained:
[He respects us] by like not getting really mad and that and like trusting us. ... It's just like he really trusts us. ... Actually he respects all the kids in the school. Like he tries his very hardest um not to get too mad and that. ... [Adults who don't respect kids] don't trust them, think that they're just kids and they can't trust them. ... [Our teachers trusts us because] he lets us walk down to the pool by ourselves while we're walking down we pass two kindergarten classes so... sometimes they're taking naps and he lets us [walk by on our own]. [He] trusts us [to be quiet].

*Darlene, 10-year-old*

Clearly, this "nice" teacher did not threaten or coerce children but rather trusted children's own sense of responsible conduct. While such adults do exist in children's everyday lives, so do those who would deny children their basic rights. At times the restrictive acts of adults would seem quite minor, but to children these daily incidents were constant reminders of their powerlessness to decide for themselves. Ten-year-old Stephen, for example, describes his experience of being punished for getting a drink of water on a hot day at school:

... I was in the 2nd grade, I was really thirsty like I was dehydrated. It was like today [extremely hot]. And so our whole school yard was so sunny and so I went inside for a drink and when I came back out she [the teacher] was staring at me and so [the] next week I had to do garbage patrol. ... Cause she's strict and... well, you're not allowed to go inside at recess. ... No, [I don't think that's right]. Like why not? We can't go inside maybe because like the teachers don't want you running around the school... you know, on their break time.

*Stephen, 10-year-old*

Although Stephen attempts to rationalize reasons for his punishment, it remains clear that children are restricted from taking care of their bodily needs in ways that would not normally be imposed on adults.

Children understand that part of being an adult is being bigger and having the authority and strength to control those who are smaller and weaker. Elizabeth aptly commented that children don't give adults permission to hit them -- that hitting children is an adult privilege:
The kid's not gonna give the adult permission to hit him. ... They [adults] just think if you're strong.. if you're older, you're stronger and powerful -- you can hit kids.

Elizabeth, 10-year-old

6.4 POWERLESSNESS IN CHILDREN'S EVERYDAY LIVES:
CHAPTER SUMMARY

Children perceived and experienced adult power over them from both a consensus as well as a conflict perspective. According to the first view of social power, the fairness and necessity of adult power over children is emphasized while the second perspective focuses on the injustices suffered by children by virtue of a power differential based on age. This dual perspective of adult power over children is, in essence, the continuum of powerlessness at play in children's lives. On the one hand children can rationalize the power of adults to decide for them, protect them, teach them, while on the other hand, children express feeling angry and frustrated over having to sacrifice their opinions out of fear of being punished for non-compliance and resistance.

The upper portion of Figure 3, represents those positive elements (or the consensus view) which influence children's desire to comply with adult decisions.

Children justified the existing age hierarchy and social power gap between children and adults on the basis of the greater life experiences and knowledge of adults. According to children themselves, this knowledge discrepancy between adults and children means that children need adults for guidance and protection. Children also comply with adult decisions because adults control resources, like money and transportation. Therefore, because adults have resources and know more about the world and what things would be entertaining for children, adult decisions often result in more fun for children. Provided adult decisions are fun, they are deemed fair decisions. Children are concrete egocentric thinkers at this point in their lives, and the behavioural outcome is more important than
adult intentions. Sexual abusers often use their position as competent authorities along with the enticement of resources, such as money or gifts, as a means of encouraging children to comply with their sexual exploits. On the other hand, children also hold a conflict view of social power and were able to bring to light adults' use of coercive authority, and identify the uneven distribution of power in society based on age. Negative reasons for children's compliance are outlined in the bottom segment of Figure 3. Central is the fact that children want to avoid trouble and punishment; their fear of trouble results in their silence in situations when they would otherwise oppose adult decision making power. Children fear that not listening to adults will result in their getting into
trouble and often their real life experiences confirm this outcome. As well, they believe they will be punished more severely if they argue back. The more children stand up for themselves, and challenge the authority of an adult, the greater their risk of losing their privileges. As a result, children are sometimes willing to accept blame without argument, even for wrong-doings for which they themselves feel they are not guilty. As outlined in this Chapter, three social realities promote children's state of powerlessness: 1) children's dependence on adult guidance, decision making, and resources; 2) children's limited credibility and believability next to that of adults, and; 3) children's physical vulnerability in the world and the legitimate use of physical punishment by adults against children. It is proposed that these "normal" social power relations contribute toward making children vulnerable to those adults whose intentions are not in the best interest of children, such as in the case of sexual abusers. Experiences of powerlessness described by the children in this study, while seemingly minor, are the stepping stones which prepare children for more extreme circumstances of victimization and silencing.
CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

The premise of the prevention initiative is that children’s own resistance to sexual abuse can be fortified through knowledge and skills training. The question as to whether or not child sexual abuse prevention education actually helps children avoid abuse has been repeatedly and vehemently posed by social researchers, education experts, and parents alike. While program critics draw attention to the huge imbalance of power between adult abusers and their child victims, there has remained a serious absence of dialogue around the topic of children’s actual social power and, more generally, about the importance of children’s social context in the development and evaluation of this primary prevention initiative.

In this Discussion Chapter I expound upon the problematics surrounding the notion of children as primary prevention agents. First, an overview of the study findings is provided in which the social power dynamics in children’s daily lives are reviewed, with attention being drawn to the existing dissonance between children’s real life social power and those expectations being placed upon them by core prevention program concepts. Following this important analysis, questions are raised with regard to the necessary directions for this movement to grow if we are to realize our best intention, and perhaps our most arduous plan, that of facilitating the empowerment of children in an adult-centred society.
7.1 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL POWER EXPERIENCES AND PREVENTION PROGRAM LESSONS: A FINAL SYNTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

7.1.1 A Comparison Between Prevention Program Messages and Children's Daily Social Power Experiences: A Social Power Analysis

Discussion in the preceding findings chapters, included the linking of children's everyday experiences of social power and powerlessness with those characteristics which make children vulnerable for sexual abuse. Considered in this Chapter is the goodness of fit between children's everyday social power experiences and the expectations placed upon them by prevention program lessons.

The three core principles and, more specifically, the related expectations of these programs are revisited here. Briefly, program expectations consist of the core beliefs that children can accurately identify adult intentions, refuse adults, and rely on the protection of adults. Analysis of children's real life social power experiences in these three domains, reveals a marked incongruity between child sexual abuse prevention program expectations and children's social power experiences in their day-to-day lives with adults. Children's daily social power experiences include instances when children demonstrate an inability to interpret appropriate and inappropriate, or typical and aberrant, adult behaviour, refuse adult decisions or actions, and rely on adult protection. Reasons for their inability to respond in those ways being prescribed by preventionists are summarized in Figure 4 (p. 179) and are further discussed in this section.
Figure 4. Three core principles and related expectations of child sexual abuse prevention programs, contrasted with findings on children's real life social power experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Program Principles</th>
<th>Expectations Related to Program Principles</th>
<th>Appropriateness of Program Expectations in View of Children's Social Power</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1. program lessons teach children to identify inappropriate touching (the right to body ownership is reinforced) | children can accurately identify the motives/intentions of adults | children may be unable to accurately determine adult motives/intentions because:  
• children believe adults act in their best interest,  
• children are strongly influenced by adult affect |
| 2. program lessons teach children they should take action/resist if touched in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable (the right to refuse an adult is reinforced) | children can refuse adults | children may not be able to refuse adults because:  
• abusive adults are often the most powerful adults in children's lives  
• children are motivated to comply with adult wishes (reward/punishment) |
| 3. program lessons teach children to disclose abuse to a trusted adult (the right to be protected by an adult is reinforced) | children can rely on the protection of adults | children may not always rely on the protection of adults because:  
• children feel they will not be believed or listened to  
• children tend to respond passively when treated unjustly or disbelieved, |
**Expectation 1:** Children can accurately identify the motives and intentions of adults.

Sexual abusers may pretend to touch children by accident or casually during play, often making it difficult for children to judge harmful adult behaviour. In an effort to fortify children's ability to avert such experiences children are educated, through prevention program training, to recognize and name sexually inappropriate touching. In order to accomplish this goal, children must be able to simultaneously interpret the appropriateness of the touch as well as the intentions of the adult.

As demonstrated through these data, it is often hard for young children to distinguish between typical and aberrant adult behaviour. Primarily, it is difficult for children to interpret the appropriateness and intent of adult behaviour because they hold a consensus view of adult social power -- most often, adult decisions and actions are perceived as being in children's best interests. Children who do experience adult behaviour as bad or unfair, may be inclined to forgive adult transgressions as a result of their sensitivity to adult moods. As discussed below, children's consensus view of adult power along with their sensitivity to adult affect, are two normal social power dynamics that place children in jeopardy of being manipulated by clever adult abusers.

1A) **Children May Not Be Able to Interpret the Appropriateness of Adult Behaviour Because They Believe Adults Act In Their Best Interest.** In general, children attribute positive intentions to adult authority figures. Children minimize and rationalize adult transgressions of power -- attributing the abusive behaviours of adults, for example, to the fact that these adults were having a bad day. Such generosity in their interpretation of adult power is difficult to understand; perhaps their tolerance is a method for denying the powerlessness they feel in the face of adult anger. Certainly, children promoted contradictory opinions about adult power and their right to tell
children what to do. One minute children felt they were bossed by adults and subsequently defended adult actions by saying that adults tell children what to do for children's own good.

Based on this pattern, it could be suggested that children try to adopt adult perceptions of the world, questioning the legitimacy of their own feelings. Similar to women, children's private perceptions of violation and their public assessment of their experiences of violation and powerlessness are at odds (see Stanko, 1985). As a result, the line between acceptable and unacceptable adult behaviour is difficult for children to identify and therefore, children may internalize and silence many of their experiences of intimidation and violation. Children also fear that speaking out will lead to an even more threatening confrontation, so they silence themselves to avoid trouble. Expecting children to abandon these daily coping strategies when faced with situations of abuse would appear to be unrealistic.

1B) Children May Not Be Able to Interpret the Appropriateness of Adult Behaviour Because Children Are Vulnerable To Adult Affect and Needs. Children expressed a keen sensitivity towards adults and their emotional needs. There were two apparent reasons for this. First, the emotional state of adults influences how they treat children -- adults who are in a good mood, for example, are more likely to give children greater liberties and privileges. In part, children's sense of powerlessness is related to their being unable to predict or control adults' behaviour or anticipate when it might lead to their punishment (see Stanko, 1985). Children tend to pay close attention to adult affect since this allows them to avoid punishment and anticipate special privileges. As well, a relationship between happy adults and children's gained privileges encourages children to do what adults want, and not argue. Children's interpretation of adult
behaviour and intention is strongly influenced by their fear of punishment and desire for special privileges. Based on these dynamics it is easy to imagine the difficulty involved in teaching children that it is appropriate to contradict the wishes of a powerful adult, thereby making them unhappy and risking those privileges bestowed upon them by the adult.

A second reason for their paying close attention to adult affect is that it allows children to attend to the needs of adults and thereby gain a sense of power over adults. Girls in particular explained that they felt most powerful when helping adults who were in need of assistance because they could then tell adults what to do. Otherwise, children felt that adults rarely listen to them. Children's desire to take care of adults may impede their ability to effectively separate themselves from abusive adults who convince children of their need for child affection and nurturance. When a child feels like a partner in an abusive relationship the abuser can encase the child in secrecy and guilt (Hindman, 1992).

**Expectation 2: Children can refuse adults.**

Children who participate in prevention programs are taught that they should take action if threatened or actually touched in an uncomfortable or inappropriate manner. Their right to say no or refuse the actions of an abusive adult is strongly promoted. Critics of these programs oppose the notion that children's knowledge about what to do in situations of abuse gives them the power to act. As demonstrated through children's lived experiences, the difficulty of refusing a sexually abusive adult is compounded by the fact that abusers are typically the most powerful adults in children's lives, as well as by the fact that children are motivated to comply with the wishes of powerful adults.
**2A) Children May Not Refuse Adults Because They are The Most Powerful People in Their Daily Lives.** Not all adults in children's lives have the same degree of power over them (see Figure 2, p.22). Adults who are well known to children, appear at the centre of the circle; parents/guardians, teachers, and principals were identified as the most powerful people in their lives. The power of these adults was related to their being in children's daily lives and having responsibility for children's well-being and care, their having the right to punish children, and their having control over resources like money. These well known adults make up children's affinity system and can tell children what to do, and punish them if they refuse to obey, virtually, without question.

The majority of adult sexual abusers are adults who are known to children -- fathers, uncles, grandfathers, school and community group teachers and so on. Clearly, in order for children to overcome the sexual advances of the most powerful adults in their lives, they will need considerable resources in addition to skill training.

Beyond these well known adults, children identified community figures or professionals as adults with power. The social power bestowed upon, for example, police officers, judges, religious leaders, and politicians meant that these adults could decide on behalf of others. However, their social power, as defined by children, was more global in nature. For instance, these adults had the ability to create and enforce laws in a community or society at large. Their power to directly tell children what to do, was less often discussed or identified and, I assume, was less felt by children. While professionals were seen as powerful because of their community positions, a number of children did not personally experience them as having the authority to get children into trouble or punish them. Therefore, they were not considered to be as powerful as known adults who demonstrated their responsibility toward children on a daily basis. Perhaps the power
which these community persons possess over young children is more closely related to how adult caregivers perceive these individuals. As adults we often give community officials, such as police officers, doctors, and church leaders, our complete confidence and authority. Children are quick to recognize the respect and power bestowed upon others by their adult caregivers. In her book, *Our Little Secret*, Judy Steed (1994) depicts the extensive power that a Kingston choir master, (and child sexual abuser), wielded amongst his community of faithful parishioners. Those men who were abused during their childhood years as church choir boys, have spoken about the complacency, and denial amongst adults who, in some instances, knew of the abuse. In this situation, as well as in children's daily lives, adult alliance is strongly felt. As adults, we often take the position of legitimizing the actions of other adults, in part, to maintain our own adult privilege over children. Waksler (1991) recognized that adults often tag their negative childhood experiences with the phrase, "now I understand why my parents ...". As adults, we make sense of our childhood experiences, and perhaps our children's experiences, in ways that do not challenge adult power. Subsequently, children may feel unsupported by adults when questioning or opposing the actions and intentions of adult authority figures.

Children do feel supported, however, in their ability and right to oppose those adults referred to as strangers. In the eyes of children, strangers do not have the power to tell them what to do or to punish them. Their power over children seems to rest exclusively on the fact that they are stronger and physically able to steal or kidnap children who fail to be protected by adults. Children's pervasive attitude that they have the power to say no to adults who are strangers is indeed encouraging to those struggling to educate children about the dangers of abduction and sexual violation. At the same time, we have to wonder about children's opinion of who a stranger might be. I was not considered a
stranger by 9 and 10 year old children because of my location within the school and because of my role as a kind of teacher. Within seconds I was conferred with the status of a known and trusted adult. Settings such as schools, where adult authority over children is strongly reinforced, may motivate children to be less vigilant in their interpretation of an adult's authority, their personal risk, and their power to refuse the commands of adults. The more rigorously adults enforce their power and authority over children, the more powerless children feel and the more compliant and passive they become. Blind compliance to adult authority would seem to be a critical risk factor for children's sexual abuse.

2B) Children May Not Refuse Adults Because Children Are Motivated To Comply With Adult Decisions and Choices. Children's compliance or agreement with the decision making power of known adults, is a result of: (1) children's positive opinion about adult knowledge and intentions, as well as; (2) children's strong desire to avoid the punishment of powerful adults (Figure 3, p.175).

A central theme in children's data was that adults know best. These 9 and 10 year olds justified the existing age hierarchy and social power gap between children and adults on the basis of the greater life experiences and knowledge of adults. This knowledge discrepancy means that children need adults for guidance and protection. Adults also control resources, like money and transportation. Therefore, because adults have resources and because adults know more about the world and what things would be entertaining for children, adult decisions often result in more fun for children. Sexual abusers often use the competent authority of their adult knowledge, along with the enticement of resources such as money or gifts, as a means of encouraging children to comply with their sexual exploits.
Children also fail to resist adult authority because they want to avoid trouble and punishment. Their fear of trouble results in their silence in situations when they would otherwise choose to oppose adult decision making power. A strong relationship between not listening to adult authorities and getting into trouble exists in children's daily lives. The more children stand up for themselves, the greater their risk of losing privileges and access to resources.

Furthermore, when opposing adult authority, they are rarely successful at defying the decisions or actions of powerful adults. Yet, children's ability to defy adult authority and adult decision making power is a critical component to their being able to resist the approaches of abusive adults. A few children did qualify their ability to resist adults saying that they would refuse an adult who wanted them to do unsafe things. Children's hypothetical power, in this regard, is likely based on the belief that a known adult would not ask them to do anything unsafe. As two young boys explained, it is good to be able to say no to adults, especially if they are bad adults. One of the boys later commented that it is indeed difficult to say no to good adults, that is, adults whose feelings one does not want to hurt. One would also need to ensure that children's understanding of unsafe behaviours could not be swayed by more knowledgable adults. Nevertheless, children's perception that they would have the power to refuse an adult in circumstances of danger is a positive theme worth pursuing with children.

Generally, children's understanding as well as their experiences suggest that opposing the decisions and actions of powerful adults is a dangerous and typically futile endeavour. Children are conscious of the fact that adults have authority over their lives, can tell them what to do, and can physically punish as well as overpower them whenever they wish.
Surprising was the fact that children described feeling less able to resist adult authority at school than at home. Perhaps less surprisingly, middle more than lower class children spoke of having some power to negotiate important issues and conflicts with parents/guardians. These small differences aside, all children (regardless of gender, cultural background, or family structure) shared a flood of common experiences with each describing life circumstances when resistance to adult demands had led to conflict and punishment. On the other hand, by obeying adults children successfully avoided trouble.

**Expectation 3:** Children can rely on the protection of adults.

Children are taught in prevention programs that they are not personally responsible for the actions of abusive adults and that they should rely on adults to intervene on their behalf. These lessons may be difficult for children to incorporate into their lives when their social knowledge is often contrary to these messages. For example, children reported that they often feel unheard, silenced, and disbelieved by adult authority figures.

**3A) Children May Not Rely on the Protection of Adults Because They Feel They Will Not Be Listened to or Believed.** Children fear that they will not be believed by adults because of their imaginative minds, because they have lied before, or simply because adults do not listen to children. From the perspective of children, their words are less believable than that of adults who are perceived by other adults as more trustworthy. As a result, children felt that when they confront the word of an adult they need to have proof of their experience -- otherwise they risk further trouble because they have challenged adult authority. The message conveyed to children through prevention programs is that their word is sufficient proof of an adult's wrong doing, but in every day experiences this is not the case. The belief that parents are also subject to the authority
of powerful adults, such as school officials, along with the expectation that adults are aligned may prevent children from reporting daily injustices. Given this sense of isolation, fear, and self-doubt, it would seem difficult for a sexually abused child to feel powerful enough to oppose the word of a trusted adult, and have the means to substantiate their claims of an adult's wrong doing.

Children felt certain that adults would listen to them when they became adults. As children, however, they were rarely listened to and at times felt ignored and invisible in adult culture. Children who were hit or grabbed by adults spoke of remaining silent about their experiences because they felt adults would not do anything on their behalf. Yet, when older, children expected that they would be able to "get adults in trouble" for such transgressions and therefore, when older, they would be less exposed to such violations of the body. In their daily lives children experience moments of being ignored, unheard and disbelieved by adults who have the authority to disregard children's point of view.

3B) Children May Not Rely on the Protection of Adults Because Children Respond to Unjust Treatment in Passive Ways. In their daily life experiences the children in this study experienced moments of being disbelieved and sometimes were punished unjustly. Under such circumstances children responded in passive ways like by withdrawing or by trying to forget the incident. In the minds of children passivity is an effective means of minimizing punishment and protecting existing privileges. Keeping their feelings or anger to themselves ensures that they will not hurt the feelings of parents or teachers. In truth, children silence their emotions out of fear that they will anger adults if they express negative sentiments. Some went to great lengths to stifle their frustration by removing themselves to private places to scream or act out their
feelings of powerlessness. It is easy to imagine why children internalise and silence their experiences of physical and sexual violation and abuse. Encouraging children to trust that adults will believe and support their claims of abuse may not be sufficient to reverse these daily life lessons and convince children of their power to confront the word of a powerful adult. Open communication between children and adults is not always encouraged by adult authorities.

7.1.2 Prevention Program Expectations and Children’s Daily Social Power Experiences: A Summary

Children’s social powerlessness, while pervasive, is not a simple process whereby adults are viewed exclusively as uncaring ogres whose power can never be opposed. Rather, children often view adult authority as a necessary and positive social condition. Children’s consensus view of adult power, is central to why it is so difficult for children to accurately interpret the motives and actions of powerful adults who violate them. Not surprisingly, children seem better prepared to oppose the exploitations and advances of adult strangers. Adult authority, however, is perhaps too easily established in the minds of children, and their sensitivity to adult needs and feelings provide an additional level of vulnerability.

Their daily interactions with adults teach children silent and passive self protection methods and not verbal oppositional strategies, as promoted in prevention programs. Standing up and speaking out against adults are not encouraged behaviours in children’s lifeworlds. To engage in such behaviours typically warrants punishment. In confronting adult power, children’s experiences included that of being disbelieved and unjustly punished, and of needing corroborating evidence. These experiences of powerlessness are
contradictory to prevention messages that say children can and should interpret inappropriate adult behaviour, refuse adults, and depend on adults for protection and support. These data call into question the appropriateness of child sexual abuse prevention program concepts. The goal of promoting empowerment in the child community, through prevention program training, is given further thought below.

7.2 FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM MOVEMENT: A THEORETICAL DISCUSSION ON THE TOPIC OF CHILDREN’S EMPOWERMENT

The prospect of empowering children to prevent their own sexual abuse through child sexual abuse prevention program training is explored in this section. Possible suggestions for future program development offered here, while based on those insights gained during this research study, are purely exploratory in nature and are not based on empirical evidence.

7.2.1 Is The Empowerment of Children A Feasible Outcome of Prevention Programs?

It is argued on the basis of this study, that children's daily socialization does not reinforce children's personal power to act against powerful adults. Prevention program lessons are at risk of being abandoned when children's daily social experiences stand in contrast to the behavioural responses prescribed. Mitchell (1985) as well as Leventhal (1987) warn that without structural change in children's lifeworlds, the message to "be powerful" may be lost:
Children must become fully autonomous human beings. Giving children rights means taking some away from parents. If you teach your child to be safe, strong, and free except in her own home, it will not work. She has to be able to apply what she learns to every situation she encounters. Parents must learn to be challenged and to respect their children's wishes (Mitchell, 1985, p. 107).

If children are taught to be more assertive, do they become more assertive in everyday activities are these new behaviours viewed as good or bad in the family? (Leventhal, 1987).

Children need vocabulary and skills to name abuse experiences but, just as important, they need permission and reinforcement to speak out in their daily lives as well as in extreme circumstances.

The empowerment of children has remained relatively undeveloped as a core concept in child sexual abuse prevention program literature. The use of the term "empowerment" perpetuates the illusion that children's vulnerability for sexual victimization is being successfully addressed. The empowerment concept, as applied to these programs, however, has been limited to children's skill training or person-centred levels of empowerment. Children are assumed empowered because they receive the necessary words and concepts to avoid and report their experiences of sexual violence. Self-protection knowledge supposedly enables children to act thereby allowing for the successful prevention of abuse. Person-centred or a skills training perspective of empowerment fails to take into account structural or systemic barriers to action. The important distinction between a "feeling" of being powerful and "actual" or real social power requires further consideration in this movement.

Whether a "sense" of being powerful to intervene on ones own behalf is sufficient for children's enablement in situations of abuse remains critical to the debate regarding program efficacy. As already reported, one study has found that, although well trained children implemented protection skills in situations of abuse and reported a sense of
efficacy, they were no more powerful in their ability to avert abusers than were less well and untrained children (Finkelhor et al., 1995). The authors’ argument that the traumatization suffered by children will be less for those who "feel" powerful in their response, has not been substantiated.

Self-protection training for children does not mean that a change in the philosophical underpinnings of adult-child power relations is underway. The question is how can we begin to facilitate a reallocation of power between the child and adult community, so that children's actual social influence and empowerment might increase, along with their knowledge and competencies?

7.2.2 How Can Children's Actual Social Power Be Addressed In Programs?

Empowerment is not a commodity to be acquired but a transforming process which leads one toward a feeling of personal mastery over one's life. An underlying developmental theme in the process of empowerment is that people must personally experience a social injustice or confrontation in order to respond, get involved, and feel more in control of their lives. Experience leads to reflection which leads to a new understanding and ultimately to action (Kieffer, 1984).

As demonstrated in this research study, children were able to concretely define the concept of social power as well as provide vivid accounts of their own personal social power experiences. During interviews children gave clear examples of how social power and powerlessness manifested in their daily lives. Without a doubt, they were conscious of social injustices resulting from the power differential between themselves and adult authority figures. On the basis of their accounts, it could also be suggested that these 9 and 10 year old children were aware of the social barriers which stood in the way of their
self determination. According to children, the superior knowledge and experience of adults was deemed an acceptable reason for the greater decision making power of adults. Children also, however, identified social circumstances in their lives that were clearly unfair.

Feminists strive to raise the consciousness levels of victims of abuse and empower them to act in their own best interest. Consciousness raising seemed to naturally occur with some children during the interview process. For example, in our discussion about personal power, 9 year old Linda explained that she had the power to say no to her teacher's request for help in the gymnasium. This insight was offered after Linda had, earlier in the interview, described her desire to volunteer to help with the supervision of younger students. My probing about this activity perhaps helped clarify for Linda her experience of having the power to choose for herself in this particular circumstance.

Group discussion is a way in which women have, and possibly children can, gain power over their awareness of their social condition. Perhaps by grounding children's discussions of power in their own experiences, it will be easier to encourage them to set realistic limits around their personal protection expectations, while also providing opportunity to expand our understanding of children's strengths, vulnerabilities, and natural resources. Children are often uncertain about how to interpret the "bossing" behaviours of adults who care for them, often resorting to adult understanding which says that such actions are meant to ensure children's optimal development and well being. Could children more effectively learn to assess adult behaviour and power, if they were encouraged to discuss with one another their experiences in their relationships with adults? Might it be empowering for children to engage in group discussion about issues of social power and take part in a format which honours their understanding and encourages children to
become confident in their assessment of their own social experiences.

Through dialogue children could perhaps be taught to understand, for themselves, their personal power as well as the present limits of their own abilities when confronting adult authority. Telling children and adults that children can successfully protect themselves from abuse, may encourage a false sense of agency in both communities. By grounding children’s discussions about social power in their daily life experiences, their ability to interpret aberrant adult behaviour may improve, as might their personal ability to speak out against any suffered injustices to their personhood. Children learn better, faster, and more permanently if they are allowed to deduce information, solve problems and, perhaps most important, build on their own knowledge.

7.2.3 If We Focus on Children's Empowerment Do We Forsake Their Protection?

Berrick and Gilbert (1991) have suggested that prevention curricula has been shaped most clearly by a feminist understanding of empowerment, with children’s developmental abilities, such as cognitive structures and moral behaviour, having been virtually ignored in the process of program development. Based on this analysis, they raise the question of whether we should be promoting child protection or empowerment. Their apparent concern is related to the notion that attention to empowerment precludes protection initiatives which take into account those limits imposed by children’s developmental levels. These authors have questioned the suitability of co-existing protection and empowerment approaches in the child sexual abuse prevention movement.

Similarly, the co-existence of primary prevention and child protection initiatives may be interpreted as being unrelated by some adults in the community. For example, attention to the goal of primary prevention may promote the dangerous notion that we
can afford to minimize the importance of protecting children by encouraging children's disclosures of abuse. To follow are two personal journal excerpts describing my reflection over the impact of a rigid adherence to primary prevention on the efficacy of these empowerment programs for children. First, my account of attending a conference workshop on child sexual abuse prevention programs and pondering over the ramifications of omitting from a list of identified program strengths the goal of encouraging children's disclosures of abuse:

A few weeks ago I attended a workshop on prevention program basics, intended for those new to the prevention field or who were already implementing sexual abuse prevention programs in their own communities. I arrived feeling excited about the opportunity to meet with others involved in the movement -- I had been isolated in the writing phase of my dissertation for almost a year now and was longing to talk about the critical issues surrounding these programs. Overall, the presentations were very informative and helped me to understand, in particular, the historical roots of child sexual abuse prevention programs. A number of the presenters had been part of the movement since the very beginning, and their unwavering commitment was inspiring. I could not help but lose my enthusiasm a little, however, when one of the presenters put up an overhead outlining prevention program strengths. I became uneasy when I noticed that children's disclosures of abuse was not a factor among the ten listed items. I asked the presenter about this omission and it was briefly explained to me that children's disclosures were not a part of prevention -- that, in fact, children's disclosures of abuse were secondary prevention and not part of the primary prevention initiative. Of course, I was aware of the three basic levels of prevention, but I was surprised that such strict divisions had been drawn for the purposes of this presentation. After all, those in attendance had come to the session largely because they were contemplating or were already implementing sexual abuse prevention initiatives in their communities. It seemed unrealistic to be talking to a room full of people who were working directly with children or in the child welfare field, and not be discussing children's disclosures as a strength of these programs simply because it did not fall under the definition of "primary" prevention. It occurred to me that the academic jargon, "levels of prevention", did not easily translate into the real world function of child sexual abuse prevention programs. Perhaps I had been distracted from the theoretical underpinnings of the programs, concentrating on the question of children's power and their ability to stop sexual abusers, long enough to see this blatant discrepancy between theory and children's reality (Radford, 1994).
A reason for rigidly promoting the idea of "primary" prevention versus all other levels of prevention is, I suggest, fear -- fear of losing funding for programs that have at their heart the blockage versus the treatment of trauma. Historically, the primary prevention movement has been wrought with criticism and attacked by the mainstream mental health community; primary preventionists have existed in a somewhat hostile environment and have had difficulty establishing credibility and competing for program monies (Albee, 1981). Political and financial support has typically been directed at those in the mental health treatment community (secondary and tertiary prevention), and not the primary prevention community. More recently, it was estimated by Crisci (1994) that approximately 90% of funding goes to individual/family tertiary prevention programs, leaving little funding for primary prevention initiatives.

Additionally, there would seem to be a fear that child sexual abuse prevention programs would be less enthusiastically implemented and supported by those in the community if emphasis was as much on children's disclosures as on their ability to avoid abuse and the resulting trauma. The latter option is, of course, tidier and an emotionally positive task to confront by comparison to the former. Teachers, principals, school board officials, and other community workers are more comfortable acting as agents to prevent sexual abuse than in helping those who have already been abused and negatively affected. The emotional and professional investment increases dramatically once children have been traumatized.

While "telling" about the abuse is part of the message given to children who participate in child sexual abuse prevention programs, it is not discussed by some as a program strength due to fear of political and professional criticism. In light of this preference for primary prevention, there is a danger that children's vulnerability and need
for adult protection is denied at the social/institutional level. Related to this point is the story of a failed attempt, early on in my research, to gain a school board’s approval to conduct focus group interviews with school children. Being refused access to grade 4 and 5 children helped me to see first hand the oppositional nature of the ideas that, 1) children can protect themselves from potential adult abusers and, 2) children need adult protection and the opportunity to disclose abuse experiences to trusted adults.

The school administrator immediately explained to me that he had reservations about my study. ... He began with his biggest issue of concern saying that children might disclose their abuse to me. Thinking he was worried about my ability to handle such situations, I reassured him that I was prepared and trained to respond to children’s disclosures. In addition, I said I was familiar with school protocol, had discussed the study with both principals at the schools approached for participation, and that these principals were comfortable with my skill. He went on to list his other apprehensions about the study: how did research with children fit into the school mandate?; what did I expect to find?; would I be alone with the children? I was surprised by this last question. Was he insinuating that my motivation to speak with school children was perhaps more sinister than I was willing to admit? I answered the question anyway, reassuring him that I would be working with small groups of children, and obtaining principals’, parents’, and children’s informed consent prior to participation. He returned to his original, and perhaps only, concern: would my questions elicit disclosures of sexual abuse from children?

Apparently, it was a frightening prospect; children feeling safe enough to speak not only about their daily lives but possibly about their abuse. I wanted to debate with him the contradiction between having safety programs in schools, (like the one he so proudly reported was being implemented in his own school district), while at the same time being worried about eliciting abuse disclosures from children. I assured him that my questions were not about children’s experiences of abuse but rather about their experiences of power and powerlessness in their daily lives, and that I did not expect that these questions would, in themselves, encourage children to disclose abuse to me. He responded by targeting one of my proposed questions which asked, "what makes your parents happy?". He suggested that children might respond to such a question by saying their father was happy when the child had sex with him. With that comment, I could tolerate the charade no longer. The hypocrisy became clear to me in that instant, children would not disclose abuse if the window of opportunity was not opened. I, an outsider, might hear children’s experiences of abuse and report the abuse, as required, and thereby, create problems by adding to someone’s "work to do" pile. My work was to be avoided because the cost was too great for all adults concerned (Radford, 1992).
Probably one of the most important findings to emerge in the recent literature on child sexual abuse prevention has been that child sexual abuse prevention programs prompt children to disclose their abuse (Volpe, 1980). Telling, while not a part of primary prevention, may be extremely empowering for children themselves. For one thing, the longer the abuse takes place, the worse the impact. Disclosures also assist in preventing any further abuse by the perpetrator who is being discovered and charged. Denying perpetrators any further access to child victims is as important a goal as any other. Yet, the disclosure function of prevention programs has been de-emphasized rather than promoted (Melton, 1992). The sentiment that prevention means we are not meant to be looking for child victims remains strong in the movement. Still, there is no solid evidence to show that children are able to stop abusers or to act on their own behalf prior to the abuse. The fact that children can learn to tell is more empirically evident then is the fact that they can avert molestation (Berliner & Conte, 1990). Perhaps, our greatest contribution will be that of early intervention with children who suffer from abuse rather than the prevention of abuse (Melton, 1992; MacFarlane et al., 1986). Detection of abuse is being accomplished, and there is some suggestion that program emphasis should be redirected toward this important outcome more than any other (Gelles & Loseke, 1993).

In order to "tell", children need to trust that they will be believed. In order for trust to be justified, individual teachers and the school as an institution need to be clear about how to respond if a pupil does disclose abuse (Adams et al., 1992). Because of poor training and a lack of trust in the child welfare system, teachers are sometimes resistant to acting on children's disclosures of abuse (Tite, 1989). Positive adult reactions to disclosures is crucial to the movement's success. Currently, school officials are insufficiently trained to deal with children's disclosures and, perhaps more importantly,
are negatively inclined toward facilitating children's disclosures. My own personal experience informed me of this contradiction in our intention to protect children. We need to make "telling" more of a goal in these programs rather than an understated fall-out effect of our primary purpose -- that of immunizing children against the possibility of abuse. Prevention efforts often overlap (Dube et al., 1988) and, by necessity, must overlap where those who are less powerful are concerned.

A necessary component to the empowerment process is the development of resources or social relations to support the individual and their social understanding (Kieffer, 1984). Improved support resources for children might include peer support programs within schools, as well as adult education and training.

According to children's information, when in conflict, many spoke to friends. Children have a naturally occurring peer support network which is capable of offering them guidance, and safety in situations of risk and abuse. There is comfort in talking to others their age because they are equal in status and experience. Might the adoption of a peer support approach to child sexual abuse prevention/disclosure provide opportunity to begin to address children's "real" empowerment in the school system?

Further to this approach, the need to include community or adult education in this movement may be critical to its success. How can the relationship between children and adults change without targeting the attitudes and beliefs of the dominant group? Keeping children safe is the responsibility of all adults (Dube et al., 1988; Butler, 1986), however, the training of adults, considered by children to be "known" and "trusted", may be more consistent with the empowerment goal if it were reframed as an attempt to improve children's self-protection resources rather than as a means of child protection.
On a more global level, there is a dire need to raise adult awareness about the link between our daily maintenance of children's powerless status and their vulnerability to abusive adults. Honest reflection about our beliefs about children's rights, their social power, and adult privileges over children might be an effective beginning point for children's empowerment. Comprehensive child sexual abuse prevention and empowerment programs, along with knowledge and skills, must address children's access to supportive social relations and resources in both the child and adult community.

7.4 IMPLICATION FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

To date, most of our questions about these programs have been driven by evaluative concerns versus theoretical logic. The benefit of considering the theory behind the initiative is partially demonstrated through this study. Specifically, it would be important to examine the process of empowerment where children are concerned. There remains the question of whether children's sense of having power as a result of having taken part in programs is a sufficient program outcome. What is the implication of promoting a sense of power in children rather than facilitating real or actual social power? Is it sure to result in greater physical injury to children? Actual social power change in the child and adult community remains a critical area requiring further theoretical and empirical exploration.

Prevention programs are an idea of the ruling class, that is, adults. There is a need in this movement to understand children's lifeworlds and social power from the perspective of children, and include this viewpoint in the design and development of these curricula. Further insight into children's personal power and powerlessness would inform us as to appropriate program modifications, for example, by offering a more realistic
assessment of when and how personal protection skills are useful to children and when they are not. Methods that encourage researchers to more closely examine child culture, such as participant observation approaches, would provide interesting insights.

Finally, this research has highlighted the absence of answers to questions specifically related to children's experiences of sexual abuse. For example, what do children do that works in circumstances of abuse? To what extent are children able to escape abuse, to what degree are they injured, and how do they perceive their efficacy in protecting their bodies? As well, published documentation about the predisposing variables and dynamics of child sexual abuse, according to the first person accounts of children of various ages, would provide an important level of information for preventionists seeking to further develop prevention concepts.

7.5 CONCLUSION

Everything we know about sexual abuse we have learned from the courage of children and adults who have persisted in speaking out with insistence and strength about their experiences. We owe them no less courage in our continuing effort to prevent further victimization by fighting back against those who would oppress and limit children's information, options, resources, and potential power (Butler, 1986, p. 15).

In this analysis an attempt has been made to uncover a child-defined understanding of social power. A social analysis of children's everyday lives suggests that children's experiences of powerlessness with adults are not random and isolated incidents but rather common place and "normal" everyday occurrences. Evidence from children reveals that the hegemony of adults over children is widespread.

Based on the findings of this study, it is proposed that children's daily social power experiences deter children from accurately interpreting adult motives, refusing adult actions, and relying on the support and protection of adult authorities. Children are
unlikely to incorporate these measures in extreme circumstances of abuse when in their daily experiences the appropriateness, success, and safety of these adult defined actions are not positively reinforced.

Children's lack of power to refuse the decisions and actions of powerful adults is a root cause of children's vulnerability for abuse, and no amount of classroom taught assertiveness training or role-playing can overcome the social power lessons being taught to children on a daily basis. Child sexual abuse prevention programs are an important first line in the defense (Dube et al., 1988), however, providing children with information and changing their behaviour will not force the adult centred social structure to collapse. A massive social reorganization, "a transformation" in the terms and conditions of power itself (MacKinnon, 1987), is not a likely outcome of the child sexual abuse prevention program movement as it exists in its present form.
REFERENCES


CBE reviews security after girl, 6, assaulted; School intruder posed as doctor. (1994, June 16). The Ottawa Citizen, p. .


APPENDIX A:

PARENT INFORMATION LETTERS AND CONSENT FORMS
Parent Information Letter  (Sent Home With Students)

Dear Parent:

I am a Ph.D student in Community Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am speaking with children who are 9 and 10 years old and I would like to include your child in my study.

I will be studying children’s relationships with adults and children’s feelings of power and powerlessness. During the interviews children will be asked to talk about things like what a typical day in their life is like, how they feel about being 9 or 10 years old and, what becoming an adult means to them. The interview questions are easy for children to answer and are not overly personal. The interview will take about 1 and 1/2 hours to complete and will be done during two separate meeting times during the week of May 10th and May 17th, at a time that is convenient for your child and his/her teacher. Your child’s answers will be anonymous, their answers will not be identified by name and your child’s school records will not be involved in any way.

The study has been approved by the Toronto Board of Education’s Research Review Committee and by the School’s Principal [name]. This information about children’s power and powerlessness in their daily lives will be useful in a number of ways. In this study, this information will be used to discuss children’s ability to protect themselves from potential harm. Personal safety concepts which have been designed to teach school children how to protect themselves from abuse will be examined and critiqued in light of this information on children’s power and powerlessness.

Whether you agree to let your child be interviewed or not please sign the attached permission form and include any comments you may have about this study. Once signed please have your child return the consent form to their teacher as soon as possible. Should you or your child choose to withdraw from the study you may do so at anytime.

Thank you for considering this important study. Should you have any questions or concerns about this study and your child’s participation in it, please do not hesitate to contact me at 532-6094 for further information.

Sincerely,

Joyce Radford Ph.D (candidate)         Supervisor:  Dr. Jeri Wine
                                      OISE, University of Toronto
PARENT CONSENT FORM (Sent Home With Students)

Children's Everyday Relationships With Adults.

Child's name __________________
(please print)

Birthdate ___________ First language ________________

CHECK HERE

___I agree to permit my child to participate in a study about children's power in their relationships with adults.

___I do NOT agree to permit my child to participate in a study about children's power in their relationships with adults.

Parent's signature and date ________________________

If you would like to request a copy of the summary report at the end of the study please write here the address where this report should be sent:

Comments: (Any comments you may have about this study would be appreciated and considered:)}
Parent Information Letter (Mailed to the Homes of Prospective Children)

Joyce Radford  
123 Marion St.  
Toronto, Ont.  
M6R 1E6

C/O [parent]  

Re: Interviewing [name of child].

Dear Parent:

My name is Joyce Radford and I am currently a Ph.D candidate in Community Psychology at OISE, University of Toronto. A mutual friend of ours [name of person] has spoke to you about my interest in interviewing your son sometime in the near future. This brief letter is to further inform you about what this interview would entail and to formally request permission for your child’s [name] participation.

In this research project I am interested in children’s everyday life experiences and their feelings of being powerful as well as powerless in their daily lives. At the present time I am at a very early stage in this research, and so, I would like to meet with a few young people to understand from their point of view what their daily lives involve, and the language they use to describe their home and school lives.

The interview that J would take part in would be very general. I will ask him to talk about things like; what it’s like to be his age, the kinds of decisions he is able to make for himself, the help he requires from adults, and the extent that he feels dependent on adults in his everyday life. These questions are meant to help me to begin to develop further questions about children’s power and powerlessness in their daily lives. The interview questions will be easy to answer and will not be extremely personal.

The interview will take about one-hour to complete and will be conducted at a convenient time for you and your son. If you agree to allow your child to participate the information collected would be completely confidential. No names will be recorded. As well, you have the right to withdraw your child from this study at anytime and J will be told that he can stop the interview anytime he wishes. He will be paid $10.00 for his time.

Ultimately, I hope to theoretically link information about children’s power in their daily lives to the notion of training children to protect themselves from adult abusers. According to what children say about their power in their daily lives I can begin to hypothetically consider reasons why children may be unable to protect themselves against adults who sexually abuse them. While the purpose of this study is to assist in our understanding of children’s actual ability to prevent their own abuse I want to reassure you that none of the questions will be about children’s sexuality or their abuse related experiences.
Should you have any further questions or concerns about this study and your child’s participation in it, please do not hesitate to telephone me at 532-6094. Once you have made your decision about your child’s participation please contact me and, if you’re interested, we can arrange a meeting time. Thank you for considering this important study.

Sincerely,

Joyce Radford Ph.D (candidate)

Supervisor: Dr. Jeri Wine (Ph.D), OISE, University of Toronto.
PARENT CONSENT FORM (Signed at Time of Interview)

In-School Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs: Including The Experiences of Children.

I agree to permit my child to participate in a study about the feelings and experiences of children in their relationships with adults.

Parent's signature and date ---------------------

If you would like to request a copy of the summary report at the end of the study please write here the address where this report should be sent:

Comments: (Any comments you may have about this study would be appreciated and considered.)
APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW GUIDES
Children's Everyday Experiences With Adults

Initial Interview: Children’s Introduction to Study

I am doing a study with young people your age to try to understand what children’s everyday lives are like. In particular, I'm interested in finding out more about how you feel about adults and how you get along with adults at home and at school.

What you tell me is "anonymous" — meaning private, your name won’t be written down anywhere. I'd like to record our conversation if that is alright with you, but I’m not going to record your name on the tape. The information you tell me is not going to be seen by your teacher or parents and will not affect your school grade. There are no right or wrong answers. If there are any questions you don’t want to answer, or you don’t know the answer to, just say so and we can skip over it. You can also stop the interview any time you want.

This interview will take about an hour to complete and I'll meet with you again in one week for about 1/2 hour, but I'll tell you more about that at the end of this meeting. After we have finished both of the interviews we can talk more about what this study is about and I'll answer any questions you may have about the study. Do you have any questions for me right now?

Are you willing to take part in this interview? May I use my tape-recorder? [VERBAL CONSENT TO BE OBTAINED HERE].
Children's Everyday Experiences With Adults

Initial Interview: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. Background:
I want to hear a little bit about you. What can you tell me about yourself?

   a) How old are you?
   b) Are you in grade ____?
   c) How long have you been at this school? Have you ever changed schools? (was changing schools hard?)
   d) Have you always lived in the same house you live in right now?
   e) Who lives with you?
   f) Are there any people in your family who don't live with you?
   g) What kinds of things are you good at?
   h) How do you know you're good at _______[that]?

2. Typical day:
I'd like to know more about your day-to-day life -- what is a typical day is like for you. Was today a typical day?

I'd like you to tell me what you did today from the time you woke up this morning until you go to bed tonight. Start from when you woke up this morning...

   a) How did you wake up?
   b) What was the first thing you did?
   c) How did you decide what to wear?
   d) What about breakfast, who made it?
   e) How did you get to school?
   f) What happened at school today?
   g) What did you do after school?
   h) When do you eat dinner?
   i) What do you usually do after dinner?
   j) When do you go to bed?

3. Quality of Life:
   a) Were you happy this morning when you woke up? Did you want to go to school?
   b) What was the best thing that happened to you today?
   c) What was the worst thing that happened to you today?
   d) Are there some days when you think... I'm having a really bad day? When was the last time you thought that. Can you tell me about it?

4. Feelings about being 9 or 10:
   a) What do you like about being someone your age?
   b) Tell me some of reasons why you don't like about being your age?
   c) What age would you like to be if you weren't 9 or 10?
   d) What will your life be like when you're older?
5. Authority over one's own life:
Everyone gets frustrated from time-to-time because they can't do what they want to do. Do you ever feel that way?

a) In the last week have you gotten upset because you couldn't do something you wanted to do?
b) Why couldn't you do what you wanted to do?
c) Who decides what you can and cannot do?
d) Does your (parents, mom, dad...) know better than you?
e) Are there other things that you wish you could do that you’re not allowed to do?
f) If you're sick do you get to stay home from school?

6. Becoming an adult means...

a) At what age will you be able to say for yourself what you can and cannot do?
b) What will you have learned by the age of _______ that you don’t know now?
   (What will be different about you?)
c) Why is someone who is 9 or 10 not allowed to make choices and decisions of their own?
d) What can a kid do if an adult (like a teacher) tells them to do something they don't want to do?
e) What does being more mature mean?

CHECK TO SEE IF CHILD NEEDS A BREAK

7. Defining personal power:

a) What does it mean when we say someone has "power" or that person is powerful?
b) Who in your family has power? How do you know they have power?
c) What about you, can you remember a time recently when you felt "powerful"?
d) Can you think of a time recently when you felt like you had no power to do or say what you wanted?

8. Adults' Trust of children:

a) Why do adults sometimes not believe what children tell them?
b) Do adults always tell the truth?
c) Do you remember a time when someone didn't believe you when you were telling the truth? How did that make you feel?
d) Why do kids get into trouble with their parents and teachers?
e) What things are you not allowed to do?
h) What happens if you do something you’re not allowed to do?

9. Adult/Child Relationships:

a) How old will you need to be before you're an adult?
b) What's going to be different about you when you're an adult?
c) Why do some adults like having kids as friends?
d) Why do kids like being friends with some adults? How do you get an adult to be your friend?
e) Is having an adult as a friend different from having someone your own age as a friend?
f) Is it important for kids to help adults? (like a babysitter or a teacher)? What can you do to help an adult?
g) How do you make your parents happy?
h) How do you make your teacher happy?
i) What makes you happy?
Second Interview: Follow-up Interview Guide

DEMOGRAPHICS: I'LIKE TO START BY ASKING YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY...

. What country were you born in? (if not Canada; How long have you lived here?)
. Where were your parents born? (if not Canada; How long have they lived here?)
. What language do you speak most often?
. What language(s) is/are spoken at home by you? By your parents?
. What do your parents do? (What did your parents do before coming to Canada?)
(education?)

Sample Follow Up Interview: Elizabeth

I WAS INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT...

HOW YOU HAD AN ARGUMENT WITH YOUR MATH TEACHER BECAUSE HE NEVER USES THE MATH BOOK YOU'VE GOT.

. When you have complaints about the way you're learning do you think adults listen to you?
. How does it make you feel when you speak with a teacher like that?
. Should teachers speak with students more about how they teach a class?
. Why do you think teachers don't talk to students about the way kids want to learn?
. How would you improve the way you're being taught?

I WAS ALSO INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT HOW YOU GIVE YOUR MOM A HUG AND A KISS GOODNIGHT BEFORE GOING TO BED.

. Why do you do that?
. How do you think your mom would feel if you stopped doing it? (how would you feel?)
. Do you give hugs and kisses to other adults sometimes?
(who and when?)
. Do kids have a choice about whether to give a hug and a kiss to an adult if the adult asks for it?

I WAS INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT HOW WHEN YOU AND YOUR BROTHER WOULD GO TO YOUR DAD'S HOUSE, THAT HIS GIRLFRIEND WOULD SOMETIMES SMACK YOU WHEN YOU MADE TOO MUCH NOISE.

. Why do adults hit kids?
. What did you do when your dad's girlfriend hit you?
. Do adults have the right to hit kids?
. How old will you be before adults will stop hitting you?
. Did you tell anyone that your dad's girlfriend had hit you? (what happened?)
HOW YOU FEEL BORED IN YOUR FRENCH CLASS AND HOW HE MAKES YOU JUST SIT AND LOOK AT A BOOK. YOU SAID YOU TALKED TO THE VICE PRINCIPAL ABOUT IT BUT THAT YOU DIDN'T WANT TO GET HIM IN TROUBLE.

. Why do you worry about getting your teacher in trouble?
. What do you think would happen if you told the vice principal the truth?
. Do you worry about getting other adults in trouble sometimes?
. What kinds of things can a kid say to get an adult in trouble?
. Would you tell if a teacher hit you?

YOU SAID YOU GET BOSSED AROUND BY YOUR OLDER BROTHER SOMETIMES... THAT HE GIVES YOU $2 SOMETIMES TO DO EVERYTHING FOR HIM.

. Why do you go along with him?
. What would happen if you told him no?
. Does your mom know that he pays you to do everything for him?
. Do you think it's fair that he gets to boss you around?

YOU SAID THAT SOMETIMES YOU KEEP THE FACT THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL TO YOURSELF BECAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO HURT YOUR MOM'S FEELINGS. YOU DON'T WANT YOUR MOM TO KNOW THAT YOU DON'T LIKE YOUR SCHOOL.

. Why would your mom's feelings be hurt if you told her the truth?
. Are there other times when you're afraid to hurt your mom's feelings?
. When is it ok for you to not tell the truth?

YOU SAID YOU FELT POWERFUL ONE TIME WHEN YOU HAD A FIGHT WITH YOUR FRIEND REA -- THAT YOU GOT HER DOWN ON THE GROUND AND GOT HER OUTFIT DIRTY.

. Why did that make you feel powerful?
. Did you feel any other way when that happened?

YOU SAID THAT ADULTS ARE BELIEVED OVER KIDS SOMETIMES. AND YOU GAVE ME THE EXAMPLE OF WHEN A TEACHER SAID SHE HAD WARNED YOU AND ANOTHER KID NOT TO FIGHT 3 TIMES BUT SHE HAD ONLY WARNED YOU ONCE.

. Why do you think adults are believed over kids?
. Do kids lie more than adults?
. Do you think kids don't stand up for themselves sometimes because they think they won't be believed?
. What do you do when an adult isn't believing you?
. Do you trust adults or kids more?
APPENDIX C:

A MEMBER CHECK INTERVIEW
Introduction to Member Check Session:

As I told you when I first interviewed you... I am interested in understanding children's experiences of power and powerlessness in their relationships with adults. So, if you remember, I asked a lot of questions about your daily life and your experiences at school with teachers, at home with your parents, and so on. You told me quite a bit about your life and based on what you have told me I have made some conclusions about your power in your relationships with adults. What I'd like to do today is to describe back to you some of the things you've told me about your life. And I'm also going to ask you to tell me more about those things. Also, I'm going to tell you what I thin some of these experiences mean, what these experiences tell me about your power in your relationships with adults. Ok. I'm interested in knowing whether you think my understanding of your experiences seems right to your or not. I'd like you to listen to what you have told me before and carefully think about what your experience means about your power. Then I'd like you to try to be honest about whether or not you think my view is the same as your or not. Don't be afraid to disagree with how I understand it, Ok. You know best what things in your life mean. OK. Do you have any questions for me right now? Lets just begin and see how it goes. Stop me at any time if you have any questions or problems.

Excerpt from Darlene's Member Check Session:

**Interviewer:** You told me you’d like to be 20 years old cause you can get a job, drive a car, do everything. You can get a lot of money from your job, have a family and you won't get bossed around as much by your teachers and your mom.

Is that how you feel about your life -- like you get bossed around by people (adults)?

**Darlene:** Well, everybody always says your only gonna be young once, but I don't believe that. I want to be older cause I think it would be fun.

**Interviewer:** Do you get bossed around by adults?

**Darlene:** Ya, sometimes.. not alot but sometimes.

**Interviewer:** How does that make you feel?

**Darlene:** Uh, like upset cause you can't boss them back.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think they boss you?

**Darlene:** Because mostly the adults think that they know better than kids do.

**Interviewer:** And knowing more allows you to boss?

**Darlene:** Ya.
Interviewer: You also told me that sometimes when you wait at a counter in a store you never get served because you’re too short and you need to be bigger and taller to be noticed. Do you remember that?

Darlene: Ya

Interviewer: What do you think that means about your power as a kid?

Darlene: That kids don’t have as much power as adults cause adults are always ready and so they get served first and stuff. Like grocery stores that’s what happens.

Interviewer: So a short adult would get served?

Darlene: Ya.

Interviewer: So it wasn’t about your height then was it?

Darlene: Not as much.

Interviewer: It’s a little about your height?

Darlene: Ya.

Interviewer: And what’s it more about if it’s not your height?

Darlene: That they’re older than you, and they have money.

Interviewer: And what does money have to do with it?

Darlene: With money they get more stuff.

Interviewer: OK. I thought that you were saying you want to be an adult because as a kid you get bossed around by older people and sometimes you’re ignored completely and there’s nothing you can do about it cause you’re just a kid. Does that sound right to you?

Darlene: Ya.

Interviewer: And when you’re older you’ll have a right to stand up to people and say you can’t tell me what to do, or they come and serve me. But you can’t say those things when you’re a kid cause you’re afraid to?

Darlene: Ya.

Interviewer: What are you afraid will happen?

Darlene: They might like get like really mad at you.
Interviewer: Like how?

Darlene: Like yell at you.

Interviewer: And what would that do to you as a kid?

Darlene: Well, I'd feel sad.

Interviewer: What are you afraid of besides just being yelled at?

Darlene: Well, I don't like being yelled at!

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that. Can you tell why you don't like being yelled at?

Darlene: It scares me.