ADOLESCENTS AND POWER: UNDERSTANDINGS OF POWER, AND DECONSTRUCTION OF NEGATIVE PEER INTERACTIONS

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Abstract

Contemporary researchers typically classify negative peer interactions as bullying or conflict. Theoretically, bullying involves exploiting a power imbalance to demobilize a peer(s), and conflict involves using power tactics to exert influence or resolve a dispute. This study attempted to explore the exercise of power between adolescent peers within psychological, social psychological and feminist psychological frameworks of power, and bullying and conflict constructions. Three hundred and fifty-two Melbourne students from Years 7 to 10 completed a “Young People’s School Relationships” survey. Students described their understandings of personal and interpersonal power, and rated their perceived power. The experimenter asked the students to differentiate three recent difficult incidents with peers according to perceived power disadvantage (less power), balance (same power) and advantage (more power). They described the difficulties, their responses and their perceptions of the power balance. Outcomes were rated on affect, relationship quality and overall evaluation. Power construction, gender, and year group differences on perceived personal power were examined. Scenario type (less, same, more power), gender, year group (7/8, 9/10), and relationship closeness (not friends, friends) differences on difficulties, responses and outcomes were evaluated. The power constructions formed three themes (‘power-within’, ‘power-with’, ‘power-over’). Difficulties were subgrouped into three forms (two-way, one-way, other-way) and three types (physical, verbal, social). Responses were categorised into adapting, distancing, dominating and engaging. There was no support for Falbo and Peplau’s (1980) two-dimensional model for classifying types of interpersonal responses in power-differentiated situations. Power was constructed most frequently as ‘power-within’. Perceived power ratings formed a Global Power Score (GPS), with males reporting higher GPSs. Males and year group 7/8 reported more physical difficulties in the ‘same’ power, and females and year group 7/8 more social difficulties in the ‘less’ and ‘more’ power scenarios. Students reported more adapting responses in the difficult interpersonal situations. Adapting and distancing responses were more frequent in the less power scenario, and dominating and engaging more frequent in the more and less power scenarios respectively. Affect and relationship status outcomes were rated more positively in same power scenario. Outcomes were more positive for difficulties with friends. Students rated their responses more positively when they used engaging strategies, but less positively when they used distancing or dominating. Power theories
provided partial explanations for the findings and alternative frameworks to bullying and conflict for understanding negative peer interactions. This study extends on knowledge of adolescents’ school-based relationships and proposes a power model for schools.
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Declaration

I declare that this report is my account of my own research and that it does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contain work that has previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution or for publication without due acknowledgement.

I further declare that the ethical principles and procedures specified by the Psychology Department of Swinburne University with respect to human research and experimentation have been adhered to in the preparation of this report.

Jenny Ricketts

20th March, 2003
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF
POWER BETWEEN ADOLESCENTS

1.1 Overview

This chapter provides a framework for the current study by presenting a series of focus questions. The questions address the themes underlying the topic of power between adolescents, the importance of exploring the issue, the need for a theory that explains the nature of power between adolescents, and current knowledge about power between adolescents. It also previews the research aims, the study design, and the anticipated outcomes of the study.

1.2 What themes underpin the study of power between adolescents?

The following scenario highlights the themes related to the nature of power between adolescents, illustrates the topic’s relevance to adolescents’ lived experiences and situates the issue in its wider context.

* A secondary school student is feeling very distressed and anxious because friends have asked, “Is it true what is being said about you?” The student has been trying to ignore the class members allegedly responsible for the rumours, hoping that they will get bored and stop. The class members are upset because the student is ignoring them. They are also upset because they are hearing rumours that the student has been saying that they do bad things after school. They have tried asking the student directly and via notes in class about the ignoring and the rumours. The student’s (uninformed) parents are confused and angry by their child’s increasingly negative attitude to school and amplified aggression towards a younger sibling. At home, the parents have banned the student’s use of the mobile phone and Internet until matters improve. A class teacher is concerned and annoyed because every time the teacher instructs the students to work together in groups there is tension. The teacher has tried, unsuccessfully, to find out what is happening. All group work has stopped until there is evidence of improved relationships. Privately and independently, the parents and teacher have approached the Year Level Coordinator with their problems. The Year
Level Coordinator is not aware of the difficulties, but accepts responsibility for addressing the matter.

This is a story built around the themes of power and powerlessness. It establishes a plot based on interpersonal relationships, ascribes relative degrees of power to the characters, presents snapshots of characterisation, identifies emotions, pinpoints behaviours and works towards the central conflict: What will the Coordinator do to restore harmony? Beyond these constructions lie theoretical questions: How might each person/group construct and explain the events? How did they come to have these understandings? Whose/which perspective will prevail? What is the relationship between this ‘story’ and the wider socio-political context?

This type of situation has given rise to the current study of power between adolescents. The situation reflects the multifaceted nature of interactions within the school context and the range of personal and situational variables that could contribute to the outcomes. It raises the question of how to explain and respond to the complex nature of power relations within a school setting.

1.3 Why is it important to investigate adolescents and power?

The importance of this investigation relates to the immediate and long-term well-being of school-based adolescents, which can involve matters of school safety, the availability of experiences alternative to aggressiveness and the uncovering of hidden curricula. These issues are outlined as follows.

Schools are intended to be safe environments that shape the psycho-social-educational development of young people. However, schools are not always successful in ensuring safety for students, as demonstrated by the findings of the Sticks and Stones Report (House of Representatives Standing Committee, 1994) into school violence. The findings suggested that violence, bullying and aggression were predominant features of school experience for many students, with consequences for health and well-being, educational progress and relationship satisfaction. Rigby and Slee (1991) found that approximately 15% of students were involved in bullying, as bullies, victims, or bully/victims. An understanding of the role of power in adolescents’ school relationships is important in understanding why, and under what circumstances, such
interactions occur. Explanations could contribute to the enhancement of safety and well-being for those in a school environment.

Schools prepare students for future citizenship as well as for future careers. In a longitudinal study, spanning 22 years, Huesmann, Eron, and Lefkowitz (1984) found that aggression was a stable, enduring trait. The researchers tracked the aggressiveness of over 600 participants from age 8 to age 30. They interviewed the 870 child (modal age 8 years) participants as adolescents (211 boys, 216 girls, modal age 19) and again as adults (198 males, 211 females, modal age 30). They also collected some intergenerational and relational data. The researchers found that once participants developed an aggressive style it persisted. Correlation of aggression scores at ages 8 and 30 showed figures of .50 for males and .35 for females. Early aggressiveness predicted later serious antisocial behaviour, involving criminality, physical aggression, and child abuse. In males, it predicted spousal abuse and power-derived behaviours. Aggressiveness was found to be intergenerational within families. The researchers considered it likely that aggression’s stability was the product of a relationship between individual (biology, physiological, genetics) and environmental factors. Some researchers, such as Opotow (1991) and Schwarzwald and Koslowsky (1999), have proposed that aggressiveness can be a negative behavioural correlate of power relations between adolescents. Therefore, an understanding of school-based power is important if schools are to accept the challenge of providing alternative ways of managing aggression and demonstrating different models of non-aggressive interactions.

Arguably, relationships’ training is part of a school’s ‘hidden curriculum’. School-based adolescents are required to manage a complex array of multi-powered relationships, across the adult population, within, and across the peer group. They are often at the centre of interactions between parents/guardians and adult school personnel. Social psychologists, such as French and Raven (1959), Kelley and Thibaut (1978), Falbo (1977), and Falbo and Peplau (1980) proposed that relationships, whatever their purpose and characteristics, involve power. Therefore, an understanding of power between adolescents is important in providing a lens through which to identify the nature of the hidden relationships’ curriculum. This knowledge could help school personnel to clarify what a school is ‘teaching’ adolescents about relationships and what adolescents are actually learning.
1.4 What main issues will the current study address?

Studies of adolescents’ school-based relationships typically address individual differences between students. This study acknowledges the importance of individual differences. It allows scope for structural and contextual factors, and it addresses the role of perception in the operation of peer relations. An outline of these issues follows.

The study of power and power relations is a complex topic that requires careful focusing. The title, ‘Adolescents and power’, may conjure up images of schoolyard punch-ups, hurtful rumours, classroom tensions, or exclusion from friendships. It might rekindle memories of in-groups and out-groups, of some groups that seemed to have confidence and worldly experience and of other groups that appeared naïve and focused on academia. Subsequently, it might draw the reader’s attention inwards to the personal characteristics, behaviours, and responses of adolescents when engaged in ‘power struggles’. The current study will consider some of the individual variables that could be related to the nature of power between school-based adolescents.

The topic might also draw the reader’s attention outwards to the wider socio-political-educational context of the school itself, since many matters of school-based power involve teachers and parents, rules and consequences. The scenario on page 1 described the communication of information about the particular student with the student’s knowledge (“rumours”) and without the student’s knowledge (“problems”). What and whose information will be sought? How, why and by whom will it be gathered and interpreted? To whom will it be communicated? Will other information be sought? The gathering, interpretation, and distribution of information by and about members of a school community are important features of school life. The outcomes for each person concerned with the event described will be determined by the answers to these questions. However, not all members of a school community have equal access to these tasks. The extent to which there is collaboration between members will affect the students’ access to autonomy and self-determination. Whilst it is not possible within the scope of the current study to examine the nature of the power relations within the participants’ respective school environments, it will consider the role that aspects of adolescents’ school positioning might play in the nature of power relations with peers.

Power can be a matter of perception. That is, people can perceive themselves as having less power, more power, or the same power as others. In an interpersonal interaction, ‘opponents’ engage cognitively in assessing the power balance and their
perceptions can diverge or converge. That is, opponents might ‘agree’ that one or other has the balance of power or that power is balanced. If opponents ‘agree’ that power is not balanced, they might ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’ on who holds the balance. Added to this equation are the perceptions of those involved indirectly in the scenario, such as teachers and parents/guardians. These perceptions have ramifications for the nature of the interaction and for its aftermath. An important issue addressed in the current study is the role that perception might play in contributing to adolescents’ appraisals of power relations.

The scenario indicated that the given situation was not just about a particular student(s) or a particular behaviour(s) but was multidimensional and multi-layered. Therefore, the current study proposes that internal, individual factors and external, contextual factors could help to explain the nature of some interactions between school-based adolescent peers. It could be helpful to view ‘power’ as a construct weaving together these internal and external elements. The study contends that an understanding of the nature of power is central to an exploration of the interpersonal interactions within and between adolescents’ groups. It argues that ‘power’ permeates all aspects of their interpersonal interactions, from their personal characteristics, characteristics of the environment and the immediate context of specific interactions, through the means of managing interpersonal difficulties to the outcomes of their interactions for individuals and the group. Finally, it suggests that adolescents’ perceptions of interpersonal power relations are an important component in understanding the nature of power between school-based peers.

1.5 What theoretical frameworks explain the construct of ‘power’?

Currently, there are three main theoretical frameworks for explaining the construct of power and the formation and operation of power relations. An overview of the psychological, social psychological, and feminist psychological approaches is given below, with a more comprehensive review provided in chapter 2.

Psychological approaches propose that power involves individual development and difference. For example, Adler (1927) theorized that humans have needs for mastery and superiority (power) and that the relative strength of such needs impacts on the individual’s environment and relationships. Adler argued that the relative importance of social interest tempers the individual drive for power so that people can
adjust their power drive according to their estimates of its potential effect on relationships. He argued that individuals are more likely to protect important relationships by subjugating their power drive and less likely to do this when the relationship is not important. On this basis, the reader might regard the student and the classmates in the scenario as having comparatively equal drives for power with little importance on protecting their interpersonal relationships.

Social psychological approaches, such as that proposed by French (1956), argue that power is two-tiered. He theorised that power is a social construction establishing relative status and providing differential access to strategies for satisfying interpersonal goals. Kipnis (1976) suggested that power concerns attempts to exert interpersonal influence allied with considerations of the potential costs/benefits. He argued that people use criteria, such as the relative status of their positions, cost/benefit analyses, social norms, personal values, target’s resistance, outcomes of previous experiences, and available tactics, when deciding on the selection and use of power tactics.

Social psychological approaches also draw on notions of social equity and social exchange, as described by Thibaut and Kelley (1959). These analyses are used to explain both symmetrical and asymmetrical power relations. From this perspective, the student might have estimated that he/she had less power/status than the classmates because of the disparity in numbers of students involved and/or given knowledge gained from previous experiences that situations worsen when you tell an adult, decided to handle the difficulty by confiding in friends. The teacher might have higher social power because of his/her status relative to the students and higher social influence because of his/her access to a range of influence tactics, such as withdrawal of group work, assignment of homework, and awarding of grades.

Feminist (structural) approaches propose that political and social structures based on characteristics such as gender, age, socio-economics, and religion determine power and power relations. Similarly, Foucault (1980) argued that power is pervasive through being productive and that compliance to socio-political expectations contributes to the reproduction of unequal power relations. He argued that society constructs power relations based on, for example, gender and economics thereby creating and perpetuating patriarchy and poverty and that the legitimacy of such should be challenged. Without analysis, he argued that inequities are legitimised and perpetuated. Structural approaches explain systematized asymmetrical power relations. From a structural perspective, the adults could have more power than the students who could
have equal power. Furthermore, wealthier parents/guardians might have access to more power than other not so wealthy parents/guardians, resulting in the potential for influencing the amount of attention paid by the Coordinator to addressing the difficulty.

Feminist (post structural) analyses of power (as described by Kitzinger, 1991) focus on identifying the factors causing or contributing to relative powerlessness and on the political and personal ways of redressing unequal power relations, such as through collectivism and empowerment. This perspective locates the foundations of power relations in factors such as language and hierarchy. Using this theoretical approach, the Coordinator might describe the student as a ‘victim’ and the classmates as ‘bullies’. Subsequently, the Coordinator might address the situation by attempting to equip the ‘victim’ with assertiveness skills and to increase the empathy of the classmates.

There is divergence of opinion regarding theoretical frameworks for explaining power and power relations. Chapter 2 describes some of the outcomes of employing specific frameworks and the potential for different, if not, competing explanations of power and power relations.

1.6 Why is it important to clarify a theoretical framework for explaining the nature of power between adolescents?

There are three main reasons for clarifying the theoretical frameworks best suited to explaining the phenomenon of power between school-based adolescents. Firstly, theories of power do not incorporate the insights and experiences of adolescents, questioning the applicability of current approaches to providing adequate explanations of adolescents’ peer relations. Secondly, theories of power typically regard adolescents’ relations as power-balanced and do not appear to cater adequately for power-differentiation between and within adolescents’ peer groups. Thirdly, current theories of power tend to be one-dimensional (within-self) or two-dimensional (self-other, group-group) and do not cater for the overlap between individual and contextual variables.

Therefore, to explain the nature of power between school-based adolescents, a theoretical framework is needed that incorporates adolescents’ knowledge of power, acknowledges the power-differentiated structures of the adolescent peer group, caters for both individual and environmental factors and addresses the interplay of power relations between all members of the school community.
1.7 What is known about the nature of power between adolescents?

Current knowledge of the nature of power between school-based adolescents relates to classifications of negative interpersonal interactions, behavioural correlates, mediating factors and outcomes. Chapter 3 explores the main research studies designed to explore adolescents’ interpersonal interactions and the nature of power within these. A brief outline is provided below.

Power is an important contributor to the nature of adolescents’ negative peer interactions, including those labelled as violence, bullying, and conflict. By definition, violence and bullying involve the exploitation of a real or perceived imbalance in power by the power-holder, with power constructed as an individual phenomenon. Conflict is not considered power-based when defined as simply behavioural opposition (interpersonal difference) accompanied by attempts to satisfy competing interpersonal goals (resolutions). When contextualised, it is considered power-based because it is defined in terms of parties’ relative access (social power) to methods of influence (social influence). Theoretically, ‘social power’ can arise from differences in relational status and ‘social influence’ can refer to the management/resolution methods. Power is considered a component of the phenomena of violence and bullying and it may be a component of conflict. It is beyond the scope of the current study to employ the three interactions in seeking to understand power between adolescents. Therefore, given the similarity between violence and bullying, the study will focus on the more distinctive interactions of bullying and conflict.

The behaviours associated with bullying and conflict resolution have been the subject of much research interest. According to Rigby and Slee (1991), bullying includes physical (hitting, kicking), verbal (teasing, hurtful names), and exclusion (left out)behaviours. Laursen and Koplas (1995) found that adolescent conflicts ranged from use of the telephone to transportation and involved specific behaviours, such as annoying actions, criticism, teasing, and put-downs. According to Ohbuchi and Yamamoto (1990), adolescents’ conflict resolution strategies included bilateral-direct (bargaining, persuasion), bilateral-indirect (suggesting, deception), unilateral-direct (threat, coercion), and unilateral-indirect (violence, withdrawal)behaviours. An overview of bullying behaviours and conflict strategies suggests some overlap, yet researchers define, describe, and apply the constructs differently. Bullying between adolescents is considered antisocial, destructive, and dangerous to health and well-
being. Conflict is regarded as adaptive, growth promoting, and potentially relationship enhancing.

Three main difficulties arise regarding bullying and conflict. Firstly, there appears to be some overlap in their theoretical constructions. Whilst each construction involves power, the nature of that power is not clear. Secondly, there appears to be overlap in the behaviours identified with bullying and conflict, since both include a range of potentially harmful, hurtful strategies. Thirdly, typologies of bullying, conflict and conflict resolution involve unequal access to power because only adult school personnel are authorised to develop such typologies and to label adolescents’ interactions accordingly. If students and teachers do not communicate about or negotiate on the meaning and/or application of labels then peer interactions can be misunderstood.

Explorations of power relations between adolescents have identified factors mediating access to power, use of power tactics, and the experience of power. In relation to bullying and conflict, researchers have explored variables such as gender, developmental stage, focus of interest, family of origin and personality. Would it make a difference to the reader's understanding and interpretation of the scenario if he/she identified the genders and ages of those involved? The outcomes of interactions based on power relations can vary, for example, temporally (short term, long-term), emotionally (not bothered, very angry), relationally (improved, terminated), and socially (reinforce negative or positive behaviours).

Students, teachers, and parents/guardians need to be able to distinguish between types of negative peer interactions. Presumably, if the attention paid to individual behaviours is disproportionate to other factors such as context, motivation, perception, and outcomes then the potential for harm is exacerbated. Analyses based on single rather than multiple perspectives, located within single rather than multiple contexts, and ignoring historical in preference to immediate time frames can contribute to harmful outcomes. The current scenario illustrates these issues. How might parents, teachers, students assess the interactions described in the scenario? To what extent might these assessments converge? Will only the behaviours of the students be the focus of attention? Will other adults and students be involved in constructing and gleaning meaning from the events? Will whole ‘stories’ be requested or only the immediate ‘stories’?

Chapter 3 will conclude with the proposition that some deconstruction of negative peer interactions labelled as bullying and conflict is a prerequisite to clarifying
the nature of power between school-based peers. The current study argues that this could contribute to a different understanding of adolescents’ interactions and, subsequently, to healthier, more satisfying outcomes and relationships.

1.8 What research questions arise regarding power between adolescents? How might the current study address these questions?

What do adolescents understand by ‘power’? What role does power play in the types of interactions adolescents experience and in the types of responses that they make? What role does power play in the outcomes for adolescents of managing interpersonal difficulties? These questions are posed in the current study and they underpin the research questions. The research process is a powered activity by virtue of role differentiation between researcher and participants. Thus, another fundamental question is: How can research into the nature of power between adolescents take account of power issues inherent in the research process?

Chapter 4 identifies the aims of the current study and describes the ways in which the study design addresses these questions. In summary, this study aims to broaden theoretical perspectives on power by accessing the insights and experiences of adolescents. It aims to apply this knowledge when examining the adolescents’ school-based peer relations. In this way, it is a small step towards attempting to understand the theoretical issues raised in the literature chapters (see chapters 2, 3).

The descriptive, exploratory nature of the study required a mixed qualitative and quantitative design and the construction of a survey instrument specifically aimed at gathering the required information. The “Young People’s School Relationships” survey is a self-report, retrospective questionnaire comprising open-ended and rating type questions. Responses to the survey could provide specific information on the ways in which adolescents construct power, adolescents’ differential access to power, and factors that might mediate their differential use of power. Chapter 4 describes the processes for constructing the survey, provides an explanation of its purposes, and presents a description of its contents. Chapter 5 then details the procedures for recruiting participants, administering the survey, and data preparation. It gives rationale for the types of data analyses. Chapter 6 will present the results of the data analyses, whilst chapter 7 will consider the results in the light of theoretical considerations raised in
earlier chapters (that is, chapters 2 - 4). Finally, chapter 8 will draw the study together in graphical form and specify some future research directions.

1.9 What are the anticipated research outcomes?

It is anticipated that the findings will contribute to theoretical understanding of power and will show the need for a model of power that is accessible, useful, and effective in understanding and managing adolescents’ interactions with peers. Such a model could assist with exploring the power relations within the whole school context. It could contribute to the effectiveness of outcomes for individuals and groups and to the enhancement of school-based power relations.
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS OF POWER – PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL, FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL

2.1 Overview

The chapter sets the framework for exploring the construct of power and explains current theoretical approaches to explaining the phenomenon. These arise from the fields of psychology, social psychology, and feminist psychology. The chapter describes the dimensions, strategies, and terminology associated with power. It describes alternative approaches to constructing power relations. The chapter concludes by identifying the theoretical issues relevant to an exploration of the nature of power between school-based adolescent peers.

2.2 The construct of power: Framework for exploration

The following questions indicate the breadth required to explain the construct of power.

1. Is power an individual phenomenon with its basis in biology, physiology, or genetics?
2. Is power a function of interpersonal relationships?
3. Is power a construction of social, political, religious, and cultural structures?
4. Is power a function of the language that describes the world and our experiences?
5. If it is not distinctive, then how do people gain power?
6. If it is pervasive, then how do people recognize power at work?

The first question indicates that power might be associated with individual variables. This signals the psychological approach, which describe power as an individual phenomenon inherent in human motivations and drives. The second question suggests that power gains meaning and significance within interpersonal, inter-group, and intra-group interactions. This is the social psychological approach, whereby power represents relative status within a relationship(s) and the use of that status. The third
question suggests that power has historical and contextual specificity and is located within global structures. Feminist structural analyses contend that power is rooted within our social and political structures. The fourth question suggests that the language used to describe oneself, others, and the world embodies power. This reflects feminist post structural analyses, which identify power as a function of the language used to describe, define, label, gather, and divide people.

Different theoretical approaches to power generate alternative constructions of interpersonal interactions and these lead to different outcomes. Thus, each approach needs careful consideration.

2.3 Power within psychology

Psychological analyses of power view it as integral to the psycho-social-biological development of the individual, defining it as a function of human agency and inherent in human drive, need and/or motivation. Adolescence involves intense psycho-social-biological development. Therefore, this approach is important when considering power between adolescents.

In his theory of human psychology, Adler (1927) theorised that humans are driven to master their fundamental inferiority through striving for power or superiority. Adler considered the power drive (moving from inferiority to superiority) to be the primary force motivating people. He contended that individuals express the drive for superiority uniquely and irrespective of gender. He believed that social interest (the need for relationship) tempers the superiority drive and that healthy development is characterised by high social motivation and softer drive forms, such as negotiation and power sharing. Unhealthy development is characterised by low social motivation and harsher drive forms, such as aggressiveness and domination.

Murray (1938) theorised that humans have viscerogenic (physiological) and psychogenic (personality) needs. Physiological needs encompass dominance (power), described as humans’ control of their environment and influence over the behaviour of others through, for example, suggestion, persuasion, or restraint. Similarly, Glasser (1984) argued in his control theory that power is one of four fundamental human needs and drives a person, through competition and conflict, to seek obedience and compliance from others. Glasser found no gender differences concerning the need for power. He argued that self-esteem and recognition accompany effective power exertion.
Building on Murray’s (1938) work, McClelland (1980) theorised that humans have a fundamental motivation for power. He described the power motive as the quality of a person’s experience when influencing the environment and others. McClelland argued that people high in power motivation are directed internally to exert power and to strive for mastery and influence over others.

McAdams (2001) conceptualised power as a known entity that contributes to individuality, to the nature of interpersonal relationships, and to organisational roles. He found that factors associated with high power motivation included proposing effective arguments, being active and forceful in small groups, taking large risks to gain recognition, and (for males only) a tendency to aggressive, impulsive behaviour.

2.3.1 Power within psychology: Appraisal

Psychological approaches construct power as an individual phenomenon, evolving from basic human biology and personality. Accordingly, school-based adolescents will have different drives, needs, and motivations for power, affecting the students’ environment and relationships. They will place different emphases on social interest, tempering the drive for power with an inverse desire for protecting a relationship. Psychological approaches to power partially explain differences between adolescents’ personalities and identities with respect to their motivation for superiority and desire for social interest.

The current study addresses the potential involvement of drive and social interest in the nature of power between peers by measuring the young people’s perceptions of their personal power and their interpersonal power (friends and classmates) within the school context. The Global Power Score measures the young people’s perceived personal and interpersonal power. The study also asks the young people to identify the nature of the relationship involved in an interpersonal difficulty by asking whether the problem was with a friend(s) or with someone(s) more distant.

2.4 Power within social psychology

Lewin (1941) theorised that power is social pressure, whereby a person exerts force on a resisting other as a means of achieving his/her needs or goals.
Subsequently, social psychological approaches have constructed power as a fundamental feature of relationships, involving the relative status between people, the relative importance of the relationship, the need to resolve competing interests, and the use of resolution methods. Social psychological approaches also focus on the processes involved in the employment of power and influence. Four models, described below, explain power from a social psychological perspective.

2.4.1 Bases of power

French and Raven (1959) regarded access to power as social power and exertion of power as social influence. They defined social power as the potential resources that an ‘agent’ has to influence a ‘target’ and social influence as the force that one person brings to bear on another in order to effect changes in the other’s behaviour, opinions, attitudes, values, needs, and goals. Social influence also encompassed the methods used to maintain a relationship, gain external status, or gain resources. Raven, Schwarzwald, and Koslowsky (1999) described social power as the potential to influence others and social influence as the methods of power usage.

French and Raven (1959) theorised that social power arises from one’s organisational role and that the goal of social power is to gain compliance from others. They theorised that, within an organisation, power arises from relative access to five bases or resources for gaining compliance: reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert. Raven (1965) added a sixth power base, information. Reward and coercive power reflect the agent’s access to positive benefits and negative consequences respectively. Legitimate power reflects the target’s acceptance of his/her legitimate right to exert influence and to expect compliance. Referent power refers to the target’s identification with the agent on relevant factors. Expert power reflects the target’s beliefs about the superiority of the agent, regarding, for example, knowledge, or experience. Informational power is independent of agent and target and refers to the relevance and validity of available information. Power bases are context specific. Theoretically, a person may draw on, or respond to, the power base(s) that he/she ascertains is likely to be most influential in attaining desired goals given the particular context.

These researchers (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965) further hypothesised that power bases comprise two dimensions: social dependence and surveillance. Social
dependence refers to the degree of reciprocity in the social relationship and surveillance refers to the need of the agent to oversee the target’s compliance. Table 2.1 details the relationship between power base and dimensions.

Table 2.1

*The Six Bases of Power*\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis of power</th>
<th>Social dependence of change</th>
<th>Importance of surveillance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coercion</td>
<td>Socially dependent</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Socially dependent</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>Socially dependent</td>
<td>Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Socially dependent</td>
<td>Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Socially dependent</td>
<td>Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>Socially independent</td>
<td>Unimportant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2.4.2 Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence

More recently, Raven (1992, 1993) revised the seminal work on bases of power (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965) and developed a Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence. The model considers subsequent research findings and extends the original work in three ways. Firstly, it further differentiates the reward, coercion, and legitimate bases of power and develops the expert, reference, and informational bases more fully. The resulting 14 power bases comprise: reward (personal, impersonal), coercion (personal, impersonal), legitimate (position, reciprocity, equity, dependence), expert (positive, negative), reference (positive, negative), and informational (positive, negative) power. Secondly, the advanced model integrates force and manipulation and accounts for the perspectives of both agent and target. Thirdly, the Power/Interaction model explains the processes involved in the use of power in interaction. Figure 2.1 presents these processes.
As shown in Figure 2.1, the Power/Interaction Model describes power in terms of active processes. It shows a feedback loop, which accommodates the possibility of the agent re-evaluating his/her relationship with the target and allowing for evaluations that could inform future situations. The model factors in the agent and target’s motivations and their respective power-resource assessments, cost-benefit analyses, strategy selections, planning approaches, and strategy outcome evaluations. The Power/Interaction Model is a dynamic model that describes in more detail the interactive processes involved in the selection of influence tactics from the perspective of both agent and target.

Figure 2.1. From “Model of power/interaction from the perspective of the influencing agent,” by B. Raven, 1993, Journal of Social Issues, 49, p. 240.
Adolescents and adolescents’ groups comprise hierarchical (vertical) and/or non-hierarchical (horizontal) structures, as will be explained in the next chapter. The Model could be useful when exploring the nature of power between adolescents when relationships are hierarchical. It has the potential to incorporate some aspects of psychological approaches, although this is not its intention. For example, the motivation phase is somewhat consistent with personal drive and the assessment and selection of influence tactics are consistent with aspects of social-biological-cognitive development (see chapter 3). It is also a multidimensional model, which incorporates a range of features, including the perspectives of both agent and target. The current study addresses several aspects of this model including the young people’s access to sources of power, their selection of power strategy, and the outcomes of this process.

Nevertheless, there are limitations to the use of the model in explaining the nature of power between adolescents. The model is context-specific and does not account for structural factors (e.g. gender, age), which can predetermine the availability of power bases. Nor does it account for environmental factors such as school culture, policies, and procedures, which might inhibit or encourage certain interactions and contribute to the type of available power relations. There is no role for language factors, which can help to construct and perpetuate power relations. The emotionality associated with power is not included, that is, the extent to which emotions such as fear and anger might be relevant to the motivation and/or assessment phases. Arguably, historical antecedents to the relationship and interaction can have an impact on the nature of an interaction. Adolescents’ prior experiences with power-based interactions can, presumably, contribute to their motivation, assessments, and outcome expectancies. However, the model is not able to account for the contributions that these components could make to the evolution and nature of interactions.

2.4.3 Power Act Model

Kipnis (1976) defined power as the influence one person exerts over another. He developed a Power Act Model that considers the perspective of the agent and the processes involved in an agent selecting a method of influence. He theorised that the chosen influence method is a function of the person’s available power bases or resources, assessment of the suitability and appropriateness of a power base, and anticipated resistance from the target of influence. The model proposes that an agent’s
use of stronger influence methods will be associated with attributions of the target’s compliance. Consequently, the agent will have enhanced negativity towards and social distance from the target.

Furthermore, Kipnis (1976) theorised that by access to strong power bases, such as coercion, the agent can assign positive self-attributions on successfully influencing the target. He argued that this further reinforces the agent’s influence and confirms future tactic use. Kipnis termed this process the “metamorphic effects of power” (1976, cited in Raven, 1993, p.241). The Power Act Model contributes the notions of resistance and relationship distancing to the assessment and effects phases of the Power Interaction Model (Raven, 1992, 1993).

2.4.4 Power Use Model

Describing power as social influence, Bruins’ (1999) Power Use Model is a one-dimensional predictive model of the differential use of relatively hard or soft influence tactics. He defined the dimension as the relative freedom that an influence tactic leaves the target to comply or resist. Sanctions exemplify hard tactics and reasoning typifies soft tactics. Bruins identified relative tactic hardness with the distance between agent and target. Agents are more likely to use hard and soft tactics with out-group and in-group members respectively. He described five possible mediation factors in tactic selection: uncertainty reduction, anticipated resistance, social desirability, assertion of group belonging, and cognitive consistency. The model is responsive to situational variables and can have dynamic outcomes for group membership. The Power Use Model adds the notion of mediating factors and a hard-soft dimension to the Power Interaction Model’s (Raven, 1992, 1993) assessment and choice of mode phases respectively.

2.4.5 Power: strategies and dimensions

Social psychologists have further theoretical interest in the dimensions underpinning influence tactics or strategies. ‘Dimensions’ refer to the underlying structures on which the strategy set is constructed. ‘Strategies’ refer to the behavioural correlates or the discrete action/s or behaviours that a person employs when attempting to influence another(s). French and Raven (1959) and Raven (1965) theorised that the
six bases of power comprise the two dimensions of social dependence (socially dependent – socially independent) and surveillance (important – unimportant), as described earlier. According to this theory, the bases can be both the power base for tactics and specific influencing tactics or behaviours.

Stahleski and Paynton (1995) investigated the use of power bases and power tactics. They found that those with higher power used power bases and those with less power used influence tactics. They concluded that the strategies associated with the use of social power (power bases) differ from those associated with social influence (influence tactics) and the difference is a function of the nature of the power relations. Furthermore, they theorised that difference in status is a predictor of the use of either social power bases or social influence.

Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson (1980) identified a set of eight strategy types (assertiveness, ingratiating, rationality, sanctions, exchange, upward appeal, blocking, and coalitions) used by those with less organisational status. Yukl and Falbe, (1990) and Yukl and Tracey (1992) identified similar types of influence strategies. They identified an underlying hard-soft dimension, which reflected the target’s freedom to yield or resist. ‘Hard’ tactics included sanctions and threats, whilst ‘soft’ tactics included reasoning and negotiation. Raven, Schwarzwald, and Koslowsky (1998) found that 44 items represented the influence tactics used by subordinates with those higher in status which, when factor analysed, represented the 11 bases of power (Raven, 1992, 1993). They found that a hard-soft dimension discriminated the use of power bases as influence tactics. Other researchers (e.g., Kipnis, 1976; Bruins, 1999) have also found an underlying hard-soft dimension.

Falbo (1977) deduced a 16 item strategy set comprising: assertion, bargaining, compromise, deceit, emotion-target, emotion-agent, evasion, expertise, fait accompli, hinting, persistence, persuasion, reason, simple statement, thought manipulation, and threat. Using a multidimensional scaling procedure, Falbo arrived at a two-dimensional (directness, rationality) model of power strategies. The directness dimension (direct-indirect) refers to the strategy’s overtness and openness. Direct strategies include assertion and simple statement and indirect strategies include hinting and thought manipulation. The rationality dimension (rational-irrational) refers to the strategy’s reasonableness and emotionality. Rational strategies include bargaining and compromise and irrational strategies include evasion and emotional alteration of the target. He found that those whom peers rated positively were more likely to use rational
strategies, such as assertion and compromise, to achieve their interpersonal goal with the other. Those whose personality was high in Machiavellianism were more likely to use indirect and nonrational strategies, such as deceit and thought manipulation, to effect influence over the other. The results suggested that tactic selection related to the perceived power relations. Falbo theorised that the model is dynamic, with strategies and dimensions varying according to the target group’s relative power.

Falbo and Peplau (1980) investigated the use of influence tactics by couples in intimate relationships. Results confirmed the validity and reliability of a two-dimensional model (Falbo, 1977) by identifying directness and bilaterality as two dimensions underpinning 12 strategies (asking, bargaining, laissez-faire, negative affect, persistence, persuasion, positive affect, reasoning, stating importance, suggesting, talking, telling, and withdrawing). The results suggested that those who perceived themselves as having more power in the relationship were more likely to use bilateral and direct strategies, such as persistence and bargaining. Conversely, those who perceived themselves as having less relational power were more likely to use unilateral and indirect strategies, such as withdrawal and negative affect. The researchers confirmed the dynamism, responsiveness, and flexibility of the two-dimensional model.

A summary of the range of strategies and dimensions associated with approaches to power described by researchers is presented in Table 2.2 with indications of the potential relevance for the current study.
Table 2.2

Power Approach by Power Strategies and Dimensions with Potential Relevance for School-based Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power approach</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Potential relevance to school-based adolescents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Falbo (1977)</td>
<td>Assertion, bargaining, compromise, deceit, emotion-agent, emotion-target, evasion, expertise, fait accompli, hinting, persistence, persuasion, reason, simple statement, thought manipulation, threat</td>
<td>Direct-indirect Rational-irrational</td>
<td>Students’ responses on continuums spanning overt/covert and reasoned/emotion-charged behaviours are based on appraisals of own power relative to the other(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falbo &amp; Peplau (1980)</td>
<td>Asking, bargaining, laissez-faire, negative affect, persistence, persuasion, positive affect, reasoning, stating importance, suggesting, talking, telling, withdrawing</td>
<td>Direct-indirect Bilateral-unilateral</td>
<td>Students’ responses from continuums spanning overt to covert behaviours and interactive to independent behaviours relates to appraisals of own power relative to the other(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French &amp; Raven (1959) and Raven (1965)</td>
<td>Coercion, reward, legitimacy, expert, reference, informational</td>
<td>Social dependence of change; Importance of surveillance</td>
<td>Students’ responses based on appraisals of the need for both parties to be involved in change, whether monitoring is needed and their power relative to the other(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kipnis et al (1980)</td>
<td>Assertiveness, ingratiating, rationality, sanctions, exchange, upward appeal, blocking, coalitions</td>
<td>Hard-soft</td>
<td>Students’ responses from a continuum spanning power-assertive to collaborative behaviours is based on preferences, appraisals of difficulties and power relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 points to overlap between the strategies and dimensions identified by different researchers. It suggests that young people’s strategy selection could relate to appraisals of relative power.
2.4.6 Power within social psychology: Appraisal

Social psychologists have described power in social and relational (interpersonal, intra-group, inter-group) terms as a function of social positioning and social interaction. According to this approach, students are positioned equally within a hierarchical school structure and will have equal access to power. As later studies will demonstrate, this assumption is not supportable, with divisions within the peer group occurring along such continuums as leadership roles and academic ability. Therefore, school-based adolescents will have differential access to bases of power and influence tactics and will engage in decision-making processes when exerting social influence with peers.

The social psychological approach informed various aspects of the current study. Participants were not asked for information that would help to identify divisions within the peer group. Instead, they rated their perceptions of their own and the other’s power during and after an interaction to investigate differential power access. This allowed for the structuring of power-differentiated scenarios within which they described interpersonal difficulties and their responses, indicating their use of power tactics.

However, social psychological approaches alone do not explain the nature of power relations between school-based adolescents. They do not consider broader socio-political contexts (e.g. society, school, peer group), which can affect access to power. There is a lack of consensus regarding the dimensions and strategies of power tactics, which can inhibit comparisons of power use. The approach does not explain the presence of unequal power relations (e.g. between friends, peer groups) within a hierarchical organisational (school).

2.5 Power within feminist psychology

According to Kitzinger (1991), feminist psychologists generally describe power in structural or post structural terms. Structural approaches are based on notions of the universalism and inflexibility of power relations. Post structural approaches encompass a variety of discourses, including discourses of hierarchy, empowerment, and collectivism. Structural and post structural analyses share some overlap via the discourse of hierarchy and can overlap to entrench some power inequities. However, structural accounts specify the continuums along which power divisions occur, arguing
that these give rise to any subsequent power divisions, such as those identified by social
psychological accounts as being situated within, if not specific to, an organisation or
group. Beckwith (1999) contends that this independence of structural and post structural
frameworks inhibits adequate explanations of power relations.

2.5.1 Structural constructs of power

Structural approaches to power, as described by Foucault, (1980) view the
phenomenon as a reflection of social and political determinism, involving concepts of
patriarchy, coercion, domination, and oppression. Structurally, power is dichotomous
(powerful/powerless) with power relations differentiated by, for example, gender, age,
religion, culture, wealth, socio-economic status, and sexual preference. Structurally
determined power relations can overlap with socially determined power relations since
both are based on the hierarchical positioning of people. The difference derives from the
nature of the hierarchical continuum. For example, gender (structural) can overlap with
role (social) to determine power relations within an organisation.

Structural and social psychological approaches to power can explain the
entrenchment of inequitable power relations. Raven (1999) used his social
psychological Power/Interaction Model of interpersonal influence to explain the ways in
which religions become instruments of social control. He argued that coercive and
reward power are evident in formulations of God (within the Christian religion) as the
dispenser of either eternal damnation or eternal salvation respectively. Subsequently,
religious leaders can achieve the compliance of followers by activating associations
between beliefs in the coercive and reward power of God with specified religious rules
and/or practices. This analysis of the power relations within a religious tradition
demonstrates how access to structural power (religion) can underpin role differentiation
(social power) and access to bases of power (social influence).

Carli (1999) demonstrates how the operation of gender bias (structurally
determined power) can provide differential access to social power and influence. She
investigated gender differences and found males more likely to have higher levels of
expert and legitimate power and women more likely to have higher levels of referent
power. She reported women less likely than men to use influence tactics and women
relatively less effective with the use of expert, legitimate, and referent power tactics.
Carli found that women used less direct influence strategies and that directness
mediated gender differences in power. She explained her findings within the framework of structural constructions of gendered power, whereby women and men have differential access to sources of power.

2.5.2 Structural constructs of power: Appraisal

Structural analyses of power explain power differences between structurally unequal, but not structurally equal relationships (Beckwith, 1999). Structurally, the peer group shares equal power. However, as will be explained later, the peer group is not homogeneous and there are differences in power relations within and between peer groups and between individuals. Whilst structural analyses do not explain differences between structurally equal peers and peer groups, the approach could suggest some of the axes along which adolescents’ power relations are constructed and systematised.

2.5.3 Post structural constructs of power

Post structural analyses describe power in terms of the internalisation and enculturation of unequal power relations through, for example, language. Post structural approaches to power focus on resistances to unequal power relations through, for example, empowerment and collectivism. Empowerment suggests that individuals can escape from the internalisation of the external structures that bind them. Collectivism suggests that groups can use collaboration and mutuality to challenge entrenched power inequities.

Reid and Ng (1999) theorised that language creates and maintains power in four ways. Firstly, it reflects power through content and style. Secondly, it creates power through differential access to conversation or dialogue, allowing the direction of conversation towards influencing outcomes. Thirdly, it depoliticises power through the processes of categorisation and stereotyping. Language can conceal power inequities by categories (such as ‘victim’ and ‘bully’), which define and reinforce unequal power relations. Finally, it routinizes power by reflecting the dominant culture. Those without access to the dominant language may not have equal access to the benefits, resources, and services of the dominant culture – although accessibility to the dominant language does not guarantee this. The researchers theorised that language and power are synonymous.
However, structural and social psychological approaches to power are needed to explain who has differential access to language and how this occurs. For example, in a school context, the relatively powerful adults have the prerogative to name interactions as ‘bullying’ or ‘conflict’ and to name individuals as ‘bullies’, ‘victims’, or ‘combatants’. Within a classroom context, the teacher has the authority to determine differential access to the contribution of ideas or the asking of questions.

Feminist post structural psychological approaches explain empowerment as a response to unequal power relations, whereby the individual gains, for example, self-esteem and confidence for the purpose of identifying and developing available power sources. Yuval-Davis (1994) contended that empowerment could be challenged because personal self-enhancement may ignore the structural constraints on personal transformation and can divert attention from challenging structural causes of powerlessness. Kitzinger (1991) reported on contentions that empowerment attempts to create, for example, a sense of personal agency to encourage the development of mindsets of powerfulness, competency, self-esteem, decision-making, and free choices. She disputed such approaches because they appear to locate relative powerlessness within individual mindsets (implying personal responsibility for disempowerment) and they can deny and/or ignore the structural conditions under which inequitable power relations are constructed. Yuval-Davis asserted that personal empowerment positioning could break important bonds between the individual and the community because it is at others’ expense.

From a feminist post structural psychological perspective, collectivism refers to the collaboration of equally disempowered groups or individuals to better their relative positioning. Collectivism is challenged because it can contribute to unity and advancement whilst failing to change the structures that constrict access to, for example, resources, opportunities, and decision-making. Yuval-Davis (1994) proposed that collectivism suggests a non-problematic movement from individual to collective power and that this assumption often fails. For example, she described liberation from oppressive family contexts as potentially destabilizing as well as beneficial for children. She also argued that liberation sometimes increases others’ oppression. The researcher contended that collectives could replicate unequal power relations and be inefficient. She argued that the results of collectivism could be relative only and confined to specific circumstances.
2.5.4 Post structural constructs of power: Appraisal

Post-structural analyses of power attempt to deconstruct the reasons for unequal power relations. However, explanations of power, its determination, and its ownership also require structural and social analyses. This is the basis for some aspects of the analyses of power in the current study. For example, data is collected on contextual (power-differentiated situations), structural (gender), social (year group), and relational (relationship closeness) variables. Furthermore, reference to difficulties as ‘problems’ avoid the use of directive language such as 'being bullied', 'bullying', and 'fighting'. The use of a mainly self-report survey partially addresses structural power differences between researcher and participants by providing them (participants) with the opportunity to ‘speak for themselves’.

Feminist psychological approaches can contribute to explanations of the nature of power between school-based adolescents. However, structural approaches are limited in their capacity to explain power relations between those who are structurally equal, such as between friends or equal peers. Feminist psychological approaches are also limited in their capacity to explain individual variation between adolescents, such as in temperament, motivation, and concern for social interest.

2.6 Theoretical issues arising from constructions of power

This overview of the theoretical approaches to power demonstrates the complexity of exploring power between adolescents. Table 2.3 highlights the theoretical differences and their relevance to the current study of power between school-based adolescents.
Table 2.3

*Psychological Models of Power and Examples of Relevance to Current Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model of power</th>
<th>Example of relevance to school-based adolescents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feminist Psychological</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>Students could differ with respect to gender, age, socio-economic status, culture, religion, and access to symbols of success and resources, which predetermine power relations. Students could differ within school structures, for example, rules, culture, environment, and leadership styles, which sanction or refute responses to power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post structural</td>
<td>Students differ with respect to the application of terms like ‘adolescent’, ‘bully’, ‘victim’, ‘leader’, and ‘follower’, which encapsulate social norms about power. Students differ in terms of their ability to transform positions of powerlessness by focusing on empowerment, which indicates resistance to power inequities. Students differ in their collective acceptance of, or acquiescence to power inequities by grouping together for safety and/or alternative relationships, which indicates resistance to inequities in power relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Psychological</td>
<td>Students’ status could differ: teachers- students, student-student, peer group-peer group, and student-peer group, which construct differential power relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>Students could differ in aggressiveness, temperament, drive for power, social interest, leadership skills, conflict resolution skills, and affect, which prepare and prime students for interpersonal interactions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main psychological perspectives indicate how alternative and potentially competing approaches can explain power between school-based adolescents. These frameworks do not integrate psychological analyses, which Beckwith (1999) claimed might explain people’s positionings within alternative discourses of power. Beckwith called for a “creative epistemology to address the tensions between these knowledge’s” (p. 391) and for attention to the emotionality of power, which is to the guilt, fear, anger, and love that might play a role in shaping individual positions about the construct of power. Furthermore, Kitzinger (1991) contended that current understandings of power could reinforce rather than transform structural inequalities.

This literature suggests that the nature of power between adolescents requires attention to psychological, social psychological, and feminist psychological (structural and post structural) constructs of power. These varied explanations suggest consideration of the immediate power relations and of those constructed within the school context and the broadest social, political, cultural, and religious contexts.

2.7 Terminology related to the construct of power: balance of power, perceptions of power, perceived power differentials

Terminology associated with power includes ‘balance of power’, ‘perceptions’ of power, and power ‘differentials’. It also includes theoretically reflective terminology: ‘power-over’, ‘power-with’, and ‘power-within’. The following section will attempt to describe these terms and to indicate their relevance for the current study.

2.7.1 Balance of power

Post structural discourses capture power dichotomies through language such as powerful/powerless, oppressor/oppressed, dominant/subservient, and perpetrator/victim in constructing unequal power relations. ‘Balance of power’ suggests that within an interaction (interpersonal, intra-group, or inter-group) the distribution of power may be equal or unequal. If equitable, parties have equal access to power and influence. If inequitable, parties have a disproportionate access to power and influence.

Taylor, Peplau, and Sears (1997) argued that social norms, relative resources, and the principle of least interest contribute to the balance of power in an interaction. Social norms refer to group members’ rules and expectations about how members
should think, feel, or behave. Relative resources refer to the availability of psychological, social, or structural advantages to exert influence over or frustrate the influence attempts of another(s). According to Thibaut and Kelley’s (1959) theory of social exchange, people strive to maximize ‘rewards’ and to minimise ‘costs’ in relationships. They argued that behaviour exchanges follow a norm of reciprocity, developing a pattern whereby aversive or positive stimulation from one party tends to produce reciprocal behaviour from the other. Foa and Foa (1974) suggested that parties’ ‘goods’ or ‘resources’ are located along two dimensions: particularism (particular/universal) and concreteness (concrete/abstract). The particularism dimension includes money (particular) and love (universal). The concreteness dimension includes possessions (concrete) and approval (abstract). They argued that a relationship is power balanced when the exchange of resources along these dimensions is equitable.

Exchange theory also proposes that the balance of power is a function of relative dependency on the relationship, including evaluations of alternatives. Consequently, power balance is more likely when parties share an equal commitment to the relationship and power imbalance is more likely when the parties differ in their commitment. In his study, Waller (as cited in Taylor et al., 1997) argued that there is an inverse relationship between power in a relationship and level of interest. He theorised that parties with less interest in maintaining the relationship enjoyed more power.

Differential power balances suggest that the power relations of school-based adolescents might be equal or unequal and that knowledge of the balance or imbalance could be useful in understanding how motives, relationship closeness, generation of alternatives, relative dependency, and cost/benefits analyses might mediate the power relations. The explanations for differential power relations outlined above are consistent with some aspects of psychological approaches but do not acknowledge the structural and/or hierarchical determinants of power relations. Therefore, an understanding of power imbalances also requires attention to structures and hierarchies.

2.7.2 Perceptions of power and perceived power differentials

Neisser (1976) described perception as the ability to receive information from the environment and to analyse it against a background of already acquired knowledge of the world in order to make sense of one’s world and to be able to function in it. For the purposes of this study, ‘perceptions’ of power are conceptualised as a dynamic
process, involving on-going cognitive appraisals of potential influence based on the interplay between new and old knowledge and including expectations of success and beliefs about the control of outcomes. Cumulative knowledge from experiences of power could contribute to adolescents’ perceptions of power. In any interpersonal, inter-group, or intra-group situation, individuals will develop perceptions of their own and others’ power. Thus, the construct of power involves the perception of power difference.

The basis for some power relations, such as gender, age, or organisational role, may be a matter of fact rather than perception. Nevertheless, perception can have relevance because, unless clearly articulated, parties could appraise differently the effects of structural and/or hierarchical power. The basis for other power relations might not be evident, particularly regarding power inequities between those who are equal according to structural and/or hierarchical frameworks. This is relevant for peer groups, which are not necessarily equal, or for the members within them. The continuums along which power divisions between peers are determined are not necessarily transparent. Groups or group members can perceive power relations without being able to articulate or recognise the basis for equity or inequity. To address this lack of clarity regarding the bases for divisions within and between peer groups, the young people in the current study described situations in which they had less, more, or the same power as the other(s) and their reasons for such assessments of the power balance. Thus, the young people provided their perceptions of the power balance and the basis for their perceptions.

In this study, ‘perceived’ power differential refers to the appraisal by a person/group of their status relative to others within a hierarchical structure. Sagrestano, Heavey, and Christensen (1999) found that lower levels of perceived power by males and higher levels of perceived power by females were associated with marital violence and verbal aggression respectively. However, the researchers did not acknowledge the role played by structural power in describing the relative power of each gender. Therefore, they did not consider that the enactment of specific behaviours could relate to a source of structural power, that is, to gender without an awareness of having it.

Arguably, it is important to investigate the extent to which parties have consensus regarding perceptions of power and of the power balance. Failure to reach consensus could have consequences for the nature of an interpersonal interaction.
However, it was beyond the scope of the current study to address the perceptions of both parties.

2.7.3 ‘Power-over’, ‘power-with’, ‘power-within’

The notions of ‘power-over’, ‘power-with’, and ‘power-within’ are recognised from post structural analyses of power. ‘Power-over’ refers to the domination exerted by more powerful over less powerful groups and occurs within a hierarchical structure. ‘Power-with’ refers to notions of group empowerment through collectivism, collaboration, and mutuality. ‘Power-within’ refers to notions of personal empowerment whereby individuals assume responsibility for self-improvement and seek to become more powerful internally.

The use of these terms can result in some confusion if taken out of the context of post structural constructions of power. For example, psychological accounts may be consistent with both ‘power-within’ approaches to power and ‘power-over’ approaches, depending on the individual’s needs, drives, and motives for power. Social psychological accounts may be consistent with both ‘power-with’ and ‘power-over’ notions of power, depending on the horizontal versus vertical positioning of the opposing individuals and/ groups.

The language of these terms can suggest other approaches to power analyses (psychological, social psychological). However, Cohen (1998) explained that the terms, which have largely arisen within feminist theory and empowerment theory, point to distinctions between power that is shared with another(s) and power that is used to dominate and subjugate. More specifically, power sharing refers to the enhancement of individual choice or change (power-within) or to the improvement of group (such as families or communities) access to decisions and choices (power-with). Domination or subjugation refers to the denial of just access to (for example) choice, decision-making, and resources (power-over). In the current study, the terms are used as described within feminist and empowerment theories.
2.8 Alternative approaches to power: Partnership Accountability model, Shared Concern Method, Peer Mediation

In explaining power and power relations, psychological, social psychological, and feminist psychological approaches tend to imply that inequities are entrenched, if not predetermined, although differential access to power does not necessitate the exploitation of an advantage. Within feminist post structural psychological approaches, discourses of empowerment and collectivism represent resistance to differential power relations (Beckwith, 1999). There are further approaches that reflect attempts at addressing and transforming inequitable power relationships. These include the Partnership Accountability model of power relations, the Method of Shared Concern, and mediation approaches, as described below.

2.8.1 Partnership Accountability model

Tamasese and Waldegrave (1993) developed a Just Therapy Approach for addressing power issues between groups of therapists and clients who were structurally and hierarchically unequal according to gender and culture, and role respectively. It is a structural and social approach to working through power differences separating groups within a dominant hierarchy (therapy). The goal is to facilitate changes for subjugated and dominant groups by addressing and transforming the inequalities embedded in an organisation and fundamental to society.

The Just Therapy Approach (Tamasese & Waldegrave, 1993) has given rise to the partnership accountability model. ‘Partnership’ refers to the gathering of structurally unequal groups and ‘accountability’ to the dominant group’s responsibility for building trust with the subjugated group. The model operates on the premise that collectives with differential access to power form fundamental structures in society. It theorises that transformation of structurally determined biases and injustices can occur through a process of caucusing, discussing, and working collaboratively towards resolution. ‘Caucusing’ refers to the process of enabling a collective voice to emerge from the voices of those in subjugated positions. Organisations allow structurally less powerful groups to caucus an issue together when identifying an issue of injustice or an innovative idea. The issues are presented to the dominant group, a convergence of meaning is reached, a shared conversation acknowledging responsibility for pain, and
injustice takes place, an agreement is forged and new perspectives, relationships, and practices are put into practice. The role of the dominant group is listening to and understanding the views of the subjugated group and, with sensitivity to this new knowledge, re-examining its practices, attitudes, and beliefs. The collectives of dominant and subjugated group(s) then work together to find ways forward and to work towards socio-political change.

Tamasese, Waldegrave, Tuhaka, and Campbell (1998) identified six common difficulties that could emerge when applying the principles of partnership accountability. They claimed that commitment only to the immediate issue could subvert or prevent the goal of transforming power differences. This could occur with unresolved leadership issues, caucusing outside the group, expending energy solely on attending to distress, unresolved institutional issues, and constantly changing relationships. The availability of time and the size of the caucusing group could also be impediments.

Partnership accountability approaches are applicable in different contexts. Hall (1994) reported on the effective employment of the partnership accountability model to address the issue of domestic violence and to develop new understandings. Denborough (1994) reported on the successful adoption of the approach to the internal structures of a group formed to work with men guilty of sexual assault. The reported outcomes supported the value of the approach in transforming attitudes, practices, relationships, and structures.

Stacey, Webb, Hills, Lagzdins, Moulds, Phillips, and Stone (2002) developed a partnership accountability approach called Youth Partnership Accountability for addressing the structures of organisations and agencies purporting to work in partnership with young people. It has similar goals, procedures, and practices to the original partnership accountability model. The approach could be valuable in analysing and attending to the structural power relations between adults and adolescents within the school context with a view to encouraging dialogue, empathy, and transformation of oppressive ways of relating within a hierarchical organisation.

**2.8.2 Shared Concern Method**

Pikas (1989) developed a Method of Common Concern to address the exploitation of less powerful by more powerful young people, particularly in a school
setting. The model aims to encourage school-based members of dominant groups or individuals who are exploiting their dominance to consider and to empathise with the feelings of the oppressed group or individual. It works towards transformation of the dominant group by bringing forth in members a concern for and acceptance of those whom they have oppressed or are oppressing. A major goal of the model is to assist those who have dominated others to recognize and change their abusive behaviours.

2.8.3 Peer Mediation

‘Peer mediation’ refers to the application of negotiation principles, practices, and processes to conflicts between adolescent peers. Schrumpf, Crawford, and Bodine (1997) described the process as pairs of trained peer mediators conducting mediation sessions with those who are distressed by oppositional behaviour and willing to negotiate resolutions. It involves setting the conditions for mediation, allowing those in conflict to tell their stories, eliciting an agreement for change as well as monitoring and evaluating the agreement’s effectiveness. Johnson and Johnson (1995) contended that negotiation rather than teacher intervention was often students’ preferred option. They argued that negotiation worked best when those involved feared or rejected authoritarianism and that mediation could transform fractured relationships rather than merely subdue them.

2.8.4 Alternative models of power relations: Appraisal

The availability of alternative models of power relations could be useful in addressing issues of power relations and power usage between adolescents within the school context. The processes involved could also be useful in exploring the perceptions of groups or individuals involved in negative interpersonal interactions. However, alternative approaches need to acknowledge, articulate, and address the structural, social, relational, or post structural bases for inequities.

2.9 The construct of power: Issues to consider

The current diversity between theoretical constructs of power suggests the need for awareness of the socio-political consequences of each approach. Synthesising rather
than segregating and selecting from approaches could be useful. However, it is beyond the scope of the immediate study to find ways of conceptualising power that bridge the micro and macro contexts in which it is typically described and that bridge competing constructions without negating or diminishing the phenomenon in the process.

Two key issues arising from this exploration of the theoretical underpinnings of power are relevant to the current study. They are as follows.

1. To what extent are current theoretical approaches to the construct of power adequate in explaining the nature of power between school-based adolescents?

2. How can the researcher take into account the power differential between him/herself and a sample of school-based adolescents when examining the issue of peer power relations?

The first issue provides the theoretical framework for the current study. The information gathered on the power relations between school-based adolescents will be examined in relation to the theoretical approaches to power outlined in this chapter. The second issue provides the basis for the study’s design, which incorporates some ways of addressing the power differential between researcher and participants.
CHAPTER 3: POWER BETWEEN ADOLESCENTS

3.1 Overview

Hierarchical power analyses suggest that there is stratification of school-based adolescents along continuums constructed within the macrocosm of the school and the microcosm of the peer group. Structural analyses suggest that predetermined divisions along continuums such as age or gender could underpin other school and peer group power-based relations. Peer relationships form and operate within the two powered contexts of school and peer group. Post structural analyses indicate that school language supports the stratification of members by defining, describing, and legitimising, for example, types of peer interactions. Psychological analyses show that adolescents may differ in aggressiveness and in social and cognitive development, as described by Owens & MacMullin (1995). Analyses of stratification, language, and individual psychology indicate that adolescents may have differential access to power. Therefore, the workings of power within the school environment, the peer group, and the individual need consideration when exploring power between school-based adolescents.

This chapter presents some of the theoretical issues and research findings regarding power relations between the school environment and its members, and between the peer group and its members. Behaviours and outcomes associated with peer interactions are examined and discourses for explaining the differential use of power by school-based peers are appraised. The chapter will show that further information is needed on the circumstances under which peers activate power bases or sources; how, and by whom peer interactions are named; the roles played by behaviour, motivation, and perception in effecting peer power relations; and the value of applying individual rather than integrated theoretical approaches to understanding power in this context.

3.2 Power relations within the school context

Adolescent students are located within a power-based context according to structural, social psychological, psychological, and post structural approaches to power. The following section describes the powered nature of the school environment. It identifies some of the ways in which context can contribute to the formation of power
relations between teachers and students and some of the consequences for students’ peer relations.

Schools are microcosms of the wider society and so the structural divisions that occur in society along such continuums as age, gender, and culture may be reproduced in the school context. For example, on an age continuum teachers have greater access to structural power than do students. Schools are also hierarchical organisations with members positioned along continuums. On a role continuum, school principal, teaching staff, and students are ascribed different status. On a leadership continuum, classroom teachers, student leaders, and students have different status. Informal leadership positioning can also apply, for example, leadership of peer groups. Theoretically, access to structural power may underpin any additional access to hierarchical power. Access to power provides access to the means of using power. Thus, teachers have more access to structural and hierarchical power than students and can choose between, for example, power-assertive and power-sharing methods. Power-assertive methods include the power to exclude students and power-sharing methods include the power to dialogue with students.

Psychological analyses suggest that school personnel (teachers and students) may have varying drives for power allied with varying concerns for social interest, forming one cohort with positionings based on drive for power. They could also form one cohort based on individual experiences with and of school-based power relations, resulting in divisions along a continuum of power relations’ knowledge. Teachers’ structural and hierarchical positioning predetermines their greater access to determining and reinforcing norms of, for example, aggressiveness and conciliation and to using knowledge gained through experience. Double standards can ensue because teachers can condone adult aggressiveness but reject it from/between students. Teachers can also assume superiority of knowledge regarding power and power relations. Therefore, rather than interrupting the teacher-student divide by repositioning school personnel along power drive and/or knowledge continuums, structural and hierarchical determinations of teacher-student power relations can reinforce experiences of power as domination.

Post structural analyses suggest that the school’s language base contributes to members’ relative status and differential access to power. Dichotomous descriptors of students such as ‘bully’–‘victim’, ‘leader’–‘follower’, and ‘success’–‘failure’ assign them to differential positioning within the school and peer group. Teachers and students
have differential access to such namings and thus to this source of power. Usually teachers define, describe, and apply this language to students. Thus, structural, hierarchical, psychological, and post structural analyses show that power operates in multidimensional, interconnected, and complex ways within the school context. Power between school-based adolescents needs to consider this context. Research to support this contention is described below.

Kreisberg’s (1992) study of power relations in schools sets the scene for the current exploration of power between adolescents. He located school power relations within the wider context of society and within the processes by which students are empowered to become members of society. He argued that teachers face the critical challenge of creating relationships with students that avoid power as domination and reflect power as collaboration. Malen (1994) described the school environment as one in which individuals and groups acquire and exercise power in order to promote and protect their interests, manage conflict, generate consensus, and have access to scarce resources and symbols. She argued that structural and hierarchical models of power are applicable at any level of the school system. Presumably, this includes the level of the classroom and the peer group itself.

These studies indicate that adolescents’ school-based relationships occur within contexts that presuppose and affect the stratification of individuals and groups. They argue that the use of power by the power-holders is part of the school’s hidden curriculum and that schools are training grounds in power relations. The following research findings will describe some ways that power relations influence students’ lives and the quality of their relationships.

Wittes (1970) investigated the relationship between school power structures and students’ beliefs about locus of control and factors mediating this connection. He measured power by asking students to rate their perceptions of the relative distribution and use of influence/control among various groups within the system. He found an association between perceptions of power differences within the school structure, student connectedness to peers, and beliefs about locus of control. There was an association between students’ perceptions of low power relative to teachers and high ratings of external locus of control. Closeness to the peer group was associated with fewer externalisations of control. The results suggested that hierarchically equal friends could mediate the relative powerlessness of students within the school structure. The
study demonstrates that power between adolescents involves friendship as a mediator to their relative powerlessness within the school hierarchy.

Cullingford and Morrison (1995, 1997) found that structural power inequalities affected students’ school experience. When students ‘failed’ and faced exclusion from typical social and academic school structures, they transferred their loyalty and commitment to alternative power systems. These alternatives included street gangs and other marginalized, disaffected groups. Pomeroy (1999) focused on the teacher-student relationship and school experience. She developed a preferred model of teacher-student relationships characterised by mutually respectful interpersonal interactions, meaningful dialogue, and consultation. The model recognized the inherent inequalities between teachers and students but argued for collaborative power relations within the school’s hierarchical framework.

These studies supported the role of context in contributing to students’ experiences of power and power relations. Friendship with those of equal status and mutuality with those who have higher status can mediate the reproduction and/or reinforcement of power as domination and subjugation.

3.2.1 Analyses of school-based power: Appraisal

Theoretical analyses of power and research findings suggest that school power relations might replicate power relations in the wider society and that peer power relations might replicate those in the school as well. According to hierarchical analyses, school personnel have differential access to power bases, such as allocation of rewards and punishments. Arguably, the type of power base used helps to reinforce its legitimacy. Therefore, the use of coercion by those with higher status could help to legitimate power relations between peers characterised by dominance and oppression. Mutuality and collaboration within the school context may legitimise these forms of power relations for peers. Applying power analyses to the school environment demonstrates that those with greater access to power have the opportunity to exploit their power advantage by domination, or to transform their power advantage by mutuality and collaboration.
3.3 Power: Peer group structure

Structural analyses of power suggest that students form a homogeneous group within the school structure. However, structural divisions within the cohort of same aged students could occur along lines such as age, gender, and culture. Hierarchical models of power suggest that there may be divisions within and between peer groups along lines such as maturity, popularity, socio-economic status, and ability. Within a group of friends, there may be additional divisions based on, for example, social freedom, interests, lifestyle, and music preference. These divisions are potential sources of power. Arguably, positioning along such continuums provides those who have higher status with more power and with more access to determining the nature of continuums. The following studies provide evidence for some ways in which peer groups and their members are stratified.

Studies support hierarchical divisions within and between subgroups of structurally equal peers. Cullingford (1991) found that peer groups differ in terms of group rules, social conventions, goals, values, rituals, identities, and management of conflicts. She explained that groups either conform to or resist the school’s dominant culture, for example, expressed as norms and expectations. If a school focuses on authority, peer groups may conform differently to the school’s rules and expectations. Thus, conformity can contribute to hierarchical divisions between peer groups.

Eder (1985) found hierarchical structuring within and between girls’ peer groups. She argued that the first years of high school are often a difficult time of transition and that a system of stratification develops during these years, resulting in cliques. The researcher found that some sought friendship with popular girls to gain peer status, whilst others avoided those perceived to have lower status. A cycle of popularity emerged whereby positive feelings towards popular girls turned to resentment and dislike, often accompanied by negative actions. Eder found that popular girls used aggression against those who threatened their status. Without similar research into boys’ friendship patterns, the gender differences remain unclear and could relate to structural, hierarchical, or developmental factors. The study assumed that the respondents began high school as structurally, hierarchically, and developmentally equal. However, the findings demonstrate peer group stratification and members’ responses to inequities.
Maccoby (1990) reported that girls formed closer, more intimate friendships with other girls through which they shared confidences, listened to one another, and treated each other with reciprocity. Maccoby described boys’ friendship groups as more diverse, conflictual, activity-orientated, and concerned with issues of dominance. Maccoby argued that the tight boundaries of girls’ groups made it easier to exploit relationships and harm others by manipulating social relationships, both within and between friendship groups. Maccoby’s findings suggested that socialization contributes to gender differences in friendship. However, structural analyses might suggest that gender differences reflect differential access to power and power strategies.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that peers have ‘unofficial’ languages, which help to define, describe, and differentiate power relations. For example, the language of popularity differentiates peers as ‘cool’ relative to ‘dork’ or ‘hot’ relative to ‘ugly’. Arguably, there will be differential access to this language, with peers rather than adults being the power-holders and some peers having more access. Investigation of the languages of school-based adolescents have could help to identify how peers contribute to the stratification of group members and groups.

### 3.3.1 Power relations and peer group structure: Appraisal

These findings point to the stratified nature of the peer group: peer groups relative to the school cohort, peer groups relative to other peer groups, group members relative to other group members, and individual adolescents relative to each other. Psychological, structural, hierarchical, and post-structural analyses help to explain some of the differentiation between peers. However, there is a lack of clarity regarding the continuums differentiating peer groups.

### 3.4 Power relations: Peer interactions

The power relations of school-based adolescents are demonstrated through the nature of their peer interactions. Adolescence is a period of biological, psychological, cognitive, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual development, posing potential tensions within and between individuals and groups. Interpersonal developments also occur, such as within and between peer, family, and social relationships. Hinde (1979) described relationships as important organisational units in the development of personality and in
the development of social participation and engagement. However, personal and/or interpersonal goals will sometimes be at odds with relationship satisfaction. The resulting interactions within and/or between peers and peer groups can highlight issues of power.

Adolescents’ negative peer relationships include classifications of violence, bullying, and conflict. The *Sticks and Stones Report* (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education, and Training, 1994) into violence in Australian schools found that peer harassment was relatively common and that gender harassment, bullying, and racism were hard to recognise and underreported. Rigby and Slee (1993) studied Australian secondary school students’ interpersonal relationships. They found that tendencies to bully, to victimization, and to relate prosocially and cooperatively characterised peer relationships, finding that the three dimensions were independent. The findings showed that most students related in prosocial ways, although Rigby and Slee (1991) found that 15% of Australian school children were involved in problems to do with bullying. Interpersonal conflict is also a feature of adolescents’ relationships. In Laursen’s (1993) study of American high school students, participants reported an average of 7.4 conflicts in 3.1 different relationships over a 24-hour period. These figures suggest that bullying and conflict are important features of adolescents’ lives.

The current study will focus on the nature of power between school-based adolescents in interactions involving bullying and conflict but not violence, for three main reasons. Firstly, bullying and violence involve the exploitation of a real or perceived power advantage, whilst conflict (according to some theoretical perspectives) occurs between those who are structurally and hierarchically equal. Secondly, research has focused on bullying and conflict, making comparisons between findings more available. Thirdly, violence is distinguishable from other antisocial interactions but bullying and conflict are not necessarily as distinctive. The current study examines bullying and conflict interactions to better understand the role of power and power relations in hierarchically equal and unequal relationships.

### 3.4.1 Bullying: Definitions

Bullying is “repeated oppression, psychological and/or physical of a less powerful person by a more powerful individual or group of persons” (Rigby & Slee, 1991, p. 1). Rigby (1994) argued that bullying involves the exploitation of a perceived
power imbalance by intentionally hurtful actions which are unprovoked and unjustified and often enjoyed by the perpetrator. The behaviours, incidence, prevalence, and duration, affective intensity, disclosure to others, absenteeism from school, safety appraisals, and health consequences associated with bullying have been investigated (Rigby, 1994). However, the sources and nature of power divisions require further investigation.

In a new approach to understanding bullying, Guerin and Hennessy (2002) investigated children’s perceptions of the construct. The researcher interviewed 166 primary school children (modal age 12 years) regarding their perceptions of bullying and bullying behaviours. The findings showed perceptions of children and adults can differ on characteristics of bullying when it is defined in terms of behaviours, repetition, intention, effect, provocation, and power balance. By contrast with predetermined constructions, children placed less importance on the role of factors such as repetition, intention to harm, and provocation in definitions of bullying. There was agreement bullying behaviours can be classified as verbal, physical, or psychological in form and on the negative effects experienced. Findings were inconclusive on the characteristic of a power balance, operationalised as physical size and popularity. The study demonstrated the importance of further exploration of this phenomenon and openness to new information and understandings.

3.4.2 Conflict: Definitions

Constructions of conflict use different theoretical approaches. Structural and hierarchical approaches such as those taken by Cowan, Drinkard, and MacGavin (1984) and French and Raven (1959), have defined it as social power and influence. Psychological approaches have defined it as interpersonal difference regarding, for example, values, beliefs, or goals and not necessarily related to power, as explained by Shantz (1987).

Cowan et al. (1984) and Ohbuchi and Yamamoto (1990) examined children’s influence attempts with parents (hierarchically unequal), friends (hierarchically equal), and opposite sex (hierarchically unequal) peers. They described conflict as the desire to achieve one’s goals, theorising that it is context-bound and shaped by structural and/or hierarchical difference.
Other researchers have defined conflict as oppositional behaviour or interpersonal difference. Shantz (1987) framed conflict as a temporal social episode that features incidence and intensity, topic, initiating, and opposing behaviours, resolution behaviours, and outcome. Shantz and Hartup (1992) defined it as overt oppositional behaviour, arising in response to disputes over, for example, goals, behaviours, or ideas. Laursen and Collins (1994), and Shantz argued that mutuality distinguishes conflict from interactions such as domination, aggression, competition, and influence. They purported that these can overlap with conflict by accompanying or following from it, but that conflict does not necessarily require them. Laursen and Collins contended that the resolution tactics employed during conflict reflect the desire for relationship enhancement. That is, they argued that adolescents used conciliatory tactics when wanting to protect a relationship and more power-assertive tactics when the relationship was not important.

Coser (1956) described conflict as oppositional behaviour concerning disputed issues, varying from ideas, through actions to interests and beliefs. He also contended that engagement in settling the dispute resulted in struggles for power, resources, and status and that, in fact, the aim of conflict behaviours was to neutralize, hurt, or disempower. This suggests that conflict can begin as a non-powered interaction but that responses can involve power tactics.

Therefore, definitions of conflict differ on conceptualisation and motivation. When constructed as interpersonal influence, conflict is dependent on context and identified as social power and influence. From this perspective, an agent is motivated to achieve his/her personal goals. Conflict arises from the agent’s perception that the other party will not necessarily acquiesce and will need pressuring to gain compliance. However, this account of conflict does not necessarily address differences between those who are hierarchically equal, such as differences between close peers.

Alternatively, when defined as interpersonal difference, conflict is independent of context, and is identifiable as the need for resolution of interpersonal difference. According to this approach, parties are motivated to reach consensus on their differing goals. They employ resolution tactics involving methods associated with, for example, coercion, but tactics are not necessarily associated with hierarchical positioning. However, this account does not necessarily explain differences that occur between those who are unequal due to structural or hierarchical positioning, such as between distant peers.
3.4.3 Power and peer interactions: Appraisal

The construct of power is integral to definitions of bullying but not necessarily to definitions of conflict. Definitions of conflict incorporate power when connected with context (social power) and with power assertion tactics (social influence). Conflict does not incorporate power when constructed as context-free (interpersonal difference) and when resolution tactics (conflict resolution) designed to achieve mutual satisfaction are used. Definitions of bullying and conflict suggest differences in motivation, ranging from the intent to harm (bullying), through the intent to influence (social power) to the intent to resolve differences (interpersonal difference).

From a post structural perspective, it seems that the current labelling of peer relations as bullying or conflict might contribute to difficulties with construct differentiation. The definitions of bullying and conflict demonstrate some overlap in terms of the role of power, the motivation of parties, and the employment of behavioural responses (see below). Conceptualisation of peer interactions contributes to distinctiveness concerning the real and/or perceived structural and/or hierarchical power of the parties. It could lead to exploration of the continuums effecting peer divisions and to examination of issues related to the determination of continuums. Conceptualisation could assist with developing a common understanding of the role power plays in the relations of school-based adolescents. It could also assist with the development of a shared language for identifying and discussing the role of power in peer relations.

3.5 Power relations and peer interactions: Overview of theoretical explanations

The following section will provide a detailed account of the theoretical frameworks used by researchers to explain constructions of bullying and conflict. It will become evident that theoretical explanations allowing for differentiation between bullying and conflict tend to be inadequate and that further theoretical clarification needed.

3.5.1 Bullying: Theoretical explanations

Researchers have attempted to answer at least five key questions regarding bullying: What is the nature of bullying? What are the causes? Are there differences in
bullying? What factors mediate bullying? What are the effects? Some researchers have proposed causation based on statistical analyses rather than using theory, as Mooij (1993) suggested. Others have attempted to explain bullying from a psycho-social-biological developmental perspective. Psychological, structural, and post structural analyses could provide further insights into the phenomenon. However, theoretical frameworks for explaining the exploitative power relations inherent in bullying remain unclear.

Based on findings of gender and age differences, researchers such as Rigby and Slee (1993), Rivers and Smith (1994), and Owens and MacMullin (1995) explained bullying as an individual phenomenon related to psycho-social-biological development. They consistently reported gender differences, with boys more likely than girls to be reported as bullying others, and boys and girls equally likely to report being bullied. They reported age-related differences, with bullying peaking at around 11 years. The researchers explained their findings within a framework of developmental maturing, incorporating social-cognitive development. Similarly, Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, and Brown (1986) found that children and adolescents whose social cognition and skills were less developed were likely to be more impulsive and less empathic, making their actions effective in the often power-filled nature of the classroom and playground. Sutton, Smith, and Sweetenham (1999) explained bullying in terms of variation in social and cognitive skills. They found bullies had higher levels of theory of mind (TOM) and this enables them to manipulate social situations more skilfully than it enables those with lower TOM levels.

Developmental accounts, which focus on skills deficits, might be useful in explaining some of the variation in bullying behaviours but they do not appear adequate in providing a theoretical framework for the exploitation of power, which distinguishes the phenomenon itself. Indeed, findings of gender and age differences suggest that structural factors could be useful in explaining the use of power in bullying interactions.

Structural and/or hierarchical approaches to power suggest that bullying could arise from peer positioning along particular continuums, involving structural variables such as gender and/or age, or hierarchical variables such as leadership status or popularity. Olweus (1989) argued that variation between schools with respect to bullying suggested that its acceptence or rejection within the school environment (hierarchical) affected its occurrence. He also found an association between family factors (structural and/or hierarchical), such as the warmth of the parent-child
relationship and parental authoritarianism, with bullying. Whilst useful, structural
and/or hierarchical approaches do not appear to account for variation between friends
with respect to the differential use of power, given that bullying occurs within
structurally and hierarchically equal friendship groups (Rigby & Slee, 1993).

Psychological analyses suggest that the drive for superiority or mastery with
little regard for social interest could help to explain bullying. It is possible that
developmental factors could link with feelings of inferiority and that bullying could
reflect attempts to alleviate such feelings. Theory and research do not support these
hypotheses at this stage. In addition, drive theory would need to explain the ganging or
mobbing (group) effect associated with bullying (Rivers & Smith, 1994) and the use of
bullying within friendship groups.

Post structural approaches to the construct of power suggest that bullying could
be a construct of language, whereby certain behavioural and other factors have been
ascribed particular labels. This possibility is consistent with attempts by some
researchers to construct profiles of participants in bullying interactions. For example,
Olweus (1989) profiled a ‘bully’ as aggressive and impulsive, with a more favourable
attitude to harming others, a strong motivation to dominate, and low in empathy. He
profiled a ‘victim’ as having heightened insecurity, anxiety, and sensitivity, with low
self-esteem, ineffective coping skills, few friends, and negative self-image. Stephenson
and Smith (1988) reported on subgroups of children involved in bullying interactions.
They differentiated between ‘typical’ bullies and ‘anxious bullies’, who have poor
school success, are more insecure and less popular; and between ‘typical’ victims and
‘provocative’ victims, who tend to seek attention and provoke reprisal from peers. The
researchers described a fifth subgroup, ‘bully/victims’, who tend to be stronger, less
popular, and more assertive than others and who both bully and complain about
victimization. Thus, bullying could be explained as a construction of the language used
to characterise personality and behaviours factors linked to particular interpersonal
interactions.

Mooij (1993) proposed a multi-causal approach to bullying that incorporates
variables of personality, home-based socialization, social processes, school
characteristics, and societal characteristics. He found that gender and aggressiveness
were significant personal characteristics in bullying. He reported associations between
parents’ punishment style and bullying behaviour, specifically between harsh
punishment style and maternal permissiveness with later bullying behaviour. He
suggested that bullying was a social process, involving affective, cooperative, disruptive, and power-assertive processes between individuals or groups. Mooij found associations between competitive school environments (with limited access to symbols of success and rewards), undemocratic instructional processes, and bullying. Finally, he suggested that a societal emphasis on achievement and status could serve to legitimise the dominance and power orientation of bullies. This approach distinguishes between access to power and use of power. Mooij's (1993) approach accounts for why some peers bully in particular ways and others do not.

3.5.2 Conflict: Theoretical explanations

Psychological (psychoanalytic, sociobiological, socio-cognitive) and social psychological (social relational) theories of conflict tend to be used when explaining the phenomenon of conflict. These are discussed below.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Anna Freud (1958) explained adolescent conflicts as a response to the biological, libidinous urges that emerge with maturation, whereby adolescents begin to detach from parents and realign with opposite sex or same age peers. Therefore, Freud saw conflicts as normative pathways through which adolescents reduce anxieties by establishing new relationships. Steinberg (1990), from a sociobiological perspective, explained conflict as an adaptive evolutionary process, whereby children begin to separate from parents to enhance survival through procreation. He argued that separation involved distancing from parents to realign with peers. This realignment allows the formation of relationships with non-family members and prospective partners. Conflict accompanies and follows this separation process.

Selman, Beardslee, Schultz, Krupa, and Podorefsky (1986) explained conflict using a social-cognitive model of development, which integrates a structural and developmental approach with a functional and information processing approach. They contended that conflict serves the function of stimulating cognitive and social development, thus contributing to the development of social competence and the transformation of social relationships. They contended that as adolescents receive new information, they process it independently of the views of parents, revising their understanding of themselves, and relationships. They argued that conflict arises in response to reorganisation in the parent-child relationship and in the adolescent’s understanding of self.
Focusing on relationship context, Laursen and colleagues (Hartup & Laursen, 1991; Laursen & Collins, 1994; Laursen, Hartup, & Koplas, 1996) developed a social relational model to describe the development of adolescents’ close peer relationships. They contended that relationship differences are a function of closeness and voluntariness, with voluntary relationships being more susceptible to disruption. Whilst acknowledging the vertical (differences) and horizontal (similarities) dimensions to relationships, they theorized that relationships between friends are not differentiated by power but by closeness and voluntariness. According to this model, adolescents’ conflicts are opportunities for redressing perceived inequities, which could improve, hinder, or be irrelevant to the relationship’s functioning. They argued that principles of exchange equity and emotional investment direct close (horizontal) relationships because peers strive to maintain close relationship (emotional investment) by ensuring the transmission of mutually beneficial rewards (exchange equity). They argued that rewards and maintenance are not as important in vertical relationships that are involuntary and more distant, such as between classmates. Their findings suggest that peers will understand conflicts differently according to the importance of the relationship.

Opotow (1991) reported on adolescents’ explanations of the role that conflict plays between peers, finding that conflicts had either destructive or constructive outcomes. When destructive, adolescents experienced social, physical, and psychological harm. When constructive, they protected valued social norms, deterred disorder, repelled harmful behaviour, and disentangled destructive power relations. She argued that conflict plays an important role in social development by assisting adolescents to “actively explore interpersonal influence, deal with threat, negotiate power balances and learn to cope with social success and disappointment” (1991, p. 417). Her explanation of conflict is consistent with both psychological theories about power as an individual phenomenon and social psychological theories of power as social power and influence.

3.5.3 Theoretical explanations of bullying and conflict: Appraisal

It seems that, from a post-structural perspective, researchers construct bullying and conflict to categorise interpersonal interactions school-based adolescents. Constructions of bullying as power relations appear to suggest structural/hierarchical
and/or psychological notions of power. Constructions of conflict include notions of either interpersonal difference or social power. When constructed as interpersonal difference, conflict appears to be independent of power dynamics. When constructed as social power, conflict seems to imply that power is structurally/hierarchically determined.

The diversity of opinion regarding the role of power in constructions of conflict appears to relate to the nature of close relationships. Can close relationships be power-free? The principles of exchange theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) stipulate that parties, even in close relationships, have differential access to resources and that these differences affect the parties’ relative power. Arguably, close friends have access to different resources, such as language or comprehension, which they access during a conflict. Therefore, it is difficult to support the contention that relationships can be truly equal and power-free when conflict occurs. The social relational model (Hartup & Laursen, 1991; Laursen & Collins, 1994; Laursen, Hartup & Koplas, 1996) supports the notion of power-differentiated relationships in other than close relationships. The model’s focus on closeness and voluntariness explains differences in conflict behaviours rather than differences between powered and non-powered types of peer interactions.

The current study contends that it is useful to construct conflict as a function of context and individual difference. Thus, ‘conflict’ is regarded as a function of both personal psychology and context and involving either equal or unequal power relations between school-based peers.

3.6 Power relations: Strategies and dimensions

Access to power does not necessitate or imply the use of power. However, differential access to power enables differential access to methods of power usage (strategies). There has been extensive research into the strategies, or behaviours, associated with bullying and conflict. The range of strategies associated with bullying and conflict resolution is diverse. Therefore, researchers have typically reduced this range by identifying categories within a strategy set, with further reductions based on underlying dimensions.

The next section will describe the research relating to these behaviours and the theoretical frameworks used to describe differences in strategy usage. It will emerge that the strategies associated with bullying and conflict partially overlap, which could
contribute to confusion about peer interactions. From a post structural perspective, the act of applying predetermined labels of bullying or conflict to peer interactions is potentially an act of power. Therefore, who and how labels are applied needs consideration. If labels are of value, there needs to be common agreement between those who have the authority to apply the labels and those to whom they are applied.

3.6.1 Bullying strategies

Findings of researchers such as Olweus (1993), Rigby and Slee (1991), and Rivers and Smith (1994) have demonstrated similarity between the bullying strategies of Finnish, English, and Australian children respectively. They have gathered data through self-report questionnaires using closed and/or rating questions. Respondents indicate, among other issues, their experience of behaviours predetermined as bullying by researchers. Common bullying strategies are contained within the broadly agreed on categories of physical (e.g., hitting, kicking, and pushing), verbal (e.g., teasing, name-calling, racial abuse, and derogatory comments), and exclusion bullying (isolating, ignoring, avoiding, and withdrawing friendship). Tattum (1993) added a category of gesture bullying, comprising strategies such as direct/indirect threats of harm, extortion, and demanding payment.

Ricketts (1996) argued that new bullying behaviours continue to emerge. Using self-report questionnaires and open-ended questions, she identified a category of electronic bullying behaviours. These behaviours use cyberspace and information technologies to hurt others. She concluded that bullying behaviours are dynamic and that the creativity of young people, allied with adult’s limited access to youth culture, makes behavioural approaches to identifying bullying problematic. She argued that predetermined behavioural approaches might not be responsive to changes in technology and might not account for contextual specificity. That is, they might not account for the particular power-based methods available in specific circumstances. She argued that prescribed behavioural approaches are one-dimensional and do not account for the experiences, motivations, emotions, and perceptions of both parties. The results indicated that whilst some students experienced certain behaviours as bullying, not all students reported being angry or upset. The results suggested that predetermined behavioural approaches to identifying bullying did not necessarily reflect the appraisals of those identified as ‘victims’.
Cullingford and Morrison (1995, 1997) investigated the experiences of young offenders excluded from school. They employed a qualitative research approach, in which they conducted semi-structured interviews and drew on the retrospective insights and experiences of participants. They found that the hurt felt by the ‘victim’ was more informative than the bully’s intention to harm, with some students reporting negative affect even though they did not believe the hurt was intentional. Participants described an atmosphere of bullying and threat within the school, classroom, and playground as being even more profound than particular events. They found that bullying pervaded participants’ school lives, concluding that it was not limited to identifiable incidents and that it could affect all students directly or indirectly. The researchers argued that focusing on the overt, behavioural forms of bullying failed to uncover the pervasiveness of more psychological dimensions and that it should be defined through the actual experience and perception of the ‘victim’.

3.6.2 Conflict strategies and dimensions

When constructed as social power, conflict behaviours are typically termed ‘power strategies’, indicating the use of power assertion to gain compliance. Schwarzwald and Koslowsky (1999) used Raven’s (1992, 1993) power interaction model of interpersonal influence to explore adolescents’ methods for handling conflicts. They identified four categories of power strategies: rationality (giving reasons), dependence (expressing reliance), coercion (use of force), and reciprocity (promising a reward for compliance). They found that strategy use was associated with personal factors, such as gender and self-esteem, and situational factors, such as focus of interest (self or group).

Falbo (1977) and Falbo and Peplau’s (1980) findings of a two-dimensional model of power strategies used by adults in intimate relationships has been replicated in research with adolescents. As described in chapter 2, the two dimensions are bilaterality, the extent to which parties are involved in managing/resolving the issue, and directness, the extent to which parties interact overtly rather than covertly. Ohbuchi and Yamamoto (1990) found that the model was applicable to the interpersonal conflicts of Japanese school children. Cowan et al. (1984) supported its applicability with young adolescents, finding an additional weak-strong dimension to young people’s conflict resolution strategies. They found a category of negative strategies, including
demanding, negative affect, and manipulation. These findings are consistent with the
construction of power as social power and social influence (French & Raven, 1959;
Raven, 1965).

Researchers who construct conflict as interpersonal difference typically refer to
conflict behaviours as ‘resolution’ strategies. Laursen and Koplas (1995) developed a
conflict resolution set based on the input of adolescents. The set comprised submission
(one person accedes to the other), negotiation (both parties modify their positions),
disengagement (withdrawal, changing the subject), and third party involvement
(someone else takes charge). They found an association between the differential use of
conflict resolutions strategies and the importance of the relationship.

From responses provided by adolescents’ during semi-structured interviews,
Opotow (1991) found seven categories of conflict strategies. She located the categories
along a continuum with ‘avoidance’ at one end and, ‘aggressive confrontation’, ‘no-
holds-barred-combat’, and ‘expanded conflict’ at the other end. Resolutions that are
more moderate included ‘mannered contact’, which involved letting out feelings,
‘fighting one-on-one’, and ‘unemotional verbal communication’, which involved
communicating directly and talking the issue through. Opotow ascribed resolution
categories to personality features, naming those who used avoidance as ‘conflict
avoiders’ through to those who used aggressive confrontation as ‘conflict seekers’. She
also found that adolescents had (diverse) rules for fair play, stable conflict strategies,
and poor conflict skills and that conflict often erupted unexpectedly with spontaneous,
repetitive, and habitual responses.

3.6.3 Bullying and conflict behaviours: Comparisons and contrasts

Bullying and conflict appear to involve some overlapping behaviours. Typically,
bullying behaviours relate to the agent’s (bully) interactions with the target (victim).
Conflict behaviours usually refer to those enacted by an agent to either resolve a
difficulty/difference or influence a target. Table 3.1 presents a summary of the
behaviours used by school-based adolescents in three types of interactions with peers.
The dimensions and behaviours presented are those performed by an agent.
Table 3.1

*Researchers’ Identifications of Negative Interactions (Dimensions, Behaviours) of Adolescent Peers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Behaviours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laursen &amp; Koplas (1995)</td>
<td>Submission</td>
<td>acceding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td>modifying position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disengagement</td>
<td>withdrawal, changing the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third Party</td>
<td>someone else takes charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohbuchi &amp; Yamamoto (1990)</td>
<td>Unilateral-Direct</td>
<td>asserting, pleading, threat, coercion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unilateral-Indirect</td>
<td>criticism, sadness, withdrawal, anger, violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bilateral-Direct</td>
<td>persuasion, bargaining, compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bilateral-Indirect</td>
<td>suggesting, ingratiation, deception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opotow (1991)</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>Avoidance, mannered contact, fighting one-on-one, unemotional verbal communication, aggressive confrontation, no-holds-barred-combat, expanded conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigby &amp; Slee (1993)</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>hitting, pushing, kicking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>teasing, name-calling, racial abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>isolating, ignoring, avoiding, withdrawing friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schwarzwald &amp; Koslowsky (1999)</td>
<td>Rationality</td>
<td>giving reasons, telling, asking, emotional arousal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dependence</td>
<td>expressing reliance, explaining importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coercion</td>
<td>use of force, threats, mockery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>promising reward such as friendship, goods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 demonstrates researchers’ findings of behaviours used during negative interactions between school-based adolescents. There appears to be overlap, for example, between ‘physical’ (Rigby & Slee, 1993), ‘coercion’ (Schwarzwald &
Koslowsky, 1999), ‘indirect-bilateral’, ‘indirect-unilateral’ (Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990), and aggression (Opotow, 1991). There is a suggestion of overlap between ‘exclusion’ (Rigby & Slee, 1993), ‘unilateral-indirect’ (Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990), ‘disengagement’ (Laursen & Koplas, 1995), and ‘avoidance’ (Opotow, 1991). Within and between dimensions, there is a tendency for strategies to range from weak to strong. For example, ‘verbal’ ranges from teasing to racial abuse (Rigby & Slee, 1993) and ‘rationality’ from expressing reasons to emotional arousal (Laursen & Koplas, 1995). However, individuals can experience behaviours differently and so personal experience needs to be considered with other factors.

3.6.4 Power strategies and dimensions: Appraisal

Therefore, studies show that there is an extensive range of strategies available to school-based adolescent peers in bully and conflict interactions. Comparisons of the strategies used in both types of interactions indicate some overlap. Verbal and physical bullying strategies are similar to coercive and dominating types of conflict strategies. Exclusion bullying strategies are similar to the more avoidant types of conflict strategies, although avoidance may sometimes be a constructive way of defusing an interaction. The overlap in strategies highlights the importance of the study by Cullingford and Morrison (1995) that identified the need to consider the recipient’s emotions in conjunction with the behaviours of the other party.

Power analysis of bullying and conflict strategies indicates that structural, hierarchical, and/or psychological accounts could be relevant. It seems that some strategies could be located along a continuum of power assertion with coercive types at one end and avoidant types at the other end. However, the notion of a hierarchy of strategies requires consideration. For example, the party using a strategy could defend exclusion as avoidant, but the party receiving it could experience it as social abuse. Similarly, the party using disengagement could defend it as conciliatory whilst the party receiving it could experience it as avoidant. The methods used for power exertion, influence attempts, or dispute resolution demonstrates responsiveness to power-differentiated relationships. However, the labelling of interactions based on strategy type remains with the power-holders, that is, with researchers and, subsequently, with school personnel.
3.7 Variables associated with differential use of strategies: Gender, developmental stage, and relationship status

This section will outline the major research findings regarding variables associated with differential strategy use in bullying and conflict interactions. Gender, developmental stage, and relationship status, in particular, have been explored. ‘Developmental stage’ refers to the developmental tasks challenging the adolescents. ‘Relationship status’ refers to the relative closeness of the peers. For example, they might be close (friend-friend) or distant (peer-classmate). The section will conclude with some of the issues related to research exploring gender and age differences with types of peer interactions.

3.7.1 Bullying strategies: Gender and developmental stage

Research findings have indicated that verbal bullying is the most common and persistent form of bullying reported by adolescents. Researchers have consistently found no evidence of gender differences in the use of verbal bullying (Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994), although some have found gender differences in exclusion and physical bullying, finding that girls more commonly reported the former and boys the latter forms of bullying (Owens & MacMullin, 1995). Developmental differences have been indicated by findings showing decreased incidence and prevalence of physical bullying behaviour and increased prevalence and incidence of indirect bullying as students mature from junior to middle to senior secondary school years. The findings show that physical bullying and indirect bullying peak at around 15 years of age, whilst verbal bullying continued to rise past the age of fifteen.

3.7.2 Conflict strategies: Gender, developmental stage, and relationship status

The differential use of strategies for exerting social influence has been investigated with respect to a range of variables. Schwarzwald and Koslowsky (1999) investigated gender, self-esteem, and focus of interest (self, group) differences with adolescents’ use of power strategies in power-differentiated situations. Gender was the strongest predictor of strategy use. They found that boys used more strategies than girls and adolescents preferred to use the ‘soft’ strategies of rationality and dependence,
rather than the ‘hard’ strategies of coercion and reciprocity. Differences between focus of interest with strategy use showed that those with a self rather than group focus were more likely to use coercion, which involves force, and less likely to use dependence, which involves reliance on others. Those with low rather than high self-esteem were more likely to use reciprocity, that is, promises of reward. Results were consistent with structural (see Foucault, 1980) and hierarchical (Raven, 1992, 1993) models of power, whereby strategy use is a function of personal and situational factors.

Ohbuchi and Yamamoto (1990) found that relationship status between opponents was a predictor of strategy use. There were no gender or developmental stage differences although girls and older students had higher levels of resolutions skills than boys and younger students. The association between developmental stage and strategy use varied according to the type of strategy. For example, the use of bilateral strategies, those requiring interaction between opponents, increased with age whilst unilateral-indirect strategies, those requiring no interpersonal interaction and no direct communication, such as withdrawal and violence, decreased with age. The researchers found that bilateral strategies, such as persuasion and compromise, were predicted when the agent perceived the opponent as having more power and unilateral strategies were predicted when the agent perceived the opponent as having less power. A hierarchical model of power use explained the strategy differences, whereby the choice of strategy was a function of the differential social status of the opponent.

Cowan et al. (1984) found contrasting gender results when investigating gender, age, and relationship differences in adolescents’ power strategies. The researchers examined two alternative hypotheses regarding differences in strategy use: either that they are a function of person variables, such as gender and age, or that they are a function of situation variables, such as relationship closeness and relative status. There was strong evidence for relationship effects, minimal evidence for age effects, and no evidence for gender effects with strategy use. The results showed that friends compared with parents were less likely to receive unilateral-indirect strategies, such as evasion and using a third party. Fathers were less likely to receive bilateral-direct strategies, such as persistence and bargaining. Opponents that are more powerful were less likely to receive weak strategies, such as asking and pleading, and less powerful opponents were more likely to receive strong strategies, such as assertion and arguing. The study supported the hypotheses that relationship is the strongest predictor of strategy use and that strategy use is a function of the perceived power differential between opponents.
Other researchers have investigated factors associated with variation in conflict resolution selection. Lindeman, Harakka, and Keltikanas-Jarvinen (1997) studied the differential use of prosociality, aggression, and withdrawal strategies by pre-, mid-, and late-adolescents of equal status. Their findings showed that prosociality and withdrawal decreased with age and age-related differences for aggression pointed to a curvilinear development. There were gender differences for girls, with those in late adolescence more likely to use prosocial and withdrawal strategies. Overall, the researchers found that boys were more likely to use aggression and proposed that differences related to the development of social competence.

Adolescents’ use of conflict resolution strategies has been researched with respect to power-differentiated relationships. Selman et al. (1986) investigated the use of negotiation strategies by adolescents when seeking to resolve conflicts. They found gender and developmental differences with older adolescents and girls more likely than younger adolescents and boys to use negotiation strategies. There was a greater use of negotiation strategies with friends rather than distant classmates. They explained their findings of gender and age differences in terms of the development of social competence and they drew on social equity theory to explain the relationship differences.

Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, and Hair (1996) also found that negotiation was chosen (third party intervention, stepping down) compared to power assertion (physical action, criticism, threat) and that disengagement (no action, drop topic, walk away) was preferred overall and regardless of the relationship. The researchers found that the personality factor of agreeableness moderated these results with low agreeableness being a predictor of power assertion strategies. They did not find equally strong support for high agreeableness as a predictor of negotiation strategies and did not find gender differences. They explained the variation in terms of the development of social competence, which involves the expansion of communication and negotiations skills resulting in the movement from cooperation for self-interest purposes to collaboration for mutuality and intimacy.

Laursen and Koplas (1995) investigated adolescents’ use of response type (submission/coercion, negotiation, disengagement) in conflicts differentiated by their importance. The most important conflicts were distinguishable from others based on ratings of affective intensity rather than behaviours, relationship status, or cognitions. For the most important conflicts, the researchers found an association between the use
of submission/coercion and disengagement with a win/loss outcome. There was no support for negotiation as a preferred response with the most important conflict types. The researchers explained their findings in terms of anger arousal, arguing that it helped to define and shape responses to important conflicts. Patterson (1982) earlier described a cycle of coercion, involving the interplay of aversive tactics and negative affect. He theorized that power assertion and anger could trigger the escalation of destructive behaviours, which in turn affected the conclusion of a conflict.

3.7.3 Variables associated with differential use of strategies: Appraisal

 Gender, developmental stage, and relationship status feature as variables in research related to the differential use of strategy use in peer interactions predetermined as bullying or conflict (social power and influence). Research findings regarding bullying suggest gender and developmental trends in the use of physical strategies by boys and exclusion strategies by girls. Findings of age differences in the use of exclusion strategies relate to the developmental nature of social competence.

 Research findings suggest a trend towards the use of negotiation strategies to resolve conflicts between close friends. For other relationships, power assertive strategies, such as coercion and physical action, are more evident. The differential use of conflict resolution strategies appears to relate to gender and age. Researchers differ in their assessments of the role that relationship status plays in the selection of strategies.

3.8 Differential strategy use: Theoretical perspectives

 The processes and rationale involved in the selection of bullying and conflict strategies require theoretical explanation. The following sections will describe the stated or implied theoretical frameworks used to explain the selection of bullying and conflict strategies.

3.8.1 Bullying strategies: Theoretical perspectives

 Developmental maturation in terms of social and cognitive development is generally the explanation used for age differences in bullying behaviours. Owens and MacMullin (1995) argued that verbal aggression appeared to increase as language skills
developed. Therefore, older compared with younger children were more likely to have access to a wider range of language skills. They argued that as social cognition developed with age so too did the facility of older children to manipulate the strengths and weaknesses of others and to find ways of harming without detection. Alternatively, structural predeterminism based on gender (as described by Foucault, 1980) could underpin this conclusion rather than biology or socialisation.

Other researchers (Owens & MacMullin, 1995; Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994) have explained gender and developmental differences in forms of bullying in terms of social desirability and social interest. Social desirability motivations mean that boys and girls follow culturally determined norms, which suggest that it is more socially acceptable for boys to use physical behaviours and for girls to use social manipulation (exclusion) behaviours. Social interest theory suggests that girls regard social acceptance more highly than boys and therefore girls will choose methods that have the highest chance of success with the least likelihood of detection.

By contrast, Besag (1989) argued that boys’ bullying was associated with a drive for power and dominance, whilst girls’ bullying was associated with a desire for affirmation and intimacy. Her arguments imply that bullying relates to developmental and gender differences regarding connections between drive for power and concerns for social interest (Adler, 1927). Thorne (1993) explained gender differences in bullying behaviour as a function of group formation. She explained her findings of girls’ use of indirect and social methods of bullying in terms of the tighter boundaries around girls’ groups. She contended that this made it easier to use social manipulation to exploit relationships and effect harm within and between groups. Rigby and Slee (1993) proposed that girls’ developed social intelligence, that is social and cognitive skills, earlier than boys do and were more able to manipulate social structures, such as peer groups, to their advantage.

Social equity theory provides an alternative explanation, whereby an analysis of the costs and benefits is the basis for tactics selection. Bjorkvist (1994) argued that adolescents select behaviour(s) by undergoing a cost/benefit analysis, that is, they weigh up which behaviours are going to achieve their goals with least danger of detection. It seems somewhat surprising that in the midst of difficulty with peers, adolescents might be so cool-headed.

It is possible to infer that bullying strategies are similar to social power bases and sources of social influence (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965) because those
who engage in bullying appear to have access to, for example, coercion and legitimate power. Theoretically, the availability of power bases to gain compliance is a function of the role that parties play in an organisation. If bullying strategies reflect differential access to power within an organisation, who sanctions the tactics? If relative power enables differential access to this range of bullying strategies, then who provides this access and how?

3.8.2 Conflict strategies and dimensions: Theoretical perspectives

There are three main theoretical approaches to explaining the differential selection of conflict resolution strategies. These are cognitive-developmental, social relational, and structural explanations.

When considering the relationship context, gender, and developmental stage differences in the use of strategies for managing interpersonal differences seems to relate to the nature of the relationship. For example, Selman et al. (1986) found that adolescents’ use of negotiation was clearly associated with the nature of the relationship, even more so than with gender or developmental stage. Considering the relationship context, Cowan et al. (1984) and Ohbuchi and Yamamoto (1990) also found evidence to support Falbo and Peplau’s (1980) model of strategy use as a function of relationship type. The researchers found that relationship type was the greatest predictor of strategy use. By contrast, Jensen-Campbell et al. (1996) found evidence for the effect of the personality trait of agreeableness but not relationship type on strategy use. They used a cognitive-developmental approach to explain this finding, suggesting that agreeableness was a reflection of social competence and development.

Researchers sometimes use cognitive-developmental theories to explain gender and developmental stage differences in the use of conflict resolution strategies. Without considering the relationship context, Lindeman et al. (1997) proposed that gender and developmental stage differences in the use of conflict resolution strategies were related to a range of developmental factors that occurred during adolescence, including changes in the peer group and in-group norms. Considering the relationship context, Schwarzwald and Koslowsky (1999) found that gender was a stronger predictor of strategy selection than self-esteem or focus of interest. They used the power/interaction model (Raven, 1992, 1993) to explain their findings. Raven proposed that strategy selection relates to rational appraisals of availability, acceptability, costs, and
effectiveness. Using Raven’s model, the researchers explained that children assume gender roles, which they describe to be a function of social and cultural expectations. They argued that gender differences in use of influence strategies for managing conflict reflected adherence to social norms and pressure from adults to conform to these expectations.

Laursen and Collins (1994) contended that the social relational model best explained differences in use of conflict resolution strategies. In earlier research, Laursen (1993) found an association between relationship closeness and conflict resolution strategies, concluding that adolescents’ considered the potential for disruption when approaching conflict management. Laursen and Collins (1994) reviewed a range of research findings indicating that differences in the nature of adolescents’ interpersonal conflicts were associated with relationship type (relative closeness), conflict context (relative freedom in forming the relationship), and conflict setting (relative stability) rather than with age and maturation. They used the exchange and emotional investment principles of the social relational model to explain the differences between the more conciliatory conflict resolution approaches of close friends and the more power assertive approaches of other peers. They found that resolutions between friends used negotiation as a protective approach, whilst other resolutions used more coercive and power assertive approaches when relationship protection was not a consideration.

3.8.3 Feminist analyses of gender and developmental differences

Some feminist analyses question the exploration of gender and developmental stage differences in the differential use of power-related strategies. The central argument is that both gender and developmental stage are primarily constructions of a structurally and hierarchically delineated society. Therefore, differences supposedly related to gender and developmental stage have been predetermined by existing power relations, rather than being differences arising from an assumption of equity. From a post structural position, Burman (1992) argued that developmental stages are primarily constructions based on structural power relations of adult-child and that research regarding developmental stage differences fails to address the predetermined power-based divisions. Burman contended that ‘normal’ development is a matter of acquiescing to the dominant culture and it is possible for findings of developmental differences to reproduce rather than challenge structurally embedded inequalities.
Kitzinger (1994) argued that explanations of gender differences tend to claim that differences are inherent in the individual, come from biological make-up, or are a result of early socialization. Kitzinger referred to structural theories of hierarchies, which contend that adherence to social expectations explains gender differences, which in turn reflect the social hierarchies, which describe and define gender. Eagly (1994) also warned against labelling differences as sex (biological) or gender (culturally derived) based. She argued for careful theoretical analysis of any sex or gender results to explain causes of similarities and differences.

Hyde (1994) addressed the issue of gender-differentiated research by proposing the adoption of six specific research guidelines. She proposed that a range of statistical methods might be valid and useful for gender-differentiated research. These include the use of appropriate significance tests, the reporting of non-significant results to avoid reporting bias, and the reporting of effect sizes. Other theoretical methods include the questioning of findings that suggest female deficits and the cautious use of biological arguments. She also proposes that scientific care is important when interpreting data, since unwary interpretations can cause unnecessary harm.

The current study explores power and power relations using a range of independent variables, including gender and year level. Primarily, it is not gender- or age-differentiated research. Attention is paid to Hyde’s (1994) guidelines where these variables are examined.

3.8.4 Theoretical perspectives on strategies and dimensions of bullying and conflict: Appraisal

Researchers appear to find structural, hierarchical, and/or psychological accounts of power most useful when explaining the differential use of strategies in bullying and conflict interactions. Structural accounts suggest that differences in strategy use are a function of predetermined access to power, implying that peer interactions involve role socialization and reproduce gender role stereotyping. Hierarchical accounts suggest that differences in strategy use are a reflection of variation in relationship status, with close relationships requiring strategies that are more protective and distant relationships requiring less protective strategies. Psychological accounts suggest that differences in strategy use are a function of
individual variables, implying that developmental stage makes strategy availability a function of adolescents’ cognitive skills and abilities.

From a post structural approach, there appears to be scope for a power analysis of the strategies themselves. Strategy labels could reinforce inequities in power relations if adolescents’ interactions are characterised accordingly. For example, those in power could label a student a bully if the student uses behaviours predetermined as ‘exclusion’. However, if the same student uses such a strategy that he/she names as ‘distancing’ to help defuse a situation then the label ‘bullying’ might not seem acceptable to the student. Those in power might label a student a bully if the student uses a strategy predetermined as ‘ganging’. However, if the same student believes that he/she is using a strategy that he/she names as ‘support’ then the student to whom the label ‘bully’ is attached might resist such naming. Furthermore, those in power might characterise a student who expresses negative affect, such as crying as, a ‘victim’ but if the student considers that strategy to be the most suitable in the circumstances (using a cost/benefit analysis) then the victim characterisation might not be relevant. Crying can also be simply an expression of emotional pain and not a selected influence/response strategy.

Therefore, structural, hierarchical, and developmental analyses might not account adequately for the differential use of strategies pre-determined as bullying or conflict, especially when motivations, perceptions, and emotions are not considered. Indeed, developmental and structural analyses represent opposing explanations for the differential use of interactional strategies by school-based peers. Theoretically, structurally determined power relations predispose adolescents to the differential availability of interactional strategies, predetermined by, for example, gender, age, and/or culture. Developmental analyses suggest that differences relate to personal variation in biology and/or social development. To this extent, structural and developmental accounts of differences in use of interactional strategies are mutually exclusive. Post structural accounts, which incorporate principles of deconstruction, might provide a way forward to greater theoretical clarity. Post structural accounts suggest that the naming and characterising of interactional strategies used by school-based peers might be better enacted through the collaborative efforts of those with and without access to this power rather than only through the efforts of those with access to the power to name and characterise.
3.9 Peer interactions: Outcomes

Consideration of the outcomes of bullying and conflict is important when exploring the nature of power between adolescents. Outcome research for both bullying and conflict generally focuses on the target individual and relational impacts of an interaction. To this extent, analyses are consistent with psychological (developmental) and social psychological (hierarchical, relational) constructs of power and power relations.

Outcome research can inform participants and school personnel about the reinforcement, reproduction, or transformation of power relations. Therefore, from a structural and hierarchical perspective, research findings on the outcomes of interpersonal interactions could contribute towards the development of profiles of power relations that might be useful for improving the quality of peer relations and making them more equitable. From a post structural perspective, outcome research could contribute information on the relevance of empowerment techniques for redressing inequitable power relations and on the role that language plays in constructing power relations. Exploration of the outcomes of interactions could contribute information on the theoretical frameworks within which adolescents’ relationships can be best understood and explained.

3.9.1 Bullying: Outcomes

Researchers have investigated the relationship between bullying and a variety of psycho-social-emotional outcome variables. For example, the immediate outcomes of bullying may include sadness or anger, loss of self-esteem, reluctance to seek help from teachers and parents, absenteeism from school, diminished feelings of safety at school, and health consequences, including somatic complaints and suicide ideation (Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993). Adolescents felt more comfortable and confident when reporting bullying to friends than to school personnel. Rigby and Barnes (2002) found evidence that they were reluctant to report to teachers. This is not surprising, in terms of power relations, given that the relationship between friends suggests a more balanced power relationship compared with the differential power relations between adolescents and parents/guardians/teachers. Those bullied felt less accepted within the school system (Cullingford & Morrison, 1997). As Smith (1991) has argued, those who bully may be
perfecting power assertive strategies whilst at school and for as long as they avoid
detection; those who are victims may be learning how to be submissive.

3.9.2 Conflict: Outcomes

Some researchers have investigated the relationship between psycho-social-
emotional outcome variables and the differential use of friends’ conflict resolution
strategies. Laursen and Koplas (1995) found an interrelationship between the use of
submission/coercion and disengagement strategies with win/loss outcomes and negative
affect. They found an association between negative affect and failure to learn anything
from the conflict. Laursen (1993) found an association between relationship closeness
and lower negative affect, higher levels of positive social interaction after the conflict,
and an overall improvement in the relationship. Outcomes related to the closeness of the
relationship. Relationships with peers compared with others, including parents, teachers,
and other peers, produced differential outcomes.

Other researchers have found an association between response type and
outcomes in power-differentiated situations. Ohbuchi and Kitanaka (1991) found that
strategy effectiveness was associated with less negative affect and more social
acceptability. Effective strategies included bilateral (mutually-interactive) and direct
(overt) rather than unilateral (self-generating) and indirect (covert). They explained their
findings in terms of social and cognitive development and relationship appraisal, with
closer relationships protected by the use of the less antagonistic and more readily
accepted bilateral-direct methods.

3.9.3 Outcomes of peer interactions: Appraisal

Research findings regarding the outcomes of bullying and conflict interactions
indicate that relationship closeness could protect against the potentially harmful
outcomes of bullying or conflict involving distant peers. Outcomes that were effective
in achieving equitable power relations were of benefit to adolescents. Knowledge of
outcomes that entrench and/or transform inequitable power relations could also be
useful for adolescents and school personnel.

Hierarchical analyses demonstrate that power relations between close peers are
associated with conciliatory response strategies, supporting the adage “Befriend your
enemy”. Post structural analyses demonstrate that the nature of affective and social consequences contribute to adolescents’ empowerment or disempowerment, indicating the possible usefulness of techniques such as self-esteem building and assertiveness training. Finally, the use of rating-type questions of predetermined affective, social, or behavioural outcomes, typically used by researchers, could inhibit exploration of the range of outcomes young people might identify if open-ended responses were sought.

3.9.4 Power between adolescents: Summary and synthesis

This chapter demonstrated how psychological, social psychological, and feminist psychological analyses contribute different theoretical perspectives on the nature of power and power relations between school-based adolescents. Examination of research related to negative peer interactions between school-based adolescent peers demonstrated that each perspective could explain research findings in different ways. The chapter indicated that a multi theoretical perspective is required to explain power and power relations within the school context.

3.10 Power between adolescents: Directions

Constructions of negative peer interactions reflect adults’ perceptions of children’s understandings (and experiences) of, for example, power and power relations, including bullying and conflict. Understanding the nature of power between adolescents requires more first-hand information, raising three issues for further exploration.

1. What do adolescents understand by ‘power’ and how do they describe ‘power usage’?

2. Do school-based adolescents have differential access to power and power usage and on what bases are access and/or usage differentiated?

3. What types of outcomes are associated with interactions between school-based adolescents and what factors contribute to the most effective outcomes?

The next chapter explains how the current study will address these questions.
CHAPTER 4: AIMS, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, RESEARCH DESIGN, SURVEY CONSTRUCTION

4.1 Overview

The first section of this chapter specifies the aims and research questions of the current study. The chapter then develops the reasons for employing a descriptive research design using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. It continues with a report on the construction of the study questionnaire and on the principles underlying its construction. The chapter concludes with a description of the survey and its measures.

4.2 Aims

The general aim of the current study was to explore the nature of power between school-based adolescent peers. The nature of power refers to adolescents’ understandings of personal and interpersonal power, the types of power-differentiated situations encountered with peers, the responses to those situations, and the outcomes of responses. More specifically, the study aimed to examine adolescents’ understandings of power against the background of the three main theoretical perspectives on power. The intention was to identify adolescents’ interpersonal problems with peers and to examine these against current understandings of bullying and conflict. A further aim was to investigate the relationships between perceived power differentials in interpersonal situations, gender, and year group on the selection and outcomes of response type in problematic interpersonal interactions. The overall aim was to work towards identifying a model of power that has application for interpersonal situations between school-based adolescent peers.

It was anticipated that the study would contribute to a better understanding of the role that power plays in adolescents’ school-based interpersonal relationships. It was hoped that school personnel might draw on adolescents’ understandings of power to reflect on the relevance and appropriateness of school policies and procedures regarding interpersonal relationships.
4.3 Research questions

Given its exploratory, investigative nature, the study presents broadly based research questions, rather than hypotheses. The fundamental thesis on which the research questions rest is that the more power people perceive themselves as having relative to others, the more power they could use in responding to interpersonal difficulties. Conversely, the less power people perceive themselves as having, the less power they could use in responding to interpersonal difficulties. The study will assess the relative strengths of the situation (an example of contextual power), gender (an example of institutionalised power), year group (an example of hierarchical power), and friendship closeness (an example of relationship power). Year grouping, which is loosely based on age, could be considered an example of institutionalised power. However, within a secondary school context, year group divisions are more decisive than age divisions. For this reason, in the current study, year grouping is treated as an example of hierarchical power positioning. Furthermore, to assist with statistical comparisons, year groups are collapsed into junior (years 7 and 8) and middle (years 9 and 10). Focus questions describe the study’s five research questions.

4.3.1 Research question one: What do adolescents understand by ‘power’?

i. What do adolescents understand by ‘power’ when they are asked to describe what it means to have ‘power within yourself’ and ‘power between people’?

ii. Do adolescents’ constructions of personal and interpersonal power differ?

iii. Is there a relationship between gender or year group (7/8, 9/10) with adolescents’ understandings of personal or interpersonal power?

This question investigates the young people’s understandings of power. Respondents’ descriptions of power (personal, interpersonal) could demonstrate their understandings of the construct of power and these understandings could parallel current constructs of power (psychological, social psychological, feminist psychological). Furthermore, there could be a difference between respondents’ constructions of personal and interpersonal power. There could be gender and year group (7/8, 9/10) differences with constructions of personal and interpersonal power.
Specifically, it is suggested that there could be a relationship between males and those from year group 9/10 with more power-assertive constructions of personal and interpersonal power.

4.3.2 Research question two: How do adolescents rate their perceptions of their power?

   i. How do adolescents rate their perceived power?

   ii. Is there a relationship between Global Power Score and understandings of personal or interpersonal power, gender, or year group (7/8, 9/10)?

This question examines young people’s ratings of their perceived power, indicated by a Global Power Score (GPS). The GPS, with scores ranging from 3 = low perceived power to 15 = high perceived power, is a measure of the respondents’ perceptions of their power. Theoretically, those with higher GPSs could have more access to power. Gender or year group differences with GPS are possible, such that males or those from year group 9/10 could have higher mean GPSs. Power construct differences are also possible, so that young people with particular views of power (personal and/or interpersonal) could vary in their GPS scores.

4.3.3 Research question three: How do adolescents describe their interpersonal difficulties with peers?

   i. What are the most effective descriptive categories for the different types of interpersonal difficulties that young people encounter with their peers?

   ii. Do the categories of interpersonal difficulties differ between or within power scenarios (less, same, more)?

   iii. Is there a relationship within power scenarios (less, same, more) between gender, year group (7/8, 9/10), or closeness (not friends, friends) with categories of interpersonal difficulty?

Research question three investigates the types of interpersonal difficulty that the young people described. To enable this, a preliminary examination of difficulty types was conducted to suggest the most effective way of categorising the descriptions. There
could be variation between the power scenarios (less, same, more) on categories of interpersonal difficulty. In other words, when young people are describing their interpersonal difficulties, they could describe different types depending on whether they were responding to a situation in which they were designated to have less power, same power, or higher power than their peer/peers. Examination could indicate that, within power scenarios (less, same, more), there are gender, year group (7/8, 9/10), or closeness (not friends, friends) differences on the categories of difficulty.

4.3.4 Research question four: How do adolescents describe their methods of handling the interpersonal difficulties?

i. What is the most effective way of categorising the descriptions of the response methods used to handle interpersonal difficulties?

ii. Do the categories of response differ across power scenarios (less, same, more)?

iii. Are there gender, year group (7/8, 9/10), or closeness (not friends, friends) differences within power scenarios (less, same, more) on categories of response?

The purpose of this question is to explore the responses that the young people used to handle their interpersonal difficulties. An initial examination of responses was conducted to suggest the most effective way of categorising the responses. Based on theory, the current study attempts to replicate the findings of Falbo and Peplau (1980) that a two-dimensional model, with dimensions of bilaterality and directness, could effectively categorise the responses used by participants to handle interpersonal difficulties in power-differentiated situations (less, same, more).

An examination of the possible differences in responses across power scenarios (less, same, more) was conducted. Within power scenarios, gender, year group (7/8, 9/10), and closeness differences (not friends, friends) on responses were also investigated. Examination of closeness differences can only occur within (rather than across) scenarios because they are scenario specific.
4.3.5 Research question five: What are the outcomes for adolescents of the responses they used to handle interpersonal difficulties?

i. Do the outcomes differ across the power scenarios (less, same, more)?

ii. Are there gender, year group (7/8, 9/10), closeness (not friends, friends), or response group differences within power scenarios (less, same, more) on outcomes?

Research question five investigates the young people’s ratings of the outcomes of their responses to interpersonal difficulties. The three outcome criteria are affect (very friendly through very angry), relationship (much improved through much worse), and overall handling (excellent through very poor). Examination of outcomes across power scenarios could indicate scenario (less, same, more) differences on outcome ratings. Examination of the outcomes within power scenarios (less, same, more) could indicate gender, year group (7/8, 9/10), closeness (not friends, friends), or response differences on outcome ratings. It is only possible to examine closeness differences within scenarios because they are scenario specific.

4.4 The research design

The exploratory nature of the study suggests that a descriptive design, as described by Heppner, Kivlighan, and Wampold (1992), would be most appropriate. The following section provides a background to descriptive research designs. It outlines the features of qualitative and quantitative approaches to descriptive research. The section concludes with an explanation of the applicability of a descriptive research design for the current study.

4.4.1 Descriptive research designs

Heppner et al. (1992) defined descriptive designs as those that allow the researcher to identify and distinguish the characteristics of phenomena within the sampled population and to describe the occurrence, dimensions, and relationships of relevant variables. They differentiated between two main categories of descriptive designs: qualitative and quantitative.
Patton (1984) argued that qualitative and quantitative research designs differ in terms of ontology, epistemology, data collection, and nature of research questions. Ontologically, qualitative research assumes the construction of reality from internal cognitive processes whereas quantitative research assumes the construction of reality from external, observable physical behaviours and processes. Epistemologically, qualitative research proposes that knowledge emanates from internal constructions whereas quantitative research proposes that knowledge emanates from observations of physical occurrences. The qualitative researcher uses the individual perspectives of the sample group to generate data whilst the quantitative researcher generates data through observational measurements. Finally, Patton proposed that the aim of qualitative research is to describe and understand people’s meaning systems and how these make sense of the world. By contrast, the aim of quantitative research is to describe the causes and effects of relationships as identified in the physical world.

Glasser and Strauss (1967) developed a ‘grounded theory’ approach to the formation of theory from the analysis of data generated by a qualitative research design. This analytical approach involves the systematic comparison of information, allowing for the emergence of categories and concepts from inspection of the data. The researcher builds and refines categories of information until categories are saturated. The researcher then defines the categories, drawing on memoranda recorded during the analytical process, and links categories to a theory. The researcher elicits more data where necessary to further develop the breadth and depth of the theory.

Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) argued that qualitative research designs have the potential to address differences between researcher and participants. That is, this research design can account to some extent for differences between researcher and participants that might compromise impartiality.

4.4.2 Descriptive research design: Current study

Qualitative research with adolescents is rare. The investigation into school bullying by Olweus (1994) demonstrated that quantitative research methods were the most commonly used tool for researching this phenomenon. Rigby and Slee’s (1991) Peer Relationships Questionnaire (PRQ) is a quantitative measure designed to examine the nature of school bullying. Laursen et al.’s (1996) review of the research literature into adolescents’ conflicts with peers demonstrated a trend towards quantitative research
methods. In addition, there is very little information available on the nature of power between adolescents. Therefore, research methodologies that explore and gather information on adolescents’ understandings of, and experiences with, power are required to develop more understanding about this phenomenon.

To satisfy the aims of the current study, a descriptive design drawing on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods was used. From an ontological perspective, the expectation of the qualitative research measures is to extend existing theoretical knowledge by inviting participants to provide their personal understanding of the phenomenon of power. From an epistemological perspective, this approach has the potential to enhance current knowledge of participants’ experiences of power with their peers. Therefore, by directing participants to power-differentiated interpersonal problems, a qualitative approach could generate information on power-in-operation between adolescent school-based peers.

It seems that a central notion of qualitative research is that there is no imperative for data to be in numerical form for analytical purposes and that data can be analysed by methods other than statistical procedures. However, a qualitative approach based on grounded theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) allows for the coding and measuring of descriptive data. The implication for the current study is that a descriptive design would allow for the categorisation, coding, collating, and analysing of qualitative, quantitative data regarding participants’ insights into the meaning of power and their experiences of power with school-based peers.

This approach generates phenomenological data, which serves two functions in the current study. Firstly, it allows for a deductive approach that draws on individual perspectives and contributes to the evolution of new understandings of the construct of power. Secondly, it allows for an inductive approach that gathers participants’ ratings of the relative effectives of response types under prescribed circumstances (perceived power differentials, gender, and year group).

The matching of qualitative with quantitative measures allows for a combination of research questions. The qualitative methodology allows for research questions that focus on participants’ understandings of power and on their experiences of power-in-operation. The quantitative methodology will allow for research questions that explore the interrelationship between perceived power differentials, gender, year group, response types, and the outcomes of response type usage. The mixed approach could contribute further to an understanding of the circumstances under which particular types
of power responses are likely and on their possible outcomes. Finally, it could provide some tentative indications of the predictive value of perceived power-differentials, developmental stage, gender, response types, and effectiveness.

4.5 Survey construction: Overview

The exploratory nature of the study necessitated the construction of an original survey. A five-stage process addressed survey construction requirements. Firstly, a set of principles guided the survey’s construction. The next four stages involved: drafting, pre-testing, revising, and finalising the survey. The processes involved in producing the “Young Peoples’ School Relationships” survey are described below.

4.5.1 Survey construction: Guiding principles

Two principles guided the survey construction. O'Sullivan and Fisher (1999) contended that research with adolescents needs to address their autonomy and welfare and make a scientific contribution. ‘Autonomy’ refers to the independence and freedom of adolescents within the research process. ‘Welfare’ refers to the pastoral care of participants. ‘Scientific contribution’ refers to the potential advancements in theoretical and practical knowledge acquired through research and to the potential for research to be an agent of change. The current study aimed to balance the potential benefits of scientific inquiry with the autonomy, welfare, and scientific contribution of adolescent participants. It also attempted to address some of the power imbalances inherent in the research process. An explanation of these principles survey construction process follows.

To satisfy the principle of autonomy, the survey construction process in the current study incorporated provision for the instruction of adolescent research participants in the ethics of voluntary, informed participation, confidentiality of information, and privacy. The front page of the survey described these instructions. The recruitment and administration processes included provision for explanations of these, as described in chapter 5.

The pastoral care (welfare) of participants in research may be affected in several ways. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the involvement of school-based adolescents to in psychological research is increasing. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that study
designs often use pencil and paper surveys or questionnaires and that these can be long, complicated, and demanding of participants’ time, energy, and commitment. Presumably, these factors can compromise the welfare of participants. To avoid this, there was consideration of the survey’s length, the accessibility of the language in the questions/statements, the accessibility of the concepts, the survey’s physical presentation, and the emotional content. To protect participants’ welfare, information was available on the possible emotional impacts of participation and the avenues for support.

Adolescents have rich insights into their own world and have the ability to contribute towards the growth of knowledge about that world (the principle of scientific contribution). Therefore, allowing adolescents to participate in research is a preliminary step to meeting this principle. The survey explored subject matter of direct relevance to adolescents’ real-life experiences. It provided adolescents with the opportunity to express their ideas regarding issues of power and to describe their experiences with power. This principle was attended to by inviting open-ended responses to set statements/questions and related matters.

Inevitably, any research study involves the issue of power relations between researchers and those researched. Olesen (2000) stated that researchers and researched occupy different hierarchical positions and that this difference may be reflected in the researcher’s control of the study’s aims, questions, conclusions, and presentation of outcomes. Olesen contended that moderators to this imbalance include: application of ethical principles, access to input, engagement in processes, reflexivity, objectivity, validity, voice, and text construction. Raabe (1993) pointed to some of the power differentials embedded in her research study. She identified structural differences based on age, gender, and culture. She concluded that the text of her research would need to take account of these differences. Olesen and Raabe each argued that qualitative research is one way of addressing the power imbalance inherent in the research process.

In the current study, the attempt to address such power differentials was represented by the adoption of ethical practices, the use of partial qualitative methodology, and the involvement of adolescents in planning the survey’s construction (see chapters 4 and 5).
4.6 Survey construction: Overview of drafting procedures

Based on previous research, five main methodological issues needed to be resolved as part of the survey drafting process. The issues included: exploration of the perceived power differentials within interpersonal interactions; identification of the response strategies used to manage the interaction; evaluation of the response usage outcomes; instrument validity; and practicalities of title, structure, length, language, and presentation.

4.6.1 Establishing perceived power differentials

To establish differences in interpersonal power from adolescents’ perspectives, researchers have chosen one of three approaches. These are: free response, deductive approaches (Laursen & Koplas, 1995; Selman et al., 1986), hypothetico-deductive approaches (Laursen, 1993; Lindeman et al., 1997; Ohbuchi & Kitanaka, 1991; Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990; Schwarzwald & Koslowsky, 1999), and a hypothetical approach (Cowan et al., 1984). Other researchers have assumed an interpersonal power differential based on theory (Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994).

Constructing hypothetical situations within a hypothetico-deductive approach allows the researcher to hold constant the type of power-differentiated relationship. To this end, Selman et al. (1986) developed a systematic way of constructing hypothetical scenarios. They contended that free response topics ensure participants’ access to salient and relevant material and allow for the gathering of original material. They proposed that this approach avoids the problem of variation in participants’ experience with hypothetical situations.

Attempts to construct hypothetical situations within which to contextualise power-differentiated relationships for the current study highlighted key difficulties. The attempts demonstrated difficulties with selecting scenario content and systemizing the power differential. Practical difficulties related to language level, length of scenario, and completion time required. To address these issues, a draft matrix was prepared. This indicated that a minimum of 12 hypothetical situations would be required for the study, raising concerns about participant fatigue. On balance, the free response approach seemed to be preferable because it addressed the exploratory aims of the current study,
allowed for participants’ self-reports, and avoided the construction difficulties associated with the hypothetico-deductive approach.

Laursen and Koplas (1995) argued that recall tasks benefit from immediacy, since this improves accuracy, and reduces bias against disputes that are affectively less intense. Arguably, there is ready recall of more intense disputes over time. Laursen and Koplas did not indicate the number of participants who could not recall conflicts from the previous day, or who reported having no conflicts. The current study chose to ensure that all participants were able to report on difficulties and to distinguish between three types of power differentials. To facilitate both recall and the availability of salient material, the current study gathered information on the most affectively intense difficulties that participants could recall under each of the three power-differentiated conditions during the limited time span of the current year (approximately 9 months).

4.6.2 Response types

This section describes the approaches taken by researchers when designing and using sets of behavioural items connected with interpersonal interactions. Response types are the strategies used to manage bullying, interpersonal differences (social influence), or to resolve conflict (conflict resolution). However, for the purposes of explaining research approaches, the methodology for designing, and using sets of behavioural items connected with bullying, which involves initiation rather than response, will also be explained. Therefore, response types will include any behavioural correlate to interpersonal interactions.

Some researchers have used a deductive approach to identify behaviours used during interpersonal interactions between children and/or adolescents. This process has gathered data from participants’ responses to open-ended questions about how they managed a difficulty, sought to get their way, or tried to influence another (Cowan et al., 1984; Laursen & Koplas, 1995; Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990; Selman et al., 1986). Lindeman et al. (1997) deductively developed a scale for use with adolescents. Behaviour sets used in power-differentiated interpersonal interactions (bullying) have been derived from exploratory research using children and adolescents, such as by Bjorkvist, Lagerspetz & Kaukiainen (1992), Olweus (1978), and Rigby & Slee (1993, 1995).
Researchers have used one of these predetermined lists of behavioural items (Lindeman et al., 1997; Ohbuchi & Kitanaka, 1991; Schwarzwald & Koslowsky, 1999). Participants were asked to identify themselves as the target, in the case of bullying (Owens & MacMullin, 1996; Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994), or the agent, in the case of conflict (Laursen & Koplas, 1995; Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990). They were then presented with a set of behavioural items and asked to rate the frequency with which they had experienced each item within a stated temporal framework.

The use of predetermined strategy/behavioural sets has the dual advantages of being able to test theory empirically and to make statistical comparisons. However, not all are appropriate for use with adolescents. The strategy sets used in power-differentiated interpersonal interactions between adolescents (Cowan et al., 1984; Ohbuchi & Kitanaka, 1991; Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990; Schwarzwald & Koslowsky, 1999) derived from research with adult participants (Falbo, 1977; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1992). There are some methodological challenges in assuming the generalisability of the adult-based strategy sets. For example, behaviours/responses available to adults may require a level of sophistication that adolescents do not have. For example, Falbo (1977) identified adults’ use of the powered strategy termed ‘expertise’, that is, ‘claiming to have superior knowledge or skill’. Arguably, young people in early adolescence may not have access to this response in a secondary school setting.

A second methodological challenge is that using behaviour or strategy sets inhibits the possible expansion of knowledge about the operation of power-generated interactions between adolescents. For example, using Rigby and Slee’s (1995) Peer Relationships Questionnaire (PRQ), participants rate their experience of five behaviours. The behaviours provide a broad framework for determining bullying. However, reducing behaviours to broad categories possibly limits the potential to discover new forms of bullying. For example, adolescents may not recognize that e-mail use can be exclusion bullying, as described by Ricketts (1996).

The development of multidimensional models of power strategies (Falbo, 1977; Falbo & Peplau, 1980) allowed for the categorisation of specific responses. In theory, a multidimensional model of power strategies allows for the collection of free responses within a theoretical framework and is testable via a specific statistical procedure. Given the exploratory nature of the current study, the use of a multidimensional scaling
procedure could allow for the gathering of first-hand accounts of responses in power-differentiated situations and for the organisation of these into appropriate dimensions. Subsequently, it was anticipated that the information gathered could be looked at in the light of previous research with a view to expanding available knowledge about the nature of power between adolescents.

4.6.3 Evaluating outcomes

The current study aimed to contribute to knowledge regarding interaction-strategy outcomes. Outcome criteria typically used by researchers include: affective and social impact (immediate and long-term) and acceptability of a strategy.

In the PRQ, Rigby and Slee (1995) asked participants to rate the effect of bullying behaviours using four criteria. Their outcome measures comprised: affective impact (felt angry, felt sad/miserable, not bothered), reporting to third parties, consequences of reporting, and effects on school attendance. Ohbuchi and Kitanaka (1991) used eight affective criteria (joy, anger, unpleasantness, surprise, fear, sadness, disdain, dislike) for evaluating the outcomes of adolescents’ strategy use in power-differentiated conflict situations. Subsequent, factor analysis produced two significant criteria (unpleasantness, fearfulness). Laursen (1993) asked participants to rate how they felt during and after the difficulty. The five affective response ratings included: very friendly, friendly, neutral, angry, and very angry.

Regarding social impact, Laursen (1993) asked participants to rate the relationship immediately after the conflict using: stayed together and continued talking, stayed together but stopped talking and separated. They asked participants to rate the relational consequences short-term using: improved, remained the same, or worsened. To evaluate the long-term social impact, participants rated the relationship as: improved, remained the same, or worsened.

To measure acceptability of strategy use, Ohbuchi and Kitanaka (1993) asked participants to rate the acceptability of an agent’s use of each strategy in hypothetical situations. Acceptability items were: strong, thoughtful, sincere, well-intentioned, friendly, active, regardful, polite, masculine, and desirable. Ratings, made on a 7 point Likert-scale, ranged from 1 = not at all acceptable to 7 = completely acceptable. The items matched the two dimensions of directness and bilaterality. Factor analysis produced two further dimensions. The first was sociability: thoughtful, sincere, well-
intentioned, friendly, regardful, polite, and desirable. The second dimension was powerfulness: strong, active, masculine.

Based on previous research, it was possible that three outcome criteria could investigate the effectiveness of strategies adopted by adolescents in power-differentiated situations. The outcome measures comprised: affective intensity and relationship status (Laursen, 1993; Ohbuchi & Kitanaka, 1991; Rigby & Slee, 1995). A third outcome criterion, a rating of global effectiveness, was included. Arguably, single, compared with multiple, rating questions of the same type of item enhance participant welfare but limit scientific exploration. Both enhance the possibility of exploratory statistical comparisons. Therefore, consistent with the exploratory aim and the stated guiding principles, it was proposed that one rating question each of the three criteria would allow for an extension of current knowledge about the use of power between adolescents. Ratings of the three outcome rating questions, based on those used by Rigby and Slee, and Laursen, might also allow for some exploratory statistical comparisons with other research findings.

4.6.4 Validity procedures

Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) described criteria for assessing the quality of psychological research. They contended that validity applies beyond the boundaries of typical statistical procedures used for verifying a quantitative design to the whole research process. They argued that differentiation between researcher and participants (the norm of reciprocity) is integral to valid research. The researchers argued that clear, relevant, appropriate, and distinctive titles need to be applied to categories and that each level of abstraction should be meaningfully and clearly related to the domain of the researched phenomenon (importance of fit). They further contended that the researcher’s values, beliefs, and attitudes could not be divorced from research and its findings. Therefore, they argued that documentation of the researcher’s beliefs, attitudes, values, methodological decisions, and rationales could be recorded and available for scrutiny. They claimed that written documentation, including notes of progress, processes, changes, ideas, observations rationales, and reflections, are a vehicle for increasing researcher reflexity. The researchers argued for a clear, close association between research topic and participant sample and that negative case analysis contributes to sound theoretical construction. Finally, the writers proposed that
valid research ought to involve negotiation with participants and that the findings and conclusions ought to be transferable to similar situations.

Efforts made to comply with these suggestions were incorporated into both the study and survey design. For example, the survey design ensured anonymity and confidentiality (as a distancing tool between researcher and participants), independent categorisation, and naming of data. There was a diary for recording changes, research questions, insights, and observations. The survey was designed for administration with participants appropriate to the research aims. The study design proposed for the incorporation of negative case analysis into the research findings. It included opportunities for participation from the participants. Finally, there was anticipation that the processes for writing a research report could include consultation with a sample of participants.

4.6.5 Practical considerations

The survey construction process required consideration of a range of practical issues to satisfy the general principles of autonomy, welfare, and scientific contribution. Practical issues comprised: survey’s title, structure, length, language, presentation, and administration. Practical issues also included addressing power differentials between researcher and participants.

The title, “Young People’s School Relationships” survey, was planned to provide participants with clear access to the study’s focus, thereby promoting autonomy. The survey was structured into three, clearly marked Parts (A, B, and C) with a minimum number of tasks in each part. Limiting the length and complexity of tasks addressed the welfare of participants. Consequently, the information sought focused on the variables clearly arising from the literature, that is, on the types of responses made in difficult interpersonal interactions, and the outcomes of these choices. There was no investigation of extraneous or unrelated variables. There was attention to the language used in the survey. Participants could write or draw their responses. Young people can find questions intrusive so the survey questions comprised statements that invited responses. There was attention to enhancing the visual presentation of the survey by, for example, using representational pictures and graphics. To enhance autonomy, the Instruction Sheet and survey tasks were designed to be
administered verbally as well as in writing, with opportunities before, during, and after administration for questions and responses.

The survey was designed to maximize participation, minimize participant fatigue, minimize social, and emotional costs and, consequently, to address the power differential between researcher and students. To enhance participation, there was a balance of open-ended and closed responses. The open-ended responses gave participants the opportunity to present ideas and information. The closed-response opportunities complemented the open-ended response opportunities without contributing to participant fatigue. Partly to address the structural power differential between members of the student body, there was an invitation to those with less rather than more structural power to participate. Consequently, the invitation was for participation from students from Years 7 to 10, rather than those from the senior years.

To enhance participants’ scientific contributions, participants presented self-report information rather than responses to predetermined items. The combination of inductive and deductive methodology enabled participants to contribute individual knowledge of the concept and of the workings of power.

4.7 Survey construction: Pre-testing

To test the validity and suitability of the survey, 35 scrutinizers considered a draft. Most scrutinizers had theoretical knowledge and understanding of survey construction, issues of power, and adolescent development. Included were three psychologists working in an academic institution, one psychologist working in a community organisation, and three psychologists working in high schools. A group of 20 student psychologists studying a course in research design and five high school teachers with at least five years teaching students from Years 7 to 10 appraised the survey. Finally, two small groups of Year 11 students (four per group) who were interested in psychology as a career provided their opinions.

In informal 20-minute sessions, scrutinizers read the survey and responded to a set of five semi-structured questions. The questions covered what they thought the survey was about, whether adolescents would understand the language and instructions, how adolescents might respond to the format and length, whether they thought the information sought would be useful, and whether they had any other comments.
4.8 Survey construction: Finalisation

The pre-testing phase suggested that the survey construction satisfied its aims. However, several changes were made because of the consultation process. In Part A, the researcher collapsed the demographic questions from two (gender, year level) into one (gender and year level). The researcher collapsed the rating questions for each power-differentiated situation in Section B from eight to five items. For example, the first item in the draft format, “How close were you to the other person(s) when the difficult situation happened?” and the fifth item, “How close are you to the other person(s) now?”, became “During the problem we were … Now we are…. in the final format. At the suggestion of the student scrutinizers, the space given for the provision of qualitative information was reduced. These alterations enabled a reduction in the size of the survey from 15 to 10 pages.

Regarding the instructions in Part B, student scrutinizers suggested rephrasing the instructions to “the biggest problem” from “the most difficult situation” to enhance accessibility of language. One psychologist suggested adding, “NO NAMES, PLEASE!” to the instructions in Part B to enhance privacy. For ease of recording, academic scrutinizers suggested using numbers to accompany rating items. However, teacher and student scrutinizers contended that letter ratings were preferable because students can negatively equate numbers with academic scores.

One psychologist did not support use of the ‘smiley’ faces as a visual rating indicator because these might confound the results. After discussion with a range of scrutinizers, there was a decision that participants would understand and relate favourably to this visual indicator. The student scrutinizers reported favourably on the survey administration to groups of students during school time. They acknowledged the importance of addressing the issue of power between their school peers and they recommended extending the research to include power between students and teachers. The appraisals of the teacher scrutinizers were similar. The final survey format follows.

4.9 Survey description: “Young People’s School Relationships” survey

The “Young People’s School Relationships” survey is a self-report instrument constructed specifically for the current study. It gathers qualitative and quantitative information on the nature of power between school-based adolescent peers. The
independent variables are scenario type (reflecting contextual power relations), gender (reflecting structural power), year group (reflecting hierarchical power), perceived power status (reflecting interpersonal power), and friendship closeness (reflecting relational power). The dependent variables are construct of personal and interpersonal power, perceptions of interpersonal difficulties with peers, types of responses to the difficulties, and the outcomes of the responses used to manage the difficulties.

The survey comprises three Parts (A, B, C). Part B is sub-divided into three sections, with a repeated structure containing three power-differentiated conditions based on perceptions of less, same, or higher power. The paper and pencil survey invites participants to respond in words or drawings to the given statements/questions. It is for administration with large or small groups of adolescents from Years 7 to 10 in a school setting and could take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

4.9.1 Survey: Part A

Part A is designed to collect demographic data on gender and year level, qualitative, informational data on the meaning of power, and quantitative, self-evaluative data on participants’ estimates of their personal and interpersonal power. Participants indicate their gender by circling the letter associated with the appropriate pictorial representation and their year level by circling the corresponding number. To expand theoretical knowledge about power, the survey asks participants to describe their understanding of personal and interpersonal power. After reading a statement about power, that “People talk about having power”, participants provide written or illustrated responses to two open-ended topics, “…what it means to have power within yourself….,” and “…what it means to have power between people…”.

The survey could establish a base line, in the form of a Global Power Score, against which to explore participants’ experiences of power. Participants rate their personal (“Within yourself”) and interpersonal (“Amongst your friends”, “Within your class”) power. Ratings are made on a five point Likert-type scale, from A=lots and lots of power through E=almost no power. The conversion of letter ratings into numbers allows for the formation of a Global Power Score (GPS) for each participant.

Part A identified participants’ understandings of power and established Global Power Scores. Consequently, Part A establishes two reference points that position the study and provide a framework for interpreting the data to be collected in Part B.
4.9.2 Survey: Part B

Part B is structured to collect data on three power-differentiated conditions: when participants perceived themselves as having more (‘more power’), the same (‘same power’), and less power (‘less power’) than a peer(s). It allows for the collection of qualitative data on what happened during each situation, how the participant handled it, and how he/she arrived at a perception of the power relationship. Part B also allows for the collection of quantitative, self-evaluative data on the outcomes of the responses used.

For consistency, one contextual framework and the same set of tasks are set for each power-differentiated condition. The contextual framework includes directions for: recall, situation, relationship, location, time frame, and power differential (“Remember the biggest problem between you and someone(s) your age at school this year when it seemed you had less/about the same/more power than the other person(s)”).

Under each condition, participants describe or draw first-hand accounts of interpersonal difficulties (“What happened during this problem was…”). Next, they describe or draw how they handled situations (“The things I did to handle the problem were…”). Finally, they explain in words or drawings their reasons for estimating the power differential (“I thought I had less/the same/more power because…”). This response assists with validating the perceived power differential.

By placing letters in the boxes provided, participants provide five types of ratings indicating the outcomes of the responses used. The outcome indicators include relationship closeness, perceived power differential, relationship status, affective intensity, and global evaluation. Relationship closeness is rated using a 4-point Likert-type scale, with A = Friends, Same group through D = Not friends, Different group. Subsequently, a 5-point Likert-type scale rates remaining items. Perceived power differential is rated from A = Lots & lots through E = Almost no (power). Affective intensity is rated from A = Very friendly through E = Very Angry. Relationship status is rated from A = Much better through E = Much worse. Global evaluation of handling is rated from A = Excellent through E = Poor. There is rating of relationship closeness, perceived power differential, and affective intensity during and after the situation. By rating these three indicators during and after the difficulty, participants can provide information on the dimension of change. For example, the survey leads into the affect indicator with the statement, “My feelings towards the other(s)…”.” It then explores the
possibility of changed affect through a rating task, “During the problem, I felt…towards the other(s). Now, I feel …towards the other(s)”. Ratings of change in the perceived power differential provide a second guide to validating the power-differentiated nature of the condition.

The outcome indicators include three global ratings. Affect, an indicator of affective response, is rated from A = *Very friendly* through E = *Very angry*. Relationship status, an indicator of interpersonal response, is encapsulated in the question, “How are things between you now?” with ratings ranging from A = *Much better* through E = *Much worse*. The other indicator, response appraisal, is an estimate of perceived effectiveness, “How do you think you handled the problem?” with ratings ranging from A = *Excellent* through E = *Poor*.

Part B establishes the framework for gathering the information that is central to the study. It enables participants to tell their stories of how they have managed an interpersonal difficulty arising within a power-differentiated relationship. Furthermore, it allows participants to share their reflections on the outcomes of their experiences.

### 4.9.3 Survey: Part C

Part C collects further qualitative information on the nature of power between adolescents, since additional ideas may arise from taking part in the survey. Participants can provide additional information by responding to an open-ended invitational statement, “These are some other things that I would like to say or draw about problems between people my age. Alternatively, these are some other ideas about good ways of handling problems. Or, these are some other ideas about power…”.

Part C establishes a framework for confirming some of the directions taken in the current study and for indicating directions for further explorations. It provides the opportunity for further insights into the role that power plays in adolescents’ interpersonal relationships and challenges the power differential between researcher and researched.

### 4.10 Survey: Measures

Typically, researchers studying power strategy usage in relationships have measured the frequency of strategy use and have explored the associations between
strategy use and variables, such as personality factors, power differentials, and relational context (Cowan et al., 1984; Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990). The findings of such research suggest that strategy popularity is partly a function of strategy effectiveness, albeit under prescribed conditions. In studies of bullying, researchers typically measure the comparative effects of agents’ choices of behaviour against intended targets. In such studies, there is measurement of a target's affective intensity and willingness to report agents’ specified behaviour (Rigby & Slee, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994).

Extending on these approaches, Ohbuchi and Kitanaka (1991) examined the effectiveness of power strategy choice by adolescents’ in interpersonal conflicts. They used three criteria for determining effectiveness from the target’s point of view: acceptability of the strategy, affective response, and evaluative response. They used factor analysis, followed by analysis of variance to explore the affective reactions and evaluative factor scores. They found that effective strategies were associated with less negative affect and more sociable evaluations. Using regression analysis, they investigated relationships between the variables. They found that negative affect contributed negatively to acceptability and that sociability contributed positively to acceptability.

An aim of the current study is to explore further the effects of response type usage with a view to better identifying the most effective ways that school-based adolescents respond to power-based difficulties with peers. The “Young People’s School Relationships” survey is designed to develop a theoretical and contextual framework within which to measure the effectiveness of participants’ choice of response types. To do this, the survey contains ratings of three effectiveness items. The items, as detailed above, are relationship status, affective intensity, and global evaluation of effectiveness. Types of responses and types of outcomes will be measured and compared (see sections 4.10, chapter 4 and 5.6, chapter 5).

4.11 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the procedures undertaken to link the theory with the study design. Having specified the aims and research questions, explained the research design, and described the survey construction procedures, the next chapter details the methodological procedures and processes.
CHAPTER 5: METHOD

5.1 Overview

This chapter has three sections. The first details the recruitment methods and describes how recruits were informed of the study, issues that arose in relation to the recruitment drive, and the participant sample. The second section describes the methods used to collect data for the study. Included in this section are descriptions of the materials used, the survey administration procedures, and the procedures for coding qualitative data. It also describes the qualitative and quantitative data collected. The final section details the preparation for data analysis and the statistical procedures for exploring and analysing the data.

5.2 Recruitment of participants: Overview

Recruitment took place in three stages. Stage 1 involved distributing information to people likely to be involved in the study, in either structural or participatory ways. This included school principals, staff members, students, and parents/guardians. Stage 2 involved participant recruitment. This involved addressing and reconciling issues that arose for students and adults in relation to voluntary, informed consent procedures. Stage 3 involved identifying the learning gained from the recruitment process.

5.2.1 Dissemination of information

Secondary school students were the study’s target group. The researcher approached the principals of two accessible schools: one single-sex girls’ high school and one co-educational high school to seek agreement to conduct research. The researcher provided the school principals with verbal and written accounts of the aims of the study, proposed procedures, possible outcomes, and ethics approval (presented in Appendix B). The principals provided written approval for the study to proceed.

The researcher held an information session for staff. The information covered the study’s aims, proposed measures, and procedures. She outlined the specific assistance sought from staff, the timeline for the study, and suggested responses in the unlikely event that any participant should become distressed during or after taking part
in the study. The researcher elicited teachers’ assistance in distributing information to, and collecting permission forms from, students. Information described the voluntary nature of staff and student participation. All staff members agreed to participate as requested.

The Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form was distributed to 98% of students in Years 7 to 10 and to their parent/guardian, with 2% declining to accept the Form. The high distribution appeared to be a function of teacher persistence and student interest. Of those who accepted forms, 42% were involved in the final sample.

5.2.2 Voluntary informed consent procedures

Parents and students were provided with information on the study’s aims, measures, procedures, and the assistance available in the unlikely event of any distress. Those students interested in participating in the study returned an Informed Consent Form signed by the student and his/her parent/guardian.

5.3 Recruitment issues: Overview

Issues raised by students and adults, the subsequent responses, and the rationales for responses are described below.

5.3.1 Recruitment issues and resolutions: Students

Class teachers indicated that most students understood the procedures for participation in the research. Some students sought further clarification regarding voluntariness, the necessity for signed informed consent, withdrawal at any time, and anonymity. Following advice provided by the researcher, class teachers reassured students that participation was voluntary, albeit appreciated and encouraged. Class teachers reiterated the option of withdrawal from or incompletion of the research at any time. Students would not miss any class work or activities by taking part in the research. There was reiteration of privacy and confidentiality. Class teachers reported an increase in student confidence with the reassurance that participation was voluntary, and that the information was confidential.
5.3.2 Recruitment issues: Adults

Some adults sought further clarification on voluntariness and consent, privacy, and use of research findings and negative affect. Voluntariness concerned the researcher’s dual role as researcher and school employee. Consent related to the availability of details on survey questions and participants’ possible affective responses. Privacy concerned the limits to confidentiality, since a conflict of interest could arise between the researcher’s research obligations and her responsibilities as a member of staff to provide a duty of care to participants. It was queried whether disclosure of information to a school principal concerning criminal activity or threat of harm could compromise the anonymity and confidentiality of a participant(s). Additional privacy issues concerned the group administration sessions and anonymity if a student became distressed or if there was peer pressure to disclose responses. Regarding the use of research findings, it was queried whether confidentiality and anonymity for a school and a year level would be protected.

5.3.3 Negotiated resolutions

Resolutions were negotiated by a school principal, a person with expertise in the principles of ethical research, and the researcher. There was agreement on balancing the need to provide more information with the need to avoid intimidating, confusing, or distressing parents/guardians and students. There was also agreement on balancing the need to conduct research with the need to protect the minors who were potential participants.

Parents/guardians and students who had provided written permission to participate received a follow-up letter (see Appendix C). The letter reiterated voluntariness, the withdrawal option, and clarified that permission to participate was an active not passive process. It outlined more fully the survey structure, topic areas, possible affective responses, research purposes, and pastoral/duty of care procedures. It advised parents/guardians and students on access to further information. The school principal and the researcher co-signed the letter. Following this letter, there was no withdrawal of previously given permission to participate and no further information was sought.
Through the consultation process, there was agreement on the unlikelihood of disclosure harmful or criminal information suggesting serious threat to safety. It was agreed that maintaining the confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity of participants would not compromise the researcher’s duty of care and ethical responsibilities. If students disclosed such information, advice would be made available generally about accessing assistance. The school principal believed that the dual role of researcher-employee did not cause conflict from the school’s perspective.

It was considered inappropriate to offer participants the opportunity to take the survey home since this could prohibit the asking of questions, reduce opportunity for observation of affective responses, and not necessarily increase privacy. Therefore, administration of the survey was organised to take place in a group setting and in a large enough area to provide participants with privacy.

By mutual agreement, the researcher withdrew the opportunity for individual school principals to receive general feedback. The researcher reiterated that if there was publication of findings global results would be presented. A statement to this effect was included in both the follow-up letter and Instruction Sheet.

The researcher informed the Principal of the second school of the issues raised, the content of the discussions, and the responses. No further action or changes needed to take place in the second school.

5.3.4 Recruitment: Finalisation

Class teachers compiled checklists of those who returned signed permission forms, including those who indicated that they did not give permission for participation. Checklists were available for students before survey administration, given the time lapse of two weeks after returning Informed Consent forms.

The recruitment process highlighted two important issues. Firstly, it reiterated the ethical soundness of the research study, as approved of by the University ethics committee. Secondly, it reinforced the need for ethical research principles to protect the well-being and rights of participants.
5.4 Data collection: Overview

There were four stages involved in the collection of data for the study. Firstly, a participant group was finalised. Secondly, participants completed a “Young People’s School Relationships” survey using specified survey administration procedures. This generated both qualitative and quantitative data. Thirdly, coding procedures were adopted for the qualitative data. The fourth stage involved using the scaling procedures employed by applying Falbo and Peplau (1980) when developing their multidimensional model of power strategy usage in interpersonal situations.

5.4.1 Participants

The study comprised a total sample size of 352 (61 males, 291 females) participants from two secondary schools in Melbourne, Victoria. Of these, there were 212 participants from a single sex girls’ school and 140 (61 males, 79 females) participants from a co-educational school. The only demographic information required for the study was gender and year level. The sample came from Year levels 7, 8, 9, and 10. For year 7, there were 15 males and 97 females. For year 8, there were 13 males and 98 females. For year 9, there were 21 males and 59 females. Year 10 comprised 12 males and 37 females. The large difference in group sizes suggests the need for caution in interpreting the results of gender analyses.

5.4.2 Materials

Respondents completed a survey titled, “Young People’s School Relationships” (see Appendix A). A detailed description of the survey was provided in chapter 4 (see section 4.9). In summary, the self-report survey contained three sections. Section A gathered information on participants’ gender, year level, understandings of personal and interpersonal power, and ratings of perceived personal and interpersonal power. In section B, participants recalled three power-differentiated situations: when they perceived themselves as having less, the same, and more power compared with the other(s). For each situation, participants described a recent difficulty with a peer, their method(s) of handling the difficulty, and their reasons for perceiving the power differential as they did. Participants completed five rating questions on the outcomes of
their response method(s). In Section C, participants added any further information concerning peer relationships, ways of handling difficulties, or the construct of power.

5.4.3 Survey administration

Survey administration areas enhanced privacy for participants and ensured minimum disruption to school activities. The survey was administered in Year level groups and took between approximately 40 minutes to complete. The researcher presented information visually (overheads) and orally on the purpose of the survey, freedom to withdraw, responding to the survey questions, and follow-up support. The researcher then presented the survey questions visually and orally, guiding participants through to completion.

Participants directed questions to the researcher or staff assistant. Participants handed in their surveys at the end of the administration period. In total, 352 participants attended the survey sessions and 352 participants completed surveys. All surveys were retained.

5.5 Coding procedures: Overview

The researcher transcribed all qualitative data and prepared it for coding. The qualitative data comprised information on the meanings of personal and interpersonal power, the types of problems experienced with peers, response strategies, cognitions about power differentials, and commentaries. Unless otherwise specified, qualitative data was analysed and coded using the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as described in chapter 4 (see section 4.4.2). Two independent raters coded a sample of all qualitative data, (see Appendices D, E, F for coding sheets). Sample size was set at 10%. Differences were resolved through discussion. Inter-rater agreements ranged from 88% to 100%. Individual reliability percentages and Cohen’s kappa coefficient are specified for each coding activity.

5.5.1 Coding: Meaning of power

Meanings of power (personal, interpersonal) were collated by similarity and discreteness, resulting in three themes. The first contained responses of an individualistic nature, such as, “I do the right thing”, “Standing up for myself”, “Know
where you are going”, “Having self-control”, “Being myself”, and “Risk-taking”. The second comprised responses that were more collaborative and included replies such as, “Be a leader”, “Consider others”, “Respect others”, and “Don’t dominate”. The third focused on other people and contained responses such as, “Tell others what to do”, “Angry, bitchy, mean”, “Someone is higher than you”, and “Control over others”.

The themes were examined in relation to the three main ways of constructing power (psychological, social psychological, feminist psychological). The first theme suggested that ‘power’ is a personal and internal construct. It approximated individual, drive orientated constructs (psychological) and empowerment (feminist post structural) constructs of power and was coded ‘power-within’. The second suggested that ‘power’ is relational and mutually satisfying. It approximated a collaborative (feminist post structural) construct of power and was coded ‘power-with’. The third theme suggested ‘power’ as hierarchical (social psychological) and based on domination and influence (psychological, feminist post structural). It was coded ‘power-over’.

A rating sample comprising 10% of responses represented each of the two forms of power (personal, interpersonal) equally. Inter-rater agreement reached 99% for coding of personal and of interpersonal power with Cohen’s kappa = .99. (See Appendix D for coding sheet.)

5.5.2 Coding: Interpersonal difficulties

The interpersonal difficulties described by participants were collated by similarity and discreteness, resulting in 10 themes. Two independent raters coded survey responses (see Appendix E for coding instructions). Subsequently, the interpersonal difficulty set comprised ten codes: ‘two-way physical’, ‘two-way verbal’, ‘two-way social’, ‘one-way physical’, ‘one-way verbal’, ‘one-way social’, ‘other-way physical’, ‘other-way verbal’, ‘other-way social’, and ‘third-party’. Sub groupings comprised forms of difficulty, representing the possible initiators (two-way, one-way, other-way, third party), and types of difficulty, representing the possible behavioural correlates (physical, verbal, social).

Two raters coded a sample of responses, comprising approximately 10% of responses drawn from within each of the three power-differentiated situations (less, same, more power). Inter-rater reliability reached 99% for each scenario, Cohen’s kappa = .99. Differences were resolved through discussion.
Table 5.1 presents the 10 modes of interpersonal difficulties with definitions and examples in the form of quotes taken directly from the survey data.
Table 5.1

*Modes of Interpersonal Difficulty by Description and Examples Using Direct Quotations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quoted examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-way physical</td>
<td>Both parties are reported using negative physical actions towards each other.</td>
<td>She pushed so I pushed her and then we started hitting each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way verbal</td>
<td>Both parties are reported using negative verbal exchanges.</td>
<td>An argument over ideas for school work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way social</td>
<td>Both parties are reported instigating a change or disruption to the relationship.</td>
<td>She was being annoying by disturbing me and when I told her to stop it she turned her back on me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way physical</td>
<td>The respondent reports the other(s) directing negative physical actions towards him/her.</td>
<td>The girl with the locker on top of me would not let me in to get my things, then I would be late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way verbal</td>
<td>The respondent reports the other(s) directing negative verbal communication towards him/her.</td>
<td>A boy said I would never have friends because I was a loner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way social</td>
<td>The respondent reports the other(s) instigating change or disruption to the established relationship.</td>
<td>She tries to push me out of the group I’m in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way physical</td>
<td>The respondent reports directing negative physical actions towards the other(s).</td>
<td>I stole something of his and he found out it was me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way verbal</td>
<td>The respondent reports directing negative verbal communication towards the other(s).</td>
<td>I told her no wonder she didn’t have any friends because she was just a bitch to everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way social</td>
<td>The respondent reports causing change or disruption to the established relationship.</td>
<td>I don’t want this boy to stay with us but he doesn’t go away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third party</td>
<td>The respondent reports voluntary or involuntary involvement in another(s) problem.</td>
<td>People were calling each other names</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 5.1, 10 modes of interpersonal difficulty emerged from the analysis of respondents’ portrayals of difficulties experienced that year with a peer(s). Descriptions demonstrated that differences between modes reflected respondents’ self-reports of the initiator of the difficulty and the behavioural correlates. The descriptions indicated that all reported behaviours were negative. The table shows that the respondent was directly involved in every mode of difficulty with the exception of the third party mode.

The initiator of the difficulty was the respondent, the other(s), or mutual. The forms comprised ‘two-way’ (mutually directed), ‘one-way’ (directed by the other towards respondent), ‘other-way’ (directed by respondent towards the other), and ‘third-party’ (not directed to or by the agent) difficulties. Third party referred to difficulties that directly involved a friend(s) and indirectly involved the respondent. It included responses such as, “Friend had problems and I stuck with her cause (sic) she was sad”, “I let them have their way and I didn’t get a say”, and “Our group split up and I was stuck in the middle”.

Behavioural correlates comprised physical, verbal, and social interactions. The two-way difficulty form comprised behaviours such as, “Myself and a friend had a bit of a physical fight” (physical), “We had an argument about something” (verbal), and “I hate this girl and she tries to act smart to me” (social). The one-way form included behaviours such as, ”Someone was ‘accidentally’ hurting me, physically” (physical), “These girls bagged me about this boy I liked” (verbal), and “One of my friends went off with the boy who wasn’t talking to me” (social). The one-way form included “I pulled the chair away and he got really mad and we had a punch-on” (physical), “I told him that if he didn’t back off, I’d tell my cousins and they’d stop him for sure” (verbal), and “I just ignored her and she just started shouting at me until my friends helped me” (social). There were no behavioural correlates specified for the third party mode.

5.5.3 Coding: Ways of handling interpersonal difficulties

The 21-item strategy set used by Ohbuchi and Yamamoto (1990) to indicate adolescents’ methods for managing interpersonal difficulties was used to code the data in the current study. Two raters reached agreement on 78% of the sampled data. Raters resolved differences through discussion and further clarification of item meanings.
However, only 47% of the total data matched items in the strategy set. This was insufficient for the set to be a reliable reflection of the data.

Ohbuchi and Yamamoto (1990) did not provide definitions or examples of strategies in their study. Therefore, comparable strategy sets used in previous studies (Cowan et al., 1980; Falbo, 1977; Falbo & Peplau, 1980), which contained item definitions and examples formed the basis for examination of the strategy set in the current study. Ohbuchi and Yamamoto’s set contained two items with similar meanings (criticism and violence) and nineteen items with semantic similarity to those in comparable studies (anger, asking, assertion, bargaining, coercion, compromise, crying, deception, detour, impression management, ingratiating, laissez-faire, persuasion, sadness, seeking support, suggesting, supplicating, threat, withdrawal). The current study retained 20 of these items and omitted detour, which did not share semantic closeness with previously identified strategies and could not be readily defined.

Two raters used the revised 20-item coding scheme to recode the data. This resulted in rater agreement reaching 88% but only 47% of responses were codable. Eight items (bargaining, supplicating, coercion, suggesting, deception, criticism, sadness, crying) failed to meet Falbo and Peplau’s (1980) inclusion criterion that strategies accruing less than five uses would not be included. The remaining 14 items coded only 45% of responses. Thus, Ohbuchi and Yamamoto’s (1990) coding scheme did not adequately match the current data.

An inductive approach was used to develop a coding scheme for the current study. Responses were collated according to similarity and discreteness. Comparisons of units of meaning and a series of filtering strategies resulted in the emergence of 16 themes. Five of these (asking, asserting, talking, persuading, withdrawing) were named according to semantic and thematic closeness with previously described items (Cowan et al., 1984; Falbo, 1977; Falbo & Peplau, 1980). The remaining 11 themes (adjusting, avoiding, coaching, disclosing, disengaging, ignoring, negative affect, reconciling, regulating, retaliating, welcoming) were named according to their thematic content. Items coded as negative affect were not included because another section of the survey covered affective response. This process resulted in a 15-item response set.

A coding scheme with definitions and examples of items was developed for this 15-item response set (see Appendix F). Two independent raters applied the newly developed coding scheme to the data. The coding scheme allowed for the coding of resulted in 100% of responses. Inter-rater agreement was 96%. Raters resolved
differences in ratings through discussion and further clarification of item meanings. Table 5.2 presents the 15-item response set representing the types of strategies described by respondents.
Table 5.2

Definitions and Quoted Examples of the 15 Response Types Used to Code Answers to “The things I did to handle the problem were...”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quoted examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting</td>
<td>Letting go, establishing a new outlook or friendship</td>
<td>I just tried to get on with my life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I just forgot about her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking</td>
<td>Making a simple request</td>
<td>I asked her what I did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I asked her not to do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asserting</td>
<td>Forcefully asserting one’s way</td>
<td>I told them I didn’t want to get involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I stood up for myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Keeping out of the way, removing physical presence</td>
<td>I stayed as far away as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I didn’t look at her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>Talking oneself through the situation</td>
<td>I changed the problem around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It’s not the end of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosing</td>
<td>Telling a third party, confiding in another(s)</td>
<td>I told my parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I talked to the counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengaging</td>
<td>Refusing to do, think, or say anything about the situation</td>
<td>I didn’t really do anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignoring</td>
<td>Giving them no attention, overlooking</td>
<td>I just let it fade away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuading</td>
<td>Simple statements about using persuasion, convincing, or coaxing</td>
<td>I tried to make the person believe me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I didn’t listen to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciling</td>
<td>Restoring the relationship by making up, apologizing, or compromising</td>
<td>I tried to get them to talk to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I apologized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We just went and had a picnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulating</td>
<td>Choosing how to behave, using self-control</td>
<td>I tried not to get embarrassed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I took it slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliating</td>
<td>Seeking revenge or retribution through physical or verbal means</td>
<td>I did to him what he did to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I called her a slut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking</td>
<td>Discussing the matter, engaging in conversation about the matter</td>
<td>I talked it over with him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I talked out the problem with her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming</td>
<td>Acting positively towards the other party, encouraging, inviting</td>
<td>I smiled at her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I started being nicer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawing</td>
<td>Withdrawing affection, growing silent, becoming cold and distant</td>
<td>I didn’t hang round them again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I stopped talking to them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5.4 Scaling procedures

It was anticipated that a multidimensional scaling procedure (MDS) could identify the response dimensions. Takane, Young, and de Leeuw (1977) developed the procedure to analyse individual differences between ratings of nonmetric data. The procedure collects data generated by volunteers who rate the similarity of pairs of items. The data is statistically analysed using the MDS procedure, which represents graphically the closeness between response types. The results allow for the construction of multidimensional models of nonmetric variables. Falbo (1977) and Falbo and Peplau (1980) used this approach to derive multidimensional models of power strategies used in social and intimate relationships respectively.

To test for a model of power response types used by adolescents in interactions with peers, the current study replicates the MDS procedures adopted by previous researchers (Falbo, 1977; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Takane et al., 1977). A group of three academic psychologists and seven school psychologists provided the data for the MDS analysis. The participating psychologists received with an information kit containing a letter detailing the study, an instruction sheet, a table regarding the response types, and a rating matrix (see Appendix D). They rated the similarity of each response type to every other response type using a 10-point scale. The scale ranged from 0 = No resemblance to 9 = Almost identical.

5.6 Data analysis: Overview

Data preparation and analysis procedures are outlined below.

5.6.1 Data preparation: Demographic information

Participants circled the letter that indicated their gender. Letters were changed into numbers so that A = 1 and B = 2. Circling one of the four numbers ranging from 7 through 10 indicated Year level. Recoding of the numbers resulted in Year 7 = 1, Year 8 = 2, Year 9 = 3 and Year 10 = 4.
5.6.2 Data preparation: Meanings of power, interpersonal difficulties, and responses

The coded power meanings, interpersonal difficulty modes, and responses were numbered and recorded, allowing for the generation of descriptive statistics.

5.6.3 Data preparation: Global Power Score

Letter responses to rating questions about perceptions of personal and interpersonal power were converted into numbers ranging from A = 5 through E = 1. This allowed for the computation of a Global Power Score for each participant, arrived at by adding the three scores within this scale. Scores ranged from 15 through 3, with high scores indicating higher estimates of perceived power and low scores indicating lower estimates of perceived power. The scores are distributed normally. However, the scale has low internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient reported of .60.

5.6.4 Data preparation: Outcomes

The letters assigned to response options for the three outcome questions were numbered, ranging from A = 5 through E = 1.

5.7 Data analysis: Overview

As described below, three data analysis methods used with the survey data.

5.7.1 Data analysis: Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic data, meanings of power, modes of interpersonal difficulty, the types of responses used by participants to handle the interpersonal difficulties, and the outcomes.
5.7.2 Data analysis: Multidimensional scaling

The ALSCAL programme of multidimensional scaling (MDS) procedures, as specified by Falbo (1977), was used to analyse the ratings of similarity data generated in the current study. The ALSCAL approach involves using a nonmetric individual difference model of MDS and is appropriate since the data to be analysed is interval. The ALSCAL approach accounts for individual differences between raters’ ratings by rescaling data separately using weighted Euclidean measures.

5.7.3 Data analysis: Comparative and exploratory statistics

Cross tabulations and Chi-square procedures were used to explore the categorical data, with residuals used to interpret the direction of significant differences. These statistics allowed for comparisons between the meanings of power, types of interpersonal difficulty, types of response with gender, and year grouping for each power-differentiated situation. One-way between-groups Analysis of Variance with LSD post hoc tests explored the continuous data. These procedures compared the categorical data and Global Power Scores and outcome variables (affect, relationship, evaluation) for each power-differentiated situation, as appropriate. Repeated measures ANOVAs compared responses and outcomes across power scenarios.

5.7.4 Data analysis: Across and within groups analyses

There are four dependent variables (Global Power Score, understanding of power, interpersonal difficulty, response, and outcome) and five independent variables (power scenario, gender, year group, and closeness). Power scenario, gender, year group, and closeness represent situational, structural, social, and relational approaches to constructing the phenomenon of power. Data was analysed across power scenarios (less, same, more) to investigate scenario (situational) effects on types of difficulty, response, and outcome, as relevant. The data represents at least once instance of the type of difficulty, response, or outcome rather than the frequency of the variables. Data was also analysed within power scenarios (less, same, more) to investigate the effects of gender (structural), year group (social), and closeness (relational) on types of difficulty, response, and outcome.
5.8 Chapter 5: Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology and procedures undertaken to gather a participant base, administer the survey instrument, generate and prepare data, and plan the data analysis. The following chapter will detail the results.
CHAPTER 6: RESULTS

6.1 Overview

SPSS for Windows (SPSS Inc. Release 11.00) was used to analyse the data in the current study. The results address the five research questions and accompanying focus questions (see section 4.3, chapter 4). There were a large number of analyses conducted. This required a strict level of power to limit the possibility of significance by chance. Therefore, an alpha level of .01 was set for all analyses.

The independent variables in this study were scenario type (reflecting context), perceived power (reflecting structural and/or hierarchical power), gender (reflecting structural power), year group (reflecting hierarchical power), and friendship closeness (reflecting relationship power). The effects of these variables on young people’s understanding of power, perception of interpersonal difficulties with peers, responses to those difficulties, and outcomes of those responses were evaluated. Other dependent variables such as social class or school-type could have been assessed but it was considered beyond the scope of the study. In particular, an assessment of social class through geographical location of school was considered too limited. In addition, an assessment of the role of school type (co-educational versus single sex) would also have been limited by the lack of a male single sex school in the sample, and the contamination of the school type variable with social class.

To allow for statistical comparisons, the four year levels (7, 8, 9, 10) were collapsed into two year groups (7/8, 9/10). Year group 7/8 represents the junior years of secondary school and year group 9/10 represents the middle years. Data on participants’ responses to why they thought they had less, the same, or more power (an aspect of Part B) and free responses (Part C) on the topic of power (see the “Young People’s School Relationships” survey, Appendix A) were not analysed.

6.2 Research question one: What do adolescents understand by ‘power’?

Respondents described what it means to have ‘power within yourself’ (personal power) and ‘power between people’ (interpersonal power). Differences between understandings of power for gender and year group were explored.
6.2.1 What do adolescents understand by ‘power’ when they are asked to describe what it means to have ‘power within yourself’, and ‘power between people’?

The descriptive data was content analysed using the grounded theory method (see section 4.4.2, chapter 4). This led to the identification of three thematic explanations of power: power-within, power-with, and power-over. Themes paralleled the explanations of power described within the fields of developmental, social, and feminist psychology (see chapter 2). ‘Power-within’ data suggested the internal drive approaches described in developmental psychology. ‘Power-with’ data pointed to collective, collaborative, and mutual understandings of power, as demonstrated in feminist post structural approaches. ‘Power-over’ data equated power with domination, oppression, and exploitation, paralleling social psychological and feminist structural approaches to the phenomenon.

Two independent raters coded survey responses according to the three thematic constructions of power: power-within, power-with, and power-over (see Appendix D). Inter-rater reliability reached 99%. Differences were resolved through discussion. Table 6.1 presents the three power categories with descriptions and examples quoted directly from survey responses (for both personal and interpersonal) power. The number of respondents who used each description at least once is also given.
Table 6.1

*Descriptions of Power Category and Examples for Personal and Interpersonal Power*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quoted examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power-within</td>
<td>Actions, relationships, and attributes that are self-directed, self-generating, and for which the individual takes personal responsibility.</td>
<td>To do what you think is right and not let anyone push you around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(n = 278)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>To be able to have a say in things with people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-with</td>
<td>Actions, relationships, and attributes that based on mutuality, collaboration, and interconnectedness.</td>
<td>Together having the strength to do hard things and be civilised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(n = 155)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>To trust and show respect for each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-over</td>
<td>Actions, relationships, and attributes that are self-generating, directed against others, and involving domination and control.</td>
<td>One could be higher or stronger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(n = 139)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Someone seeing another person feel small and helpless.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 shows the category descriptions that resulted from analysing respondents’ explanations of personal and interpersonal power. Category descriptions demonstrate that the young people constructed power as behaviours, relationships, and attributes directed towards particular personal and/or interpersonal goals. The power-within category indicates that respondents understood power as prosocial and directed towards personal empowerment and autonomy. The power-with category suggests that power involves mutually enhancing ways of relating, whereby group skills and abilities are used prosocially for the common good. The power-over category suggests that power involves antisocial, destructive ways of relating that use domination to control or diminish others.

Table 6.1.1 presents respondents’ descriptions of personal power by year group and gender.
Table 6.1.1

*Descriptions of Personal Power by Year Group and Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Power-within</th>
<th>Power-with</th>
<th>Power-over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Group 7-8</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>To ignore other people who trouble you</td>
<td>That you can be a leader and treat your friends properly</td>
<td>Controlling other people and having rights to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>To not be afraid to speak up and make your own decisions</td>
<td>I can stand up for myself and other people</td>
<td>Having a lot of control over people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Group 9-10</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>To be able to hold your own, think &amp; act for yourself</td>
<td>People respect you and look up to you</td>
<td>To be stronger than someone else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>To have confidence and feel good about what I do</td>
<td>Respect from peers and adults</td>
<td>I feel that power is about people who are more popular at school who thinks there better than everyone else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1.1 shows variation in the descriptions of personal power across the three power categories.

Table 6.1.2 presents respondents’ descriptions of personal power by year group and gender.
Table 6.1.2

*Descriptions of Interpersonal Power by Year Group and Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Power-within</th>
<th>Power-with</th>
<th>Power-over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Group 7-8</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>To control your body</td>
<td>To work as one, to use both ideas for anything to make one big plan</td>
<td>Controlling other people and having rights to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>To have confidence around others. It is the way in which you act with others</td>
<td>An understanding of each other</td>
<td>To be able to control what everyone does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Group 9-10</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No shame, not hesitant, acting the way you want to, expressing your true self</td>
<td>To trust and show respect for each other</td>
<td>That you are somehow intimidating mentally/physically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>To be able to stand up for yourself and friends and tell people who you are</td>
<td>The ability to share your strength with others and for them to do the same</td>
<td>That you have a certain advantage over them. You’re more superior than they are and more intimidating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1.1 shows variation in the descriptions of personal power across the three power categories.
6.2.2 Do adolescents’ constructions of personal and interpersonal power differ?

The power categories were explored to examine whether respondents used different categories to describe personal and interpersonal power. Table 6.2 gives the percentages of responses for each of the three categories of power by the personal and interpersonal power kinds.

Table 6.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power category</th>
<th>Power-within</th>
<th>Power-with</th>
<th>Power-over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>81 (n = 274)</td>
<td>8 (n = 27)</td>
<td>11 (n = 39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>15 (n = 46)</td>
<td>44 (n = 138)</td>
<td>41 (n = 128)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 6.2, respondents used different categories to describe personal and interpersonal power. Not surprisingly, respondents tended to describe personal power as power-within. They tended to describe interpersonal power as either power-with or power-over.

The categories used to describe personal and interpersonal power were explored further. Table 6.3 gives the frequencies of responses for each of the three categories by the two power kinds (personal, interpersonal). Chi-square tests assessed whether there were power kind differences in the categories of power.
Table 6.3

*Frequency of Power Category by Power Kinds (Personal, Interpersonal)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal power category</th>
<th>Interpersonal power category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power-within</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-within</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-with</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-over</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N = 310*

As shown in Table 6.3, descriptions of power were spread unevenly across the three power categories. There were category differences for descriptions of personal and interpersonal power. There were significant kind differences on category of power, with $\chi^2 (4, 310) = 22.35, p < .01$. Respondents who described interpersonal power as power-over compared with other categories were significantly more likely to also describe personal power as power-over.

6.2.3 *Is there a relationship between gender or year group (7/8, 9/10) and adolescents’ understandings of personal or interpersonal power?*

The relationships between respondents’ constructions of power and their gender and year group were investigated. Response frequencies for each of the three power categories within the two power kinds were calculated in relation to gender and year group (7/8, 9/10). Chi-square tests assessed whether there were gender or year group differences in category of power. Table 6.4 presents the results.
As shown in Table 6.4, respondents’ understandings of power did not differ significantly with year group. Nor did their understandings of interpersonal power with gender. However, there were significant gender differences on category of personal power. Chi-square results indicated that females were significantly more likely than males to describe personal power as power-within, and somewhat less likely than males to describe personal power as power-over. The results indicated that differences between perceptions of categories of power related to gender and not year group.

6.2.4 Research question one: Findings

Overall, it was possible to categorise participants’ meanings of power in ways consistent with existing theoretical approaches to the phenomenon. They differentiated between the meanings of power, demonstrating connections between personal power and the power-within category, and between interpersonal power and the power-within category. There was a more even spread between the power-with and power-over categories for both power kinds. Females were more likely than males to describe
personal power as power-within. Year group did not contribute to differences in descriptions of power.

6.3 Research question two: How do adolescents rate their perceptions of their power?

To investigate whether adolescents perceived that they had different access to power, they rated their perceived personal power and interpersonal power relative to their friends and classmates.

6.3.1 How do adolescents rate their perceived power?

Respondents’ Global Power Scores (GPSs) were calculated. The results showed scores ranging from the highest possible GPS of 15 \( (n = 13) \) to the lowest possible GPS of 3 \( (n = 1) \). Calculation of the GPSs indicated that scores tended towards the highest rather than lowest possible perceived power level \( (M = 11.00, SD = 2.10, N = 352) \). The results suggested that the group was quite robust in terms of perceived power and the range suggested that group members had differential access to power.

6.3.2 Is there a relationship between Global Power Score and understandings of personal or interpersonal power, gender or year group (7/8, 9/10)?

Respondents’ GPSs were related to their understanding of power and to their gender and year group. Table 6.5 shows the mean GPSs for each of the subgroups of power and for gender and year group (7/8, 9/10). One-way ANOVA tests compared each of the power categories, gender, and year group with respect to their mean GPSs.
Table 6.5

Descriptive Statistics for Category of Power, Gender, and Year Group by Mean Global Power Scores (GPSs), and One-way ANOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>GPS</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal power (N = 340)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-within</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>10.91</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-with</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11.48</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-over</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2, 339</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal power (N = 312)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-within</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-with</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>11.04</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-over</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>10.77</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2, 311</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (N = 352)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>10.86</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1, 351</td>
<td>7.62*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year group (N = 352)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/8</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>11.14</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>10.76</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1, 351</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 6.5, there were no differences between the three categories of perceived power on mean GPS, or between year groups on mean GPS. Results showed that males had a significantly higher mean GPS than females, suggesting that gender might play a role in adolescents’ perceived access to power. However, the results need to be interpreted with caution because groups are not balanced.

6.3.3 Research question two: Findings

Overall, the young people rated their perceived power quite positively, with differences related to gender but not to year group or power construction.
6.4 Research question three: How do adolescents describe their interpersonal difficulties with peers?

This question investigated the difficulties that respondents reported experiencing with their peers. Difficulties were examined across and within perceived power scenarios. A preliminary check that scenarios were in fact power-differentiated investigated respondents’ ratings of their perceptions of their own and other(s) power during the difficulties. Paired samples t-tests evaluated the impact of power differential (less, same, more) on ratings of perceived power. Table 6.6 presents these results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Own power</th>
<th>Other’s power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01.

The results in Table 6.6 indicate that in the less power scenario participants did indeed perceive their own power as significantly less than the power of the others. In the same power scenario, participants rated their own and others’ power equally and in the more power scenario, participants viewed their own power as significantly greater than that of the others. These results show that respondents differentiated between perceptions of own and others’ power as the survey instructed.

6.4.1 What are the most effective descriptive categories for the different types of interpersonal difficulties that young people encounter with their peers?

Respondents described three difficult interpersonal encounters with peers during the previous six months. They were asked to differentiate the true to life scenarios based on perceived power relations. They described situations in which they perceived the
power balance as favourable to the other(s) (scenario 1), balanced (scenario 2), and tipped in their own favour (scenario 3).

The researcher content analysed descriptive data on interpersonal difficulties using the grounded theory method (see section 5.5.2, chapter 5). This resulted in the emergence of ten modes of interpersonal difficulties: two-way physical, two-way verbal, two-way social, one-way physical, one-way verbal, one-way social, other-way physical, other-way verbal, other-way social, and third party. Subgroups of initiators (two-way, one-way, other-way, third party) and behaviours (physical, verbal, social) were labelled forms and types of interpersonal difficulties respectively (see chapter 5, p. 108 for definitions).

6.4.2 **Do the categories of interpersonal difficulty differ between or within power scenarios (less, same, more)?**

Differences in modes of interpersonal difficulty were explored across and within the power scenarios. The frequencies of each of the 10 modes of interpersonal difficulty for each of the three power scenarios are given in Table 6.7.
### Table 6.7

*Percentages of Interpersonal Difficulty Modes by Power Scenario*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Power scenario</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>More</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way physical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way verbal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way social</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way physical</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way verbal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way social</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way physical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way verbal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way social</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third party</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 6.7, the most frequent types of interpersonal difficulties were one-way social (a peer or peers behaving toward the student in a manner perceived as anti-social) with one-way and two-way verbal difficulties also frequent (for example, name calling or arguments). Physical interactions were rare in the reported difficulties, as were other-way’ interactions (the student initiating the interaction with peer/s).

Comparing scenarios, it could be seen that within the less power scenario, there were relatively higher percentages reported for one-way interactions, especially social and verbal, that is, participants saw themselves as the ‘victims’ of others’ behaviour. Within the same power scenario, two-way interactions were common, suggesting the recognition of more equal access to power, although there was also a reasonably high percent of one-way social and verbal difficulties. The more power scenarios included higher percentages of ‘other-way’ difficulties, that is those arising from action on the part of the student respondent, but the percent of these was still low in comparison with two-way interactions and those in which a peer or peers were the initiator (one-way).
These results provided some indications of possible connections between adolescents’ power relations and the modes of interpersonal difficulty that they encountered. Understandably, the young people reported mutually initiated difficulties most frequently when they perceived power as balanced and other-initiated difficulties most frequently when they perceived power as balanced against them. It was not surprising for the reporting of a higher percentage of self-initiated difficulties when respondents perceived themselves as being at a power advantage. The young people consistently reported more social than verbal behaviours and only those who perceived a personal power advantage more frequently reported physical behaviours.

It was not possible to examine the gender and year differences for modes of interpersonal difficulty because the numbers per category were small and a large number of Chi-squares could have increased the possibility of Type 1 errors. Therefore, it was decided to explore the modes more closely by forming two sub-groups based on initiator (two-way, one-way, other-way) and behaviour (physical, verbal, social). There was no further exploration of the third party mode because it did not have behavioural correlates.

The frequencies of responses for each of the three forms and three types of interpersonal difficulty for the three power-differentiated scenarios were calculated. Table 6.8 presents the results in percentages.
Table 6.8

*Percentage Frequency of Interpersonal Difficulty Form and Type by Power-differentiated Scenario*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power-differentiated scenario</th>
<th>Less %</th>
<th>Same %</th>
<th>More %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty Form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way (Peer-initiated)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way (Self-initiated)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.8 clarifies the trends indicated in the previous table. Peer-initiated difficulties were most common when young people perceived they were in lower power situations. In balanced power situations, young people saw the difficulties relating to two-way interactions. Even in situations in which young people saw themselves as having more power, they viewed difficulties as arising mostly from others or from two-way interactions, however there was a greater acknowledgement of personal initiation of these difficulties. Overall, self-initiated difficulties were not perceived as commonly as other forms.

Table 6.8 also shows that social behaviours were most frequently reported. Comparing scenarios, there were relatively more social behaviours reported in the less power scenario, relatively more verbal behaviours in the same power scenario, and
relatively more physical behaviours in the more power scenario. The results suggested that irrespective of the power relations, social, and verbal behaviours characterised young people’s interactions.

Examination of the young people’s interpersonal difficulties pointed to some possible connections between power relations and the nominated initiator and the behaviours that shaped the interaction. The young people assigned mutual responsibility more frequently when there was a perceived power balance and they took responsibility themselves more frequently when they perceived an unequal power balance in their favour. There was more frequent reporting of the more complex (arguably) social behaviours irrespective of the perceived power relationship. There was consistently less reporting of physical behaviours, which only featured more prominently when the young people perceived themselves as having more power.

6.4.3 Is there a relationship within power scenarios (less, same more) between gender, year group (7/8, 9/10), or closeness (not friends, friends) with categories of interpersonal difficulty?

Differences in relation to gender (structural), year group (social), and closeness (relational) variables were examined within scenarios with respect to the form and category variables. The following tables (6.9 – 6.11) present these results.

Table 6.9 indicates the response frequencies with associated Chi-square tests for each of the three forms and three types of interpersonal difficulty for the three power scenarios by gender.
As shown in Table 6.9, there were no significant differences between males and females in form of interpersonal difficulty described, for any of the three power scenarios. However, there were significant gender differences on type of interpersonal difficulty for each scenario. Chi-square tests indicated that, in the less and more power scenarios, females were significantly more likely than males to report experiencing the social type, and somewhat less likely to report the physical and verbal types. In the same power scenario, males compared with females were significantly more likely to report experiencing the physical type. It seemed that when there was an imbalance of power, females more so than males described social behaviours as the source of their interpersonal difficulties. This suggested that social behaviours might operate differently according to the perceived power relationship. The relative frequency of physical, verbal and social difficulties showed less variation for males than females in each scenario.
Table 6.10 indicates the response frequencies and associated Chi-squares tests for each of the three forms and three types of interpersonal difficulty for the three power scenarios by year group.

Table 6.10

*Frequency of Interpersonal Difficulty Form and Type by Year Group Within Power-differentiated Scenarios, and Chi-square Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Less Power</th>
<th>Same Power</th>
<th>More Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way</td>
<td>52 32</td>
<td>74 54</td>
<td>41 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way</td>
<td>130 69</td>
<td>69 24</td>
<td>61 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way</td>
<td>10 6</td>
<td>12 8</td>
<td>19 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (2, 299)</td>
<td>= .32</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (2, 241)</td>
<td>= 6.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>12 6</td>
<td>17 5</td>
<td>19 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>63 43</td>
<td>57 48</td>
<td>34 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>117 58</td>
<td>81 33</td>
<td>68 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (2, 299)</td>
<td>= 1.63</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (2, 241)</td>
<td>= 8.47 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .01$

As shown in Table 6.10, there were no significant differences between year groups on form of interpersonal difficulty for any of the power-differentiated scenarios. However, significant year group differences were indicated on type of interpersonal difficulty for the same power-differentiated scenarios. Chi-square tests indicated that, in the same power scenario, younger students were significantly more likely than older students to report experiencing the physical type.

Table 6.11 indicates the response frequencies, with associated Chi-square tests, for each of the forms and types of interpersonal difficulty for the three power scenarios by relationship closeness.
Table 6.11

*Frequency of Interpersonal Difficulty Form and Type by Closeness Within Power-differentiated Scenarios, and Chi-square Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Less Power</th>
<th>Same Power</th>
<th>More Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Friends</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Not Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \chi^2 ) (2, 290) = 1.08</td>
<td>( \chi^2 ) (2, 231) = .99</td>
<td>( \chi^2 ) (2, 185) = 2.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \chi^2 ) (2, 290) = 2.37</td>
<td>( \chi^2 ) (2, 231) = 2.89</td>
<td>( \chi^2 ) (2, 185) = 6.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 6.11, there were no significant differences on form or type of interpersonal difficulty for any of the power-differentiated scenarios, based on whether the persons in the described scenarios were friends or not friends. It appeared that friendship closeness was not associated with the type or form of interpersonal difficulties experienced.

6.4.4 Research question three: Findings

Summarising, the difficulties encountered by the respondents were categorised into 10 modes, nine of which comprised initiator (form) and behaviour (type) features. There was preliminary evidence of variation in the forms and types of difficulties across and within power-differentiated scenarios. The results suggested that closer analysis across scenarios with gender and year group could further clarify the relationship between situational (scenario), structural (gender), social (year group), and relational (closeness) variables on differences in type of interpersonal difficulty (using the full set
of categories, rather than the summarised set). However, without further reduction the size of the difficulty set was too large to make valid comparisons. Therefore, the modes were grouped into form and type of difficulty.

Further examination showed that the forms of difficulty did not vary with gender, year group or relationship closeness. However, within power scenarios type differences related to gender and year group but not to closeness. When there was a perceived power balance, males and younger students were more likely to report physical behaviours. By contrast, when there was a perceived power imbalance (less, more), female students were more likely to report social behaviours.

6.5. Research question four: How do adolescents describe their methods of handling the interpersonal difficulties

This question aimed to investigate the responses that adolescents used to handle interpersonal difficulties with peers.

6.5.1 What is the most effective way of categorising the descriptions of the response methods used to handle interpersonal difficulties?

Coding of the response methods respondents used to handle interpersonal difficulties resulted in the identification of 15 categories: adjusting, asking, asserting, avoiding, coaching, discussing, disengaging, ignoring, persuading, reconciling, regulating, retaliating, talking, welcoming, and withdrawing responses. (For definitions, see chapter 5, p. 108.)

Preliminary investigation of the 15 response items was conducted across and within the three power scenarios. Students could use more than one response method. The frequency of items is reported as a percentage of the total number of responses made. Table 6.12 presents the results.
As shown in Table 6.12, there was variation in the pattern of response items across and within power-differentiated scenarios. Across scenarios, the percentages for retaliating decreased from the more to the same to the less power scenarios, whilst percentages for adjusting, coaching, and ignoring decreased from the less to the same and to the more power scenarios. Percentages for persuading and welcoming were highest in the same power compared with less and more power scenarios. Within scenarios, where respondents perceived the power balance as less favourable, they reported more disclosing, ignoring, and talking than other responses. By contrast, when respondents perceived the power balance as more favourable, their strategy use ranged from retaliating to persuading, adjusting, asking, and avoiding. In situations of
perceived power balance, more retaliating, talking, welcoming, and disclosing strategies were preferred. These findings showed a mixed pattern of responses, requiring further analysis for trends to be identified more clearly.

Reduction of the 15 categories of participants’ responses to the interpersonal difficulties (response items) was necessary to ensure sufficient statistical power for further analyses. The multidimensional scaling procedure (MDS) described by Falbo and Peplau (1980) was attempted in order to reduce the data inductively. The MDS procedure allowed for the calculation and analysis of similarity ratings of pairs of response items (see section 5.5.4, chapter 5). Ten raters rated the thematic similarity of the 105 pairs of response items. Raters indicated their perception of the similarity between items by rating pairs of items on a 10-point scale ranging from 0 (no resemblance, that is, the two response items were not at all alike) to 9 (almost identical, that is, the two response items were almost the same). Using the MDS procedure, the agreement between raters on the similarity of item pairs was calculated. The procedure accounted for the anticipated difference between raters’ judgements about the meaning of the items and their use of the scale.

Preliminary analysis of the results showed that for the 105 item pairs, there were 4 pairs for which the difference between raters’ ratings of the similarity of items was 1 (indicating high agreement), and there were 8 item pairs for which the difference between raters’ ratings was 9 (indicating low agreement). The median difference between raters’ ratings of the similarity of item pairs was six, indicating low agreement between raters on the similarity of items. These results indicated that there was high disagreement between raters on the meaning of items. Furthermore, the matrix’s reliability coefficient, measured as Cronbach’s alpha, was low at .65.

The multidimensional scaling procedure produced a matrix of similarity ratings of response items. One-, two, and three-dimensional solutions were compared. Figure 6.1 presents the matrix representing the raters’ judgements about the similarity between the response items.
Figure 6.1 Euclidean distance model of response ratings

Key: adju = adjusting, ask = asking, ass = asserting, avoid = avoiding, coach = coaching, disc = discussing, diseng = disengaging, ignor = ignoring, per = persuading, recon = reconciling, regul = regulating, retal = retaliating, talk = talking, wel = welcoming, withd = withdrawing.

As shown in Figure 6.1, the multidimensional scaling procedure (MDS) resulted in the generation of a two dimensional solution, which accounted for 96% of the variance in ratings of similarity for pairs of response items. The dimensions were labelled ‘flexibility’ and ‘sociability’. These reflected the relative positioning of pairs within the MDS space. The vertical dimension generally comprised responses that indicated willingness to work through the difficulty and the horizontal dimension generally comprised responses that indicated engagement with the other(s) in managing the difficulty. Flexible responses ranged from those high on flexibility (e.g. adjusting, regulating) to those low on flexibility (e.g. ignoring, withdrawing). Sociable responses ranged from those high on sociability (e.g. talking, persuading) to those low on sociability (e.g. avoiding, disengaging).

However, some responses did not readily fit the dimensions. For example, disengaging, or removing oneself from the difficulty, appeared closer thematically to avoiding, withdrawing, and ignoring than to the adjusting response. Welcoming appeared closer to reconciling, which is behavioural, than to persuading, asking, and
asserting, which have verbal components. The high disagreement in the raters’ meanings of items, the low reliability coefficient, and thematic inconsistencies suggested threats to the validity of the results. Thus, this data reduction method was not used to categorise the responses to the interpersonal difficulties.

Alternatively, by using the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), four response groups of adapting, distancing, dominating, and engaging were categorised according to the thematic similarity of items. The adapting group (welcoming, disclosing, adjusting, coaching, regulating) comprised responses indicating that the participant took an indirect and proactive approach to handling the difficulty. The distancing group (withdrawing, ignoring, avoiding, disengaging) comprised responses that pointed to the participant taking an indirect and defensive approach to handling the situation. The dominating group (asserting, persuading, retaliating) included responses suggesting that the participant adopted a direct and attacking approach to handling the difficulty. The engaging group (asking, talking, reconciling) included responses indicating a direct and collaborative approach by the participant to handling the difficulty. Further analyses were conducted using these four response groups.

6.5.2 Do the categories of response differ across power scenarios (less, same, more)?

Response group differences were tested for situational (scenario) effects. Responses across the power scenarios were investigated using repeated measures ANOVAs. Strictly speaking, the response data is categorical (0 = non-use; 1 = use). Thus analysis of the data as if it were scores (interval) could be seen to violate assumptions of normality and continuity. However, analysis of the data using Chi-squares in a repeated measures design would also violate statistical assumptions, because respondents were able to use more than one response group and so the groups were not mutually exclusive. Therefore, the output from the following analyses requires cautious consideration.

Table 6.13 shows the means and univariate F values for the four response groups across the three power situations for the 155 respondents who generated responses for each of the three scenarios. (N is reduced for the analyses because a large number of participants did not complete the three scenario exercises.)
Table 6.13

Means and Univariate Fs for Response Use Across Three Power-differentiated Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response group</th>
<th>Less power</th>
<th>Same power</th>
<th>More power</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adapting</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.37 (^1)</td>
<td>5.09**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distancing</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.26 (^2)</td>
<td>0.30 (^2)</td>
<td>7.67**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.41 (^2)</td>
<td>5.67**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.32 (^{1,2})</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>4.39*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) significantly different from more power; \(^2\) significantly different from less power

* \(p = .01\); ** \(p < .01\)

As shown in Table 6.13, there were significant differences across power scenarios on response groups. Post hoc tests using LSD tests showed that respondents were more likely to generate adapting responses in the less than the more power scenarios. They were more likely to use distancing in the less compared with same and more power scenarios and less likely to use dominating responses in the more than the less power scenarios. Engaging responses were more common in the same power than the unbalanced power scenarios.

6.5.3 Are there gender, year group (7/8, 9/10), or closeness (not friends, friends) differences within the power-differentiated scenarios (less, same, more) on categories of response?

Gender, year group (7/8, 9/10), and closeness (not friends, friends) differences on response groups were explored within the power scenarios. Respondents could use more than one response group and response groups were not mutually exclusive so separate analyses were conducted for the variables with each of the four response groups.

The frequencies of the four response groups for the three power-differentiated scenarios by gender are indicated in Table 6.14. Chi-square tests assessed whether there were gender differences for response groups.
Table 6.14

*Frequency of Response Groups by Gender for Power-differentiated Scenarios, and Chi-square Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response group</th>
<th>Less Power</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Same Power</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>More Power</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1, 326)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1, 241)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1, 202)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.15*</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distancing</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>158</td>
<td></td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>67</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>207</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>194</td>
<td></td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .01$

The results presented in Table 6.14 show that there were no significant relationships of gender with distancing, dominating, and engaging responses in the less, same, or more power scenarios or with adapting in the same and more power scenarios. However, there were significant gender differences on adapting with females significantly more likely than males to use the adapting response when they (females) perceived themselves as power-disadvantaged.

The frequencies of the four response groups for the three power-differentiated scenarios by year group (7/8, 9/10) are indicated in Table 6.15. Chi-square tests assessed whether there were year group differences in response groups.
Table 6.15

Frequency of Response Groups by Year Group for Power-differentiated Scenarios, and Chi-square Statistics

| Response group | Less Power | | | | | | | Same Power | | | | | | | More Power | | | | |
|----------------|------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                | 7/8 | 9/10 | | | | | | 7/8 | 9/10 | | | | | 7/8 | 9/10 | | | |
| Adapting       | n   | n   | \chi^2 (1, 326) | n   | n   | \chi^2 (1, 241) | n   | n   | \chi^2 (1, 202) |
| Yes            | 119 | 55  | 72  | 37  | 38  | 37  | 81  | 51  | .38  | 86  | 41  | 5.09 |
| No             | 92  | 60  | 1.87 | 81  | 51  | .38  | 86  | 41  | 5.09 |
| Distancing     | Yes | 84  | 51  | 38  | 25  | 39  | 21  | 85  | 57  | .28 |
|                | No  | 127 | 64  | .46 | 115 | 63  | .21 | 85  | 57  | .28 |
| Dominating     | Yes | 51  | 34  | 53  | 34  | 54  | 28  | 85  | 57  | .28 |
|                | No  | 160 | 81  | .86 | 101 | 53  | .23 | 70  | 50  | .87 |
| Engaging       | Yes | 61  | 32  | 44  | 30  | 25  | 22  | 99  | 56  | 1.31 |
|                | No  | 150 | 83  | .01 | 109 | 58  | .52 | 99  | 56  | 1.31 |

The results in Table 6.15 indicate that there were no significant relationships between year group and response groups for any of the power-differentiated scenarios.

The frequencies of the four response groups for the three power-differentiated scenarios by closeness (not friends, friends) are indicated in Table 6.16. Chi-square tests assessed whether there were closeness differences in response groups.
The results in Table 6.16 indicate that there were no significant relationships between closeness and response groups for any of the power-differentiated scenarios.

### 6.5.4 Research question four: Findings

Preliminary exploration of the 15 response categories suggested that there were trends in the responses used in different power scenarios. When the young people perceived themselves as disadvantaged by the power relations, they used more seemingly power-neutral responses, such as adjusting. When they perceived power as equal, they identified more use of apparently power-sharing strategies, like welcoming. By contrast, when they perceived that the power balance was in their favour, they employed more ostensibly power-assertive strategies, such as retaliating.
There was little support for Falbo and Peplau’s (1980) two-dimensional model of response strategies. Thus, the deductive rather inductive approach to data reduction produced results appraised as more theoretically appropriate for the data generated in the current study. The deductive approach reduced the 15 response categories to four response groups: adapting, distancing, dominating, and engaging. Across the power scenarios, those who perceived themselves as having less rather than more power were more likely to use adapting and distancing, and less likely to use dominating. Those who perceived themselves as having equal rather than unequal power were more likely to use engaging responses. Within the power scenarios, there were no effects of year group or closeness on response groups. Gender differences on response groups were minimal, with females being more likely than males to use adapting responses only when perceiving themselves at a power disadvantage.

In general, the results suggested some support for the notion that young people’s perceptions of differential power relations rather than gender, year group or closeness played a part in the nature of their responses to interpersonal difficulties with peers.

6.6 Research question five: What are the outcomes for adolescents of the responses they used to handle interpersonal difficulties?

Outcomes are an important aspect of interactions, so the young people were asked to assess the outcomes of the responses they used in each of the power-differentiated scenarios. Three outcome criteria, affect, relationship, and evaluation were used to investigate respondents’ satisfaction with handling the difficulty (see section 4.9.2, chapter 4). ‘Affect’ refers to the emotional impact of the interaction process on respondents. ‘Relationship’ refers to the social impact on the friendship following the respondent’s management of the event. ‘Evaluation’ refers to the respondent’s global estimate of the effectiveness of his/her response. Higher ratings indicated favourably judged outcomes: friendly affect, better relationship, and good handling of the situation. Lower ratings indicated unfavourably judged outcomes: angry affect, worse relationship, and poor handling of the situation.

Theoretically, the outcomes of interactions could relate to perceived power differential (situational), gender (structural), year group (social), or closeness (relational) variables. Therefore, outcomes were explored across and within the power scenarios. The results of analyses across power scenarios are presented first.
6.6.1 Do the outcomes differ across the power scenarios (less, same, more)?

To explore the differences on outcomes across power scenarios, repeated measures ANOVAs were used. The dependent variables were ratings of scenarios in which the respondent was in a less power position (time 1), same power position (time 2), and more power position (time 3). Univariate F’s and means are shown in Table 6.17 for the 171 respondents who evaluated their strategies for each scenario.

Table 6.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Less power</th>
<th>Same power</th>
<th>More power</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>4.90*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>9.26*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 significantly different from same power; 2 significantly different from less power; * p < .01

The data presented in Table 6.17 indicates that the affect associated with the responses to the perceived equal power scenarios was more positive than for the others scenarios. Judgement of relationship outcome was higher in the equal and less power scenarios than for the more power scenario. Thus, in general, there was a tendency for young people in situations in which they perceived themselves as having relatively more power to rate their responses less favourably than they did for the other power situations.

6.6.2 Are there gender, year group (7/8, 9/10), closeness (not friends, friends), or response group differences within power scenarios (less, same, more) on outcomes?

Gender, year group, closeness, and response group differences were examined separately within the power scenarios on outcomes. The results are presented in Tables 6.18-6.23 below.
The outcome ratings for the power-differentiated scenarios are presented by gender in Table 6.18. One-way ANOVAs compared gender differences with respect to affect, relationship, and evaluation outcomes.

Table 6.18

*Means Ratings of Outcomes by Gender for Power-differentiated Scenarios, and Results of One-way ANOVA Tests*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Less power</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n 54 271

| **Same power** |                   |                   |       |     |           |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------|-----|           |
| Affect         | 3.64              | 1.33              | 3.57  | 1.40| .09       |
| Relationship   | 3.87              | 1.17              | 3.73  | 1.22| .42       |
| Evaluation     | 3.68              | 1.07              | 3.67  | 1.01| .01       |

n 44 210

| **More power** |                   |                   |       |     |           |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------|-----|           |
| Affect         | 3.47              | 1.16              | 3.15  | 1.27| 1.79      |
| Relationship   | 3.38              | 1.26              | 3.41  | 1.19| .03       |
| Evaluation     | 3.50              | 1.32              | 3.51  | 1.21| .00       |

n 32 177

* p < .01

Table 6.18 shows almost no significant differences between genders on outcomes for the power scenarios. The exception was that there was a significant difference between genders on evaluation outcome for the less power scenario. The one-way ANOVA results indicated that males were likely to evaluate their handling more highly than females.

The outcome ratings for the power-differentiated scenarios are presented by year
group in Table 6.19. One-way ANOVAs compared year group (7/8, 9/10) differences with respect to affect, relationship, and evaluation outcomes.

Table 6.19
Mean Ratings of Outcomes by Year Group for Power-differentiated Scenarios, and Results of One-way ANOVA Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Year group 7/8</th>
<th>Year group 9/10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p = .01

As shown in Table 6.19, there were no significant differences between year groups on outcomes for the same power scenarios, between year groups on affect and evaluation for the less power scenarios, and between year groups on affect and relationship for the more power scenarios. However, year groups rated relationship significantly differently in the less power scenario and rated evaluation significantly...
differently in the more power scenario. The one-way ANOVAs showed that situations involving difficulties with year group 9/10 rather than 7/8 were more likely to be rated as higher on relationship after the difficulty in the less power scenario. One-way ANOVAs also showed that for the more power scenario, the outcomes of difficult interpersonal situations involving year group 7/8 rather than 9/10 were more likely to be evaluated more positively.

The outcome ratings for the power-differentiated scenarios are presented by relationship closeness in Table 6.20. One-way ANOVAs compared closeness (not friends, friends) differences with respect to affect, relationship, and evaluation outcomes.
Table 6.20

*Mean Ratings of Outcomes by Closeness for Power-differentiated Scenarios, and Results of One-way ANOVA Tests*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Not friends</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
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<td>1.07</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>140</td>
<td>181</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
<td>163</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
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<td>Relationship</td>
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<td>4.01</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
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<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01

Table 6.20 shows no significant differences between closeness groups on evaluation for the less and same power scenarios. However, closeness groups rated affect and relationship significantly differently in all the power scenarios. The one-way ANOVAs also showed that situations involving difficulties friends rather than non-friends were more likely to be rated as higher on positive affect and to have a better relationship following the scenario outcome. One-way ANOVAs also showed that for
the more power scenario, the outcomes of difficult interpersonal situations involving friends rather than non-friends were more likely to evaluate their handling positively.

The outcome ratings for less power-differentiated scenario are presented by response group in Table 6.21. One-way ANOVAs compared each of the four response groups with respect to their associated mean outcome ratings.

Table 6.21

Mean Ratings of Outcomes by Response Groups for the Less Power-differentiated Scenario, and Results of One-way ANOVAs with df = (1, 315)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response group</th>
<th>Affect</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distancing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01

As shown in Table 6.21, for the less power-differentiated scenario, one-way ANOVAs showed no significant differences between those who used adapting and those who did not on affect, relationship, and evaluation. Similarly, there were no significant differences between those who used distancing and those who did not on relationship, and none between dominating and non-dominating on relationship or evaluation. Finally, there were no differences between engaging and non-engaging on evaluation. Significant results were as follows: Distancers were less positive on affect and evaluation than non-distancers were. Dominators were less positive on affect than
non-dominators. Engagers compared to non-engagers rated their responses higher on affect and relationship strength.

The outcome ratings for the same power-differentiated scenario are presented by response group in Table 6.22. One-way ANOVAs compared each of the four response groups with respect to their associated mean outcome ratings.

Table 6.22  
Mean Ratings of Outcomes by Response Groups for the Same Power-differentiated Scenario, and Results of One-way ANOVAs with $df = (1, 233)$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Affect</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.71</td>
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<td>1.20</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distancing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>7.92*</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>5.97*</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>11.27*</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>25.88*</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>16.36*</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .01$  

As presented in Table 6.22, one-way ANOVAs showed, for the same power, that distancers and dominators rated their responses lower on affect than non-distancers and non-dominators respectively. Engagers were however significantly higher on affect than non-engagers. Relationships were assessed as more positive among non-distancers (than distancers) and among engagers (than non-engagers). Finally, engagers evaluated their responses more positively overall than non-engagers did.
The outcome ratings for more power-differentiated scenario are presented by response groups in Table 6.23. One-way ANOVAs compared each of the four response groups with respect to their associated mean outcome ratings.

Table 6.23

*Mean Ratings of Outcomes by Response Groups for the More Power-differentiated Scenario and Results of One-way ANOVAs with df= (1, 193)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response group</th>
<th>Affect</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adapting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distancing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 6.23, for the more power-differentiated scenario, there were no significant differences between response groups on affect, relationship, or evaluation scores.

6.6.3 Research question five: Findings

The results indicated to variation in the ways that young people rated the outcomes of their interpersonal difficulties. Comparison of the power-differentiated scenarios pointed to differences in relation to the young people’s feelings and to the status of the relationship after managing the difficulty. The young people felt more positively after the difficulty when it involved a peer(s) of perceived equal rather than
unequal power. They were more positive about their handling of the problem when they perceived themselves as having less or equal rather than more power.

Within the power scenarios, there were varying outcomes. When respondents perceived their power as relatively less, the young people were likely to rate the affect outcome more positively if the difficulty was with a friend and if they used engaging and did not use distancing or dominating responses. They were likely to report more positive relationship outcomes if they were in year group 9/10 (rather than 7/8), if friends (as opposed to non-friends) were in dispute and if they used engaging. Positive evaluations of handling difficulties were more likely if respondents were male and, for either gender, they did not use distancing.

In situations of perceived power balance, the young people were likely to rate the affect outcome more positively when the difficulty was with a friend and when they used engaging responses and did not use distancing and dominating approaches. They were likely to rate the relationship more positively when in dispute with a friend rather than with a non-friend and when they used engaging and not distancing responses. Evaluations of their handling were more likely to be positive when the young people used engaging responses and did not use distancing responses. Where they perceived themselves as being power-advantaged, the young people rated the affect, relationship, and evaluation outcomes more positively if the difficulty was between friends and they rated their handling of the situation more positively if they were in year group 7/8 (rather than 9/10). Response type did not appear to be relevant for the high power situation with respect to evaluation of affect, relationship, and overall satisfaction.

These results seemed to suggest that, generally, young people were more satisfied about the outcomes of interpersonal difficulties when they were in dispute with a friend(s) rather than another peer(s). More particularly, in scenarios of perceived unfavourable and equal power balance, the young people appeared to be more satisfied when they resolved difficulties by engaging with, rather than by trying to dominate or distance themselves from, the other(s).
### 7.1 Overview

This chapter considers the key findings of the exploration of power between school-based adolescents. The young people’s descriptions of power, interpersonal difficulties, and responses to the difficulties are explored within the theoretical frameworks of psychological, social psychological, and feminist psychological approaches to power. Their ratings of their perceived global power and their ratings of the interaction outcomes are also explored within these frameworks. There is consideration of the roles that power scenario (situational), gender (structural), year group (contextual), and closeness (relational) variables might play in the nature of power between school-based adolescents.

### 7.2 Research question one: What do adolescents understand by ‘power’?

The current study aimed to investigate young people’s understandings of the construct of power, as encapsulated in research question one. These understandings are discussed in the following section in terms of psychological, social psychological, and feminist psychological approaches to power and power relations.

#### 7.2.1 Understanding of power: Emergent themes

Three themes for describing power, ‘power-within’, ‘power-with’, ‘power-over’, emerged from deductive analysis of the data. As hypothesized, there were differences in the young people’s constructions of power. Overall, power was most commonly constructed as power-within, then as power-with and, least commonly, as power-over. There were differences between constructions of personal and interpersonal power with personal power most commonly described as power-within and interpersonal power as power-with. For both personal and interpersonal power, there was an even spread of power-with and power-over descriptions. Males were more likely to describe personal power as power-over but there were no year group differences.
7.2.2 Theoretical explanations: ‘Power-within’

Descriptions such as “To do what you think is right and not let anyone push you around” and “To be able to have a say in things with people” were examples of the power-within theme. This language suggests that for some young people the construct involved self-direction, self-generation, and self-responsibility. This understanding parallels that of feminist analyses which recognise empowerment or personal agency discourses, whereby individual may attempt to redress a perceived power imbalance by becoming more self-determining, self-confident, and self-directed (see Kitzinger, 1991).

Additionally, the language suggests the internalisation of an external authority on morality, which implies recognition of power as hierarchy (power-over) and seems contrary to the notion of individual power drive (power-within). However, Raven (1999) provided a social psychological analysis of religion, explaining that those in positions of authority within the Christian churches have promoted the legitimacy of God as the authority on morality. The participants for the current study came from school contexts with Christianity as the dominant religion. Therefore, the young people’s language for the power-within theme reflects the possible internalisation and reproduction of norms prescribed by membership of a Christian organisation. Foucault (1980) contended that membership of a dominant culture, such as a dominant religion, provided access to power. The power-within theme suggests the possible internal reproduction of the dominant religious culture. This is consistent with both a psychological and a social psychological (Raven, 1999) perspective.

Furthermore, the language of the power-within theme suggests a sense of drive or motivation. Following one’s internal authority and having particular skills appear to represent power to the young people. The reference to rightness implies a regard for others as well as for the individual. To this extent, the theme appears to reflect psychological analyses, which present power as mastery tempered by social interest (Adler, 1927).

Overall, the theme of power-within as described by the young people appears to be consistent with aspects of feminist psychological, social psychological, and psychological analyses of power.
7.2.3 Theoretical explanations: ‘Power-with’

Descriptions such as “Together having the strength to do hard things and be civilized” and “To trust and show respect for each other” were examples of the ‘power-with’ theme. The language suggests that some young people constructed power as collaboration, mutuality, and interconnectedness. Mutuality and interconnectedness reflect feminist analyses of power as collectivism, that is, of collaboration between those with less structural and/or hierarchical power (Yuval-Davis, 1994).

The language of trust, respect and accepting difficult challenges suggests that the young people could have legitimised and internalised an external authority/authorities. It echoes a sense of morality and righteousness and sounds like the product of particular learning and teaching. Social psychological (French, 1956; French & Raven, 1959) analyses contend that schools represent a variety of dominant cultures, such as religious, educational and socio-political. Schools also have an ethos and guiding principles, which represent the school’s culture. Subsequently, schools aim to socialize young people into these, providing rewards and symbols to students who successfully replicate the cultural norms and expectations, and punishments for those who do not. The descriptions incorporated in the power-with theme are consistent with social psychological notions of power. It seems that the young people have ascribed legitimacy to those with higher status, such as teachers, at least within the school organisation.

The suggestion that the young people could have internalised an external authority seems contrary to the collectivism notion that is suggested immediately by the naming of this theme as ‘power-with’. However, considering this theme only within collectivism analyses could fail to acknowledge the young people’s stated understanding and could misrepresent their views. Furthermore, the language is also suggestive of the young people having a motivation or drive to achieve success through difficulty and to do so with regard for others. To this extent, the power-with theme also appears to reflect the psychological analysis of power as mastery tempered by social concern (Adler, 1927).

Therefore, the theme of power-with as described by the young people is also consistent with aspects of feminist psychological, social psychological, and psychological analyses of power.
7.2.4 Theoretical explanations: ‘Power-over’

Descriptions such as “One could be higher or stronger” and “Someone seeing another person feel small and helpless” gave rise to the power-over theme. The language suggests that some young people constructed power as relative status or domination, although not necessarily as subjugation or control. The suggestion of relative status is consistent with social psychological (French & Raven, 1959) and feminist structural psychological analyses (see Foucault, 1980), whereby power is constructed as relative positioning within a hierarchy or socio-political system.

The implication of dominance (‘…small and helpless…’) appears to match psychological analyses, whereby relative status is exploited in ways that diminish or demean another. It may represent a drive for dominance or control (McAdams, 2001; McClelland, 1980; Murray, 1938), or compliance from others (Glasser, 1984). A concern for social interest is not presented, so the theme could represent an untempered drive for mastery, consistent within Adler’s (1927) theoretical framework.

The descriptions comprising the power-over theme reflect aspects of feminist psychological, social psychological, and psychological analyses. Arguably, power, in this sense, may be regarded as negative and its use as exploitative. However, the young people’s language did not strongly represent this perspective.

7.2.5 Power themes: Appraisal

In describing power, the young people did not choose between alternative constructions, as do psychologists and researchers. Rather, the students provided personal perspectives, demonstrating group divergence on understanding of power. Psychological, social psychological, and feminist psychological analyses independently could not fully explain the themes, supporting Beckwith’s (1999) contention that explanations of power are limited by division into structural and post structural approaches. Kitzinger (1991) contended that inadequate attention to the ramifications of using specific discourses could serve to reinforce inequities. In the current study, adopting the perspective of a particular approach to power would have discounted the young people’s language, possibly contributing to misrepresentation or distortion of their views.
The themes drawn from the young people’s descriptions of power could also be considered as a set. The set refers to the group of individual, distinctive themes rather than to themes located along a continuum. The next section considers explanations of the thematic set from within the frameworks of psychological, social psychological, and feminist psychological approaches to power.

### 7.2.6 The thematic set: Psychological analyses

Psychological analyses of the thematic set of power descriptions, which include power-within, power-with, and power-over, suggest that there could be individual variation in the young people’s need, drive, or motivation for dominance and, possibly, in the accompanying concern for social interest. The language characterising the power-within and power-with themes suggests a concern for social norms (doing what is “right”) and the welfare of others (showing “respect”) respectively and does not contain indications of a drive for superiority or dominance. The language of the power-over theme suggests little, if any, social concern (“seeing another person feel small and helpless”) and high drive for dominance. Therefore, psychological analyses (Adler, 1927; McAdams, 2001; McClelland, 1980; Murray, 1938) do not offer partial explanation for this thematic set.

### 7.2.7 The thematic set: Social psychological analyses

Social psychological analyses suggest that the thematic set could reflect either divisions between students based on status (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965) or variation in the use of social pressure and resistance (Lewin, 1941; Kipnis, 1976). Descriptions of “not let anyone push you around” (power-within) and being “higher or stronger” (power-over) indicate resistance to social pressure and relative status respectively. Language such as “together..” and “each other” (power-with) recognises interpersonal equality. The themes indicate variation in the young people’s legitimising of external authority. The power-within language suggests resisting attempts at external control. That of the power-with theme suggests mutual authority. The language of power-over suggests attempting to exert control (power-over).
Therefore, social psychological analyses provide a useful framework within which to understand this thematic set, although the nature of the external authority and the bases for relative status remain unclear.

7.2.8 The thematic set: Feminist psychological analyses

A feminist structural psychological approach (see Foucault, 1980; see Kitzinger, 1991) suggests that the thematic set could reflect variation in the young people’s awareness of structural inequities. The language that gives rise to the three themes indicates an awareness of systematic inequities, suggested by “not let anyone push you around” (power-within), “...do hard things and be civilised” (power-with) and “...higher or stronger” (power-over). Each theme indicates an awareness of ‘right’ living in the face of obstacles and the set could be consistent with feminist structural analyses, although the bases for inequities are not articulated or identified.

The language used by the young people identifies variation in levels of responsibility for, or responses to, inequities. These include self-responsibility in the power-within theme (“stand up for yourself”), mutual responsibility in the power-with theme (“...together.”), and other-responsibility in the power-over theme (“making someone...”). This variation parallels empowerment (power-within), collective (power-with), and hierarchical (power-over) discourses, which are consistent with feminist post structural analyses (Beckwith, 1999).

Therefore, feminist structural and post structural psychological theories of power help to explain the systematic inequities (structural factors) and the variation in responsibility for addressing inequities (post structural factors) respectively that gave rise to the thematic set of power constructions.

7.2.9 Young people’s understandings of ‘power’: Conclusions

There appear to be few, if any, comparative studies regarding adults’ understandings of power. However, the young people had clear concepts of power, presumably developed from experiences in the school and the peer group(s), which are primary contexts for gaining insights into the workings of power. The school context to which young people belong reproduces power relations that are present in the wider society and creates power relations specific to the school as an organisation (Kreisberg,
A tendency towards consistency in ‘power-over’ and variation in ‘power-within’ and ‘power-with’ constructions of power across contexts provides support for this view.

The themes that emerged (power-within, power-with, power-over) were named in accordance with terms arising from within feminist and empowerment theories (see Cohen, 1998). Further analysis of the language used by the young people in the current study indicated that the names ascribed to the themes were partly consistent with the original descriptions and meanings. The young people’s descriptions of power demonstrated that they understood the phenomenon in ways that partly matched psychological, social psychological, feminist psychological approaches. The variation in the pattern of responses for personal and interpersonal power suggests that many of the young people constructed these differently and did not have a single understanding of power. This is a new insight since it indicates that explanations of power might need to vary in response to variation in context. Beckwith (1999) proposed that bridging the divisions between feminist structural and post structural approaches to power could have the advantage of explaining the phenomenon more fully. The current study supports Beckwith’s proposal by demonstrating the limitations of applying any one theoretical approach when attempting to explain the young people’s understanding of power. Variation in context might require variation in the theoretical framework(s) for explaining the interactions that occur within them.

Usually, psychologists explain research related to power from one of three perspectives (psychological, social psychological, feminist psychological). However, this approach could replicate or reproduce unequal power relations if there was a failure to identify and acknowledge the language used by the young people. For example, a psychological analysis of three power themes (power-within, power-with, power-over) could suggest that the young people varied with respect to their drives for superiority and/or domination and that this drive may have been tempered by a desire for social interest. However, this approach would fail to account for the contribution of the school and/or peer contexts to the formation of participants’ perspectives. Analyses that did not account for the young people’s language could distort their intended meanings. For example, the ‘power-over’ theme allowed for the role of status, not only domination or control. Therefore, allowance for the emergence of theory, rather than applying existing frameworks, can contribute to new theoretical understandings of power.
Information on the young people’s understanding of power contributes to the current knowledge in three main ways. Firstly, it reinforces the relevance of ‘power-within’, ‘power-with’, and ‘power-over’ notions of power. Secondly, it indicates that young people’s understanding of power and power relations might be a reproduction of power relations in the immediate contexts of peer group and school. Thirdly, it supports feminist post structural perspectives on the role that language can play in determining power relations.

7.3 Research question two: How do adolescents rate their perceptions of their power?

As encapsulated in research question two, the current study aimed to investigate young people’s perceptions of their interpersonal power, measured by Global Power Score (GPS). The mean GPS indicated that the group perceived its power as relatively high, whilst the range indicated that individuals had differential access to power. Gender differences on GPSs supported the notion that males could rate their power more highly than females.

The young people’s ratings of their perceived power indicated that they were a relatively robust group. This could indicate that the school contexts enabled them to learn about power and power relations (Kreisberg, 1992; Malen, 1994). The robustness could also suggest that the power-holders (adult school personnel) provided students with access to power, possibly through the development of collaborative relationships which foster positive teacher-student relationships (Pomeroy, 1999) and thereby enhancing perceptions of relative powerfulness (Wittes, 1970). The perception of relative power within a hierarchical context is consistent with feminist and social psychological approaches to power, which construct adult teachers as having more access to power than adolescent students. The students’ frequently used ‘power-within’ constructions of power, indicating that their own power need not be limited by relative status. However, clarification of the nature of the school contexts is beyond the scope of the current study.

The range of Global Power Scores and gender differences in mean GPS indicate that within and between peer groups the young people had differential access to power. It seems that a number of the young people rated their power as low, indicating their relative powerlessness within the group. The criteria on which the young people based
their perceptions are unclear. Lower drive for superiority (psychological perspective), less status within the group (structural and/or hierarchical perspective), or negative labelling (post structural perceptive) all offer possible explanations for this finding. Theoretically, it is possible for a student to have high drive for power (psychological explanation) but to have low access to power because of their position within the peer group (social psychological explanation) or because of their gender (feminist psychological explanation), highlighting the limitations of selecting an individual framework within which to explain the finding (Beckwith, 1999; see Kitzinger, 1991). Such a student could rate their power as either high or low. Therefore, further statistical and theoretical exploration is required to assess and understand ratings of perceived power.

Males had higher ratings of GPS than females. Some psychologists argue that the drive for power is not associated with gender (Adler, 1927; Glasser, 1984). Conversely, McAdams (2001) argued that high power motivation could be associated with gender because males have a tendency to be more aggressive and impulsive than females. Therefore, psychological analyses are not consistent in explaining gender differences, possibly because their predictions about gender differences can vary. The finding that males rated their power more highly than females is consistent with structural analyses of power (see, for example, Foucault, 1980), which contend that males are the dominant gender and that this gives them greater access to, for example, resources and symbols of success. The finding suggests the possible reproduction of structural power divisions existing in the wider community in the more localised context of the school. However, there was an absence of year group differences, which could be expected if structural issues were taken on board in students’ conceptions of power.

Psychological, social psychological, and feminist psychological approaches to power contribute different explanations for the findings of robustness and gender difference in the perceived power ratings of young people surveyed in the current study. Only one measure of power forms the basis for these findings. Therefore, caution is required when drawing conclusions about the roles played by school, peer group, or gender in forming these results.
7.4 Research question three: How do adolescents describe their interpersonal difficulties with peers?

This research question investigated the nature of adolescents’ interpersonal difficulties with peers. The participants were asked to describe scenarios in which they perceived that they had less, the same, and more power relative to their perceptions of the other’s power. Young people were able to complete this task with understanding, as shown by their differentiation of power ratings for self and others in each scenario (see section 6.4, chapter 6). Subsequently, the findings on interpersonal difficulties are examined with respect to research on bullying and conflict. The findings regarding the effects of scenario type, gender, year group, and closeness (to the other/s in the scenarios) on interpersonal difficulties are examined. All results are considered within the frameworks of feminist and social psychological approaches to power.

7.4.1 Interpersonal difficulties: Emergent themes

Ten modes of difficulty (two-way physical, two-way verbal, two-way social, one-way physical, one-way verbal, one-way social, other-way physical, other-way verbal, other-way social, third party) were deduced from the data and cross categorised into three forms (two-way, one-way, other-way) and three types (physical, verbal, social). Difficulty form indicated whether participants nominated the initiator as the others (one-way), themselves (other-way), or mutually (two-way). Difficulty type indicated the behavioural correlates of the interaction as negative physical actions (physical), negative verbal exchanges (verbal), or change or disruption to the established relationship (social). These are discussed in turn.

7.4.2 Difficulty form

Overall, there was a trend towards difficulties being initiated by the other(s) (one-way) followed by mutually (two-way) initiated and then self-initiated (other-way). The pervasiveness of describing who initiated the difficulty suggests that this is an important theme for young people when they consider interpersonal difficulties. It was not surprising that when asked to describe interpersonal difficulties the young people would nominate others as initiators more frequently than each other or themselves.
However, comparisons across the three power-differentiated scenarios also indicated that participants tended to report more other-initiated difficulties in the less power scenarios, more mutually initiated difficulties in the same power scenarios, and more self-initiated difficulties in the more power scenarios. These findings suggested a trend towards variation in the initiator of an interpersonal difficulty with variation in power relations.

The findings of trends towards variation in nominated initiators and of variation in the frequencies of nomination with different power relationships suggest variation in access to, and use of power. This variation could be explained by differences in drive for superiority (a psychological factor), whereby those students with more drive for power tended to use it more frequently possibly to initiate interpersonal difficulties with peers. Alternatively, status within the peer group and/or within the situation itself (hierarchical and/or structural factors) could have provided some students with more access to power, which could have been used to initiate interpersonal problems. Within the scenarios, the trend towards variation in initiator could not be explained by the structural factor of gender, the hierarchical factor of year group, or the structural and/or hierarchical factor of relationship closeness, suggesting the presence of other structural and/or hierarchical factors within the scenarios. Further exploration is required to fully explain the basis for the variation in initiator.

7.4.3 Difficulty type

When describing their interpersonal difficulties, participants reported social behaviours most frequently, that is, they reported the use of actions that effected change or disruption to the relationship. Verbal behaviours were reported more frequently than physical behaviours. Comparisons across the three power-differentiated scenarios indicated that students tended to report more social behaviours in the less power scenarios, more verbal behaviours in the same power scenarios, and more physical behaviours in the more power scenarios. These findings suggested a trend towards variation in behaviour with variation in power relations. Within the power-differentiated scenarios, those with less structural power (females) were more likely to report social difficulties when the power relations were perceived as unequal (less power, more power). Those with more structural and hierarchical power (males, year group 9/10) were more likely to report physical difficulties when the power relations were perceived
as equal (same power). There were no closeness differences (not friends, friends) on
difficulty types. It seems that structural and hierarchical factors contributed to the
variation in behaviours within the scenarios.

The findings suggest the possibility of a hierarchy of behaviours, such that those
with more access to power could have more access to physical behaviours, although this
could be moderated by the overall power in the situation. Social behaviours have the
potential to set up a series of interrelated events, to trigger an interactive process of
responses and to involve more people than the disputants. Disruption to the peer group
(social behaviours) can have on-going ramifications, whereby members need to readjust
their own positions each time there is a disruption. By comparison, physical and verbal
behaviours can be discrete, less prolonged, and more contained to the immediate
disputants.

The possibility of a hierarchy of behaviours and the trend towards variation in
the use of behaviours with variation in power relations, suggests that behaviours
themselves might be power-differentiated. Social, verbal, and physical interactions draw
on different skills and have the potential for different outcomes, with social more so
than verbal and physical skills being a function of social and cognitive maturity (Owens
& MacMullin, 1995) and having the capacity for greater long-term disruption.
Therefore, a hierarchy of behaviours suggests that young people could have access to
different skills and that those with more skills in social disruption could have greater
access to power within and between peer groups. Such differential access could be a
function of drive for power (Adler, 1927), but it seems more representative of
differential access to social power and influence (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965)
and/or to structural power (see Foucault, 1980), whereby position within or between
peer groups is a source of power.

Descriptions of interpersonal difficulties established the context of problems and
the precipitating event(s) between participants and others. The findings regarding
interpersonal difficulty form (initiator) and type (behaviour) are considered below in the
light of research related to bullying and conflict. An alternative approach (also below)
considers the findings from within the frameworks of power and power relations.
7.4.4 Difficulty form: Bullying and conflict

Theoretically, bullying applies to interpersonal situations in which a target (victim) identifies an agent (bully) as exploiting a real or perceived interpersonal power differential and using physical, verbal, or social behaviours (Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993). The typology of ‘bully-victim’ (Rivers & Smith, 1994) refers to alternative rather than simultaneous roles, indicating that bullying does not comprise mutually initiated interpersonal difficulties. Conflict applies to interpersonal situations in which an agent (disputant) identifies his/her attempt either to influence another (target) or to resolve differences with another (target) using a variety of behaviours (Laursen & Koplas, 1995; Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990; Schwarzwald & Koslowsky, 1999). In conflict, agents and targets can be in equal or unequal positions of power. Agents are initiators of interactions with targets.

The findings regarding initiator in the current study contrasted with findings from studies of bullying and conflict in two ways. Firstly, participants identified a third category of initiator, mutual, to represent equal responsibility for initiating the interaction. Secondly, some participants identified themselves as agents, irrespective of the power relations. These data arose although the survey gathered self-report data, demonstrating the capacity for participants to consider multiple perspectives when responding to open-ended questions and providing new information on the range of initiators that can be identified by young people with respect to their interpersonal difficulties. In short, the young people were able to take broader perspectives on interpersonal difficulties than those implied in the terms ‘bullying’ or ‘conflict’.

7.4.5 Difficulty type: Bullying and conflict

The finding in the current study that descriptions of interpersonal difficulties could be subgrouped into difficulty type comprising physical, verbal, social behaviours was consistent with findings of the range of behaviours that comprise bullying (Owens & MacMullin, 1995; Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993). It is also consistent with behaviours that may be associated with social influence attempts and attempts to resolve interpersonal differences (Laursen & Koplas, 1995; Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990; Schwarzwald & Koslowsky, 1999). These findings support the contention of potential
overlap between bullying and conflict behaviours. They point to the need for caution when labelling peer interactions.

Theoretically, some interactions described in the less and more power scenarios could be classified as ‘bullying’ with participants classified as ‘victims’ or ‘bullies’ respectively. Conversely, interactions described in the equal (same) power scenario could not be classified as ‘bullying’, since bullying by definition requires the exploitation of a power imbalance. Theoretically, there would be a range of power differences within a power-differentiated scenario. Bullying interactions are more likely to represent extremes of power differences within the more power scenario, with victims more likely to be represented by those who perceive their power as lower rather than higher within the less power scenario. Furthermore, no participant used the term bullying or referred to interactions as conflict. Therefore, the behaviours comprising the behavioural theme do not help to distinguish between possible bullying and conflict interactions. This finding adds support to the contention that classifying interactions based on behaviour is potentially misleading.

There was a trend towards social behaviours being reported more frequently than verbal, which were reported more frequently than physical behaviours, in the power scenarios. This is not consistent with bullying research, which has found verbal behaviours to be reported most commonly across genders and ages, followed by social and then physical behaviours (Owens & MacMullin, 1995; Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994). The finding that females were more likely than males to report social behaviours is consistent with other findings, but that year group 7/8 was more likely than the more senior students to report social behaviours is not consistent with findings regarding bullying (Owens & MacMullin, 1995; Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994). The results do not appear to support those of gender differences found in the nature of friendship groups (Maccoby, 1990), since there were no closeness differences reported.

There does not appear to be consistency between the nature of the interpersonal difficulties (considering scenario, gender, year group, closeness differences on difficulty form and type) described by the young people and constructions of bullying and conflict, even though the power scenarios in the current study and constructions of bullying and conflict all involve real or perceived power-differentiated relationships.
7.4.6 Interpersonal difficulties: Conclusions

In summary, the findings regarding the nature of interpersonal difficulties suggest that power and power relations could be used in conjunction with constructions of bullying or conflict when differentiating between peer interactions. Identification of the themes of initiator and behaviour contributed information on the structure of interpersonal difficulties. It supports the contention that young people’s insights can help to broaden knowledge of power and power relations. The finding reflects post structural analyses of the necessity to address the power differential between researcher and researched (Raabe, 1993) and to avoid theory-driven methodological approaches since these can contribute to the distortion or misrepresentation of information (Olesen, 2000).

Addressing the contextual features of young people’s interpersonal interactions demonstrates their consistency with feminist psychological and social psychological explanations of power relations. Rather than labelling young people’s interactions as bullying or conflict, the findings of the current study suggest that school personnel could assess the students’ access to power and to methods of power usage. Partial assessments could be made by identifying students’ perceptions of the interpersonal power relations, their perceptions of the initiator and the behaviours involved and by considering factors of context, gender, and year group.

7.5 Research question four: How do adolescents describe their methods of handling interpersonal difficulties?

This question aimed to investigate the methods that the young people used for handling their interpersonal difficulties. This involved investigating the appropriateness of Falbo and Peplau’s (1980) approach to grouping responses along dimensions of bilaterality, the extent to which the response required interaction and directness, the extent to which the response was overt. It involved exploring scenario, gender, year group, and relationship closeness differences with respect to responses, and considering findings with respect to constructions of bullying, conflict, and power and power relations.
7.5.1 Responses: Emergent themes

Responses to the interpersonal difficulties were categorised into 15 different groupings (see section 5.5.3, chapter 5). Exploration of this 15 item set using the multidimensional scaling procedure (MDS) did not support Falbo and Peplau’s (1980) classification of a two dimensional model of strategies used in interpersonal interactions. In the current study, the MDS identified two dimensions of flexibility (the extent to which responses were adaptable) and sociability (the extent to which responses were prosocial). However, there was not sufficient statistical or theoretical support to accept the two-dimensional model, partly because the range of ratings suggested too much variation in raters’ appraisals of the similarity between response item pairs.

Alternatively, response data generated in the current study was reduced to four response groups (adapting, distancing, dominating, engaging), based on appraisals of theoretical similarity. Adapting responses (welcoming, disclosing, adjusting, coaching, regulating) suggested the use of an indirect and proactive approach to handling difficulties. Distancing responses (withdrawing, ignoring, avoiding, disengaging) incorporated those using an indirect or defensive approach. Dominating responses (asserting, persuading, retaliating) were direct and attacking in nature. Engaging responses (asking, talking, reconciling) involved a direct and collaborative approach.

Overall, the young people used more adapting than distancing responses, which were used more than dominating responses, which in turn were reported more than engaging responses. This is not consistent with findings (Jensen-Campbell et al., 1996) that young people prefer to use negotiation (included in the engaging theme) than power assertion (similar to dominating) or disengagement (similar to distancing). Nor was there consistency with findings that young people prefer to use submission/coercion (similar to dominating) in their most important conflicts (Laursen & Koplas, 1995). These inconsistencies could arise partly from the fact that other studies have not identified a category of adapting responses, that is, responses that require the young person to use a range of social, communication, cognitive, behavioural, and affective skills to transform the difficulty into one that is personally beneficial. In addition, in the current study, differences in response usage appeared to reflect variation in power relations (described below in section 7.5.3) rather than variation in a possible response style, which would be used irrespective of other variables.
7.5.2 Responses: Adapting

Adapting responses comprised positive actions directed towards the other(s) that might lead to a better relationship by, for example, smiling, or “being nicer” (welcoming). They included telling a third party about the difficulty (disclosing), possibly with a view to developing ways of restoring the relationship and suggested by language such as “I talked to the counsellor”, or seeking support, implied in the language of, “I told my parents”. Adapting also included letting go of the difficulty or the relationship by, for example, getting “…on with my life” (adjusting), to improve the situation for the person alone and independent of the other(s). Finally, it included cognitive (coaching) or behavioural (regulating) readjustments, indicated in language such as “It’s not the end of the world” and “I took it slowly” respectively, that directed the person him/herself towards adapting to the situation.

These responses suggest taking personal responsibility for managing the situation in ways that do not require interaction from the other(s). They imply a sense of personal agency. As such, they appear to be consistent with empowerment approaches to power relations, whereby the individual transforms his/her situation through developing more self-esteem or confidence (see Kitzinger, 1994; Yuval-Davis, 1994). Adapting responses can contribute to the personal transformation of students’ internalised notions of power disadvantage, but they can also imply that students are responsible for their perceived or real power disadvantage and can fail to address the structural and/or hierarchical frameworks which could contribute to the nature of the power relations (see Kitzinger, 1994).

7.5.3 Responses: Distancing

Distancing responses comprised actions whereby some young people removed their affection by means such as “I stopped talking to them” (withdrawing). Others withdrew communication by ignoring, for example, “I didn’t listen to them”. Others removed their social interaction by such methods as “I stayed as far away as possible” (avoiding) away from the other(s). These responses could indicate the young people’s desires for self-protection or punishment of the other(s), suggesting the need for a range of personal skills or the motivation to restore a sense of personal harmony and equilibrium. These explanations are consistent with empowerment notions of power.
relations, whereby the individual adopts strategies for enhancing their sense of personal power in relation to others (see Kitzinger, 1994; Yuval-Davis, 1994).

7.5.4 Responses: Dominating

Dominating responses included verbal interventions aimed at retaining personal positioning or stance (asserting) and suggested by language such as “I stood up for myself”. They also included verbal interventions aimed at changing the other’s beliefs or behaviours (persuading), expressed in language such as “I tried to make the person believe me”. A third type of dominating response, expressed in retributive language such as “I did to him what he did to me” was more physically or verbally abusive (retaliating) and indicated no desire for reconciliation. Dominating responses suggest that some young people could have exerted their desire or drive for power (Adler, 1927), or that they could have exploited a real or perceived power imbalance based on divisions within or between peer groups along continuums of, for example age, gender, or culture (see Foucault, 1980), or hierarchical status (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965). Arguably, assertion and persuasion may provide the other person with the opportunity to engage in a process of working towards a resolution, by contrast with retaliation, which does not contain this possibility. However, the three responses are consistent in suggesting the activation of access to a power base in seeking to achieve personal goals (French, 1956; French & Raven, 1959) and their grouping on this basis appears to be somewhat defensible.

7.5.5 Responses: Engaging

Engaging responses comprised actions directed towards restoring the relationship. Some young people simply communicated directly with the other(s) by, for example, “I asked her what I did” (asking). Others engaged with the other(s) by discussing the matter or conversing (talking), suggested by “I talked out the problem with her”. Others directly apologised, attempted to work out a compromise or made up (reconciling), indicated by “we went and had a picnic”. The young people who used engaging responses may have been motivated by their desire for social interest more so than for superiority (Adler, 1927). However, it is also possible that they were using a collaborative, mutual approach to restoring relational equilibrium. This is consistent
with feminist notions of collectivism, whereby those with relatively equal power within structurally or hierarchically determined power differentiated situations strive to work together towards enhanced position or status (Beckwith, 1999, Yuval-Davis, 1994). Arguably, the restoration of relational harmony is important within and between peer groups because without it, peers are more vulnerable to externalising the locus of control (Wittes, 1970) and, additionally, female peers are more vulnerable to exclusion from the peer group (Eder, 1985).

### 7.5.6 Responses: Bullying and conflict

In the current study, respondents described the responses used to handle interpersonal difficulties, allowing for comparisons with those used to handle bullying, to achieve goals (social influence), or to resolve interpersonal differences (conflict resolution). Responses to bullying include affective response, disclosure, school avoidance, and ignoring (Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993). Responses to conflict encompass tactics for gaining compliance (Cowan et al., 1984; Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990) and strategies for resolving interpersonal difference (Laursen & Koplas, 1995).

Adapting (which includes disclosure) and distancing (which includes avoidance and ignoring) were more prevalent when participants perceived themselves as being power-disadvantaged (less power scenario) compared with power-advantaged (more power). This could be consistent with findings related to victims’ responses to bullying behaviours (Owens & MacMullin, 1995; Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994). Although the reluctance of young people to report bullying to school adults (Rigby & Barnes, 2002) suggests a difference with the current study, in which participants identified friends, parents, school personnel, and others as sources of disclosure. The language used by participants did not clarify whether disclosure was to seek resolution to the difficulty or to gather support against the opponent, as described in ganging or mobbing (Rivers & Smith, 1994). This response item requires further exploration.

The dominating response (comprising asserting, persuading and retaliating), which predominated in the more power scenario, is partially consistent with findings related to bullies’ behaviours (Owens & MacMullin, 1995; Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994). This suggests that some young people could have responded to the interpersonal difficulty in ways consistent with bullying, indicating that bullying
could be a response to possible bullying or conflict. This provides further support for the contention that behaviours are not a reliable way of distinguishing between types of interpersonal interactions. Clarification of these constructs is essential to assist school personnel, including students, with distinguishing between types of peer interactions.

The themes of adapting, distancing, dominating, and engaging responses parallel those identified by researchers of conflict (Laursen & Koplas, 1995; Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990; Schwarzwald & Koslowsky, 1999). For example, distancing and engaging in the current study parallel disengaging and negotiation respectively in conflict studies (Laursen & Koplas, 1995), whilst dominating parallels coercion (Schwarzwald & Koslowsky, 1995), the unilateral-direct category of response (Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990), and aggression (Opotow, 1991). Adapting, which represents individual attempts to reframe cognitions about the situation or to modify behaviour according to the situation, does not appear to be replicated in other findings. It seems that the young people in the current study took personal responsibility and had skills consistent with empowerment approaches to power (Yuval-Davis, 1994). Therefore, current findings of a connection between response usage and the nature of the interpersonal power relations are consistent with the outcomes of other conflict studies.

These results provide further support for the difficulty in distinguishing between interpersonal difficulties based on available constructs of bullying and conflict. Section 7.5.7 provides an alternative approach by working from features of the power relations rather than by applying prescribed labels.

### 7.5.7 Responses: Scenario, gender, year group, and closeness differences

Investigation across and within the three power-differentiated scenarios (less, same, more power) showed that there were scenario differences but not gender (with one exception), year group (7/8, 9/10), or closeness (not friends, friends) differences with respect to response usage. In situations of perceived power disadvantage (less), the young people preferred to use indirect approaches, either proactive (adapting) or defensive (distancing). In situations perceived as power balanced, they indicated support for direct and collaborative (engaging) approaches. In situations of perceived power advantage (more), the young people preferred direct and attacking (dominating) approaches.
The results indicate that response selection was more a function of the interpersonal difficulty context than of gender, year group, or relationship closeness. Gender is a structural factor, whilst year group, closeness, and context are hierarchical factors. Therefore, response selection was reactive to the contextual nature of the power relations rather than to power relations predetermined by gender and year group. This suggests that power tactics themselves might be power-differentiated. For example, greater access to power, indicated by perceptions of power advantage in the more power scenario, was accompanied by more dominating responses. Conversely, less access to power, indicated by perceptions of power disadvantage in the less power scenario, was accompanied by more adapting and distancing responses. When the power relations were perceived as equal (same power scenario), there were more engaging responses.

The finding in the current study that variation in responses was context-specific is consistent with other research outcomes. For example, Ohbuchi and Yamamoto (1990) found that young people used more unilateral-direct tactics (such as asserting, threatening) to influence less powerful others and more bilateral-indirect tactics (such as suggesting) to influence more powerful others. Similarly, the current study found that participants used more dominating responses (such as asserting) when they perceived a power advantage (more power scenario) and more adapting responses (such as adjusting) when they perceived a power disadvantage (less power scenario). There was support for the use of negotiation and engagement with equal peers (Laursen et al., 1996; Selman et al., 1986). Negotiation approximated with engaging in the current study, which found that an engaging response was more likely in situations perceived as power balanced. The findings were consistent with outcomes of other studies that relationship status, which refers to the interpersonal power relations, was the strongest predictor of strategy use (Cowan et al., 1984; Ohbuchi & Yamamoto, 1990).

Some researchers have classified response tactics along a hard-soft continuum, with hard tactics giving the target low relative freedom to comply and soft tactics giving the target high relative freedom to comply (Bruins, 1999; Cowan et al., 1984; Kipnis et al., 1980; Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Using this dimension, adapting, distancing, and engaging responses could be classified as soft and dominating responses as hard. The findings of the current study are consistent with findings of power differentiation between hard and soft power tactics. Those who perceived themselves as power disadvantaged (less power) were more likely to report the use of soft responses (adapting, distancing) and those who perceived themselves as power advantaged (more
power) were more likely to report the use of hard responses (dominating). Variation in response selection with differential perceptions of power suggests that the young people could have assessed the suitability of specific responses according to the nature of the interpersonal relationship (Raven, 1992, 1993), which is consistent with social psychological analyses of power and power relations.

Overall, these findings are consistent with feminist psychological (see Foucault, 1980; as described by Kitzinger, 1991, 1994; Yuval-Davis, 1994) and social psychological (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965, 1992, 1993) analyses, whereby differential access to power can provide differential access to power methods, particularly the use of domination by those who are more powerful. Feminist post structural analyses, which include discourses of hierarchy (Beckwith, 1999) and social psychological analyses of social power and social influence (Kipnis, 1976; French, 1956; French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965, 1992, 1993) provide explanations for the finding of context rather than gender, year group, or relationship closeness differences regarding the responses used to manage interpersonal difficulties. However, as stated on previous occasions, the basis for the young people’s perceptions of contextual power differences requires further exploration. There appears to be further evidence to suggest that the nature of the power relations between participants in interpersonal difficulties helps to differentiate the nature of the interaction, including the types of responses.

7.5.8 Responses: Conclusions

The findings suggest that the nature of the interpersonal difficulty context rather than gender, year group, or relationship closeness was more predictive of the young people’s selection of response methods. It seems that perceptions of the interpersonal power relations provided a context for difficulties and that these were not based on gender, year group, or relationship closeness. Therefore, the bases for young people’s perceptions of power relations within a situation require further investigation. The outcomes of such investigations are important if school personnel are to understand accurately the nature of interpersonal interactions between adolescent school-based peers.
7.6 Research question five: What are the outcomes for adolescents of the responses used to handle interpersonal difficulties?

This research question investigated the nature of the response outcomes for adolescents using criteria that comprised the young people’s feelings (affect), appraisals of the relationship status (relationship), and appraisals of their management (evaluation) following the interaction. The outcomes were investigated across the three power-differentiated scenarios and within the scenarios with respect to gender, year group, and relationship closeness differences. The outcomes were also explored with respect to the responses used to handle interpersonal difficulties. Scenario, gender, year group, relationship closeness, and response differences on outcomes are considered with respect to findings regarding bullying, conflict, and power and power relations.

7.6.1 Outcomes: Scenario, gender, year group, and closeness differences

Outcome differences were explored across and within the three power-differentiated scenarios with respect to variation in scenario, gender, year group, closeness, and response. Scenario and relationship closeness represent structural and/or hierarchical power divisions, whilst gender and year group represent structural and hierarchical power divisions respectively. Theoretically, responses are not power-differentiated, although, they can represent differential access to power based on structural and/or hierarchical power relations.

There was a trend towards more positive ratings on the three outcome criteria when the young people perceived the power relations as balanced (same power scenario) rather than unbalanced (less, more power scenarios). Comparisons across the scenarios showed that difficulties in perceived power-balanced situations were accompanied by better feelings and a better relationship; difficulties in perceived power-advantaged situations were accompanied by worse feelings and a worse relationship; difficulties in perceived power-disadvantaged situations were accompanied by worse feelings and a better relationship.

The findings suggest a connection between perceived power relations and the outcomes of interactions. The outcomes of difficulties between those perceived as equal were likely to be more positive than the outcomes between those perceived as unequal. The findings suggest that it could be easier to maintain relationships between equals
rather than to transform relationships between those who are not equal. Alternatively, the findings suggest that difficulties could provide a vehicle for the entrenchment and/or reproduction of unequal relationships. Therefore, it seems important that school personnel have strategies for addressing the power differences in young people’s relationships if they are to assist young people with transforming rather than entrenching negative relationships and, subsequently, with having more favourable than unfavourable outcomes to difficulties.

Within the power-differentiated scenarios, there were closeness but not gender (with one exception) or year group differences (with two exceptions) on outcomes. In the less power scenario, males rated their handling of the difficulty more positively than females and year group 7/8 (rather than 9/10) rated their relationship more positively afterwards than females. In the more power scenario, year group 9/10 (rather than 7/8) were more positive in rating their overall handling of the interpersonal difficulty. The young people rated the affect and relationship outcomes more positively when they were friends with the other(s) in each of the scenarios. They rated the evaluation outcome more positively when in dispute with friends when they perceived the power relations as advantaged (more power scenario). The young people’s feelings were friendlier and the relationship was better after a dispute with a friend. Therefore, relationship closeness appeared to mediate the affective and relational outcomes of disputes between peers, irrespective of the perceived power differential.

7.6.2 Outcomes: Bullying and conflict

The findings of scenario differences on outcomes do not appear consistent with findings related to bullying. The bullying studies have consistently reported negative outcomes, including negative affect, for those classified as victims and positive outcomes, including enhanced self-esteem and status, for those classified as bullies (Cullingford & Morrison, 1995, 1997; Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993; Smith, 1991). Theoretically, victims are those with less real or perceived power and bullies are those with more real or perceived power. The power relations of victims and bullies may approximate those in the current study who perceived their power as lower rather than higher within the less power scenario and higher rather than lower within the more power scenario respectively. The current results of less positive affect and relationship outcomes when participants perceived their power as more than the other(s) and more
positive affect and relationship outcomes when participants perceived their power as less than the other(s) are not consistent with bullying studies (Cullingford & Morrison, 1995, 1997; Rigby & Slee, 1991, 1993; Smith, 1991). However, without information on the outcomes for those with the highest and lowest perceived power, it can only be concluded that, in general, there were more positive outcomes for those with less rather than more perceived power and that those with equal perceived power reported the best affect and relationship outcomes.

The findings of closeness differences and not gender or year group differences on outcomes are partially consistent with findings related to conflict. Conflict studies (Laursen, 1993; Laursen et al., 1996) have reported findings of lower negative affect and more positive relationship outcomes when difficulties were with close peers. Arguably, close peers may have more equal power relations than others, which approximates with the power relations of those in the current study who perceived the interpersonal power relations as equal. It could be that participants tried to protect relationships with friends more so than with those who were not friends (Laursen & Collins, 1994). The results suggest support for exchange theories of relationships, whereby relationships that are more important are protected from disruption (Foa & Foa, 1974; Laursen, 1993; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Alternatively, problems between friends could vary in ways that make them more difficult to manage than those between peers who are not tied by friendship. The relationship distance itself could contribute to the motivation of parties to achieve outcomes that are more favourable. That is, if parties are already differentiated by power or distance, they may be more motivated to maintain their position than to feel happier or to have a better relationship. This could help to explain the more positive evaluation outcome for those with more rather than equal or less perceived power, that is, maintaining the power differential could be more important than improving the relationship or feeling better.

These findings suggest that power-differentiation in the relationship and relationship closeness more so than gender or year group are connected with the nature of the outcomes. It seems that when a relationship is already power-differentiated, the management of a difficulty does not necessarily mediate an improvement in the power relations, nor are parties necessarily motivated to achieve affect and relationship outcomes that are more positive.
7.6.3 Outcomes: Response differences

A general overview of the response differences showed clear trends within the power scenarios on outcomes. Adapters compared with non-adapters tended to feel better and have a better relationship after the difficulty but they tended to be less satisfied with their handling of the situation, although they did tend to feel more satisfied when they perceived a power-advantage (more power scenario). Distancers tended to feel worse, to have a worse relationship, and to be less satisfied with their handling than non-distancers. Dominators compared with non-dominators tended to feel worse and to have a worse relationship after the difficulty, although they also tended to be satisfied with their management of the situation. Engagers tended to feel better, to have a better relationship, and to be satisfied with their handling of the difficulty. Overall, the young people who used adapting and engaging and who did not use dominating and distancing tended to report a better conclusion to the difficulty.

More specifically, there were significant distancing, dominating, and engaging but not adapting responses differences with respect to outcomes within the perceived power-disadvantaged (less) and power-balanced (same scenarios). Distancers rated the outcomes less positively than non-distancers did, although the difference was not significant on the relationship outcome in the less power scenario. Dominators rated their affect less positively than non-dominators. Engagers rated the outcomes more positively than non-engagers did, although the difference was not significant for evaluation in the less power scenario. The results suggest that those who engaged with the other(s) in bringing the difficulty to a close were more positive on at least one outcome criterion than those who distanced themselves from the other(s) involved or tried to work out the difficulty by using force. Distancing oneself from a difficulty or trying to force acquiescence to one’s wishes may not achieve an amicable resolution. It could pave the way for future antagonism. Alternatively, engaging with the other(s) could provide the opportunity of achieving a mutually satisfying resolution could pave the way for an enhanced relationship. In terms of power and power relations, distancing and dominating suggest power-defensive and power-assertive approaches respectively, whilst engaging suggests a power-sharing approach.

The findings suggest support for the importance of the relationship when managing interpersonal difficulties. This is consistent with social relational approaches to adolescents’ conflicts (Hartup & Laursen, 1991; Laursen & Collins, 1994; Laursen, et
al., 1996), which describe the importance of protecting the relationship. The outcomes suggest that the young people selected responses that best suited the nature of the power relations and the nature of the relationship, which is consistent with other findings that more direct and interactive strategies were accompanied by less negative affect and were more socially desirable (Ohbuchi & Kitanaka, 1991). Direct and interactive strategies approximate with those termed engaging in the current study. The closeness differences with respect to outcomes are also consistent with findings of other studies that relationship enhancement is more predictive of the outcomes of interpersonal interactions than gender or age (Cowan et al., 1984; Ohbuchi & Kitanaka, 1991; Selman et al., 1986). It is also possible that young people strive to achieve the best outcomes for themselves in interpersonal difficulties in which they perceive themselves as power-disadvantaged (less power scenario). Those who perceive themselves having more power do not necessarily need to protect themselves, since their more powerful position advocates them interpersonally.

A further implication of the findings is that the perception of enhanced power did not appear to contribute to better outcomes for the young people. This appeared to be the case when the young people perceived themselves as being essentially power-advantaged (more) in the situation. It also seemed relevant for their use of engaging and not distancing and dominating. Arguably, engaging responses have the potential for outcomes that are more mutually satisfactory. Whereas, distancing and dominating do not appear to have the potential for mutual satisfaction and ultimately self-satisfaction. The finding suggests that young people preferred to work matters out rather than adopt a defensive (distancing) or attacking (dominating) approach.

### 7.6.4 Outcomes: Conclusions

Scenario and closeness differences on outcomes suggest that feminist structural and social psychological analyses can provide the most helpful explanations. The criteria by which the young people assessed the power relations in the interpersonal difficulty were not identified. They could have arisen from predetermined, structural factors (other than gender) or from hierarchical factors related to the school or peer group (other than year group). Closeness differences can represent appraisals of the relative distance and voluntariness of the parties in the relationship (Laursen, 1993) and appraisals of differences in structural and/or hierarchical status (see Foucault, 1980;
French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965, 1992, 1993). Closeness differences suggest appraisals of relative equality in the power relations. Therefore, it seems that the perceived power relations could have provided the context for the difficulty outcomes and that the perceived power relations within the difficulty context could have helped to mediate the outcomes.

Thematic appraisal of the nature of response items remains a matter of subjectivity. For example, it is not possible to predict whether disengaging (a distancing response) or welcoming (an adapting response) could help or hinder an interpersonal difficulty or its outcomes. The consequence of a strategy needs to be assessed in conjunction with the recipient’s experience (Cullingford & Morrison, 1995) and that of the initiator. The current study contends that the impact of a strategy can be best assessed through dialogue between the parties involved. This approach is consistent with alternative approaches to power relations, which involve caucusing and dialogue (Pikas, 1989; Schrumpf et al., 1997; Tamasese & Waldegrave, 1993; Tamasese et al., 1998).

7.7 Power and power relations: Scenario, gender, year group, and relationship closeness differences

The young people differentiated between situations with peers based on their perceptions of the interpersonal power balance as power-disadvantaged (less power scenario), power-balanced (same power scenario), and power-advantaged (more power scenario). For each of the three scenarios, they described an interpersonal difficulty and how they handled it and they rated the outcomes of the interactions. The four factors of scenario, gender, year group, and relationship closeness were explored to investigate whether any factor(s) mediated the type of responses selected or the outcomes. Structural analyses (as described by Foucault, 1980) contend that power relations are determined externally by factors such as gender, age, and culture. Hierarchical analyses (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965) contend that power relations are determined internally by factors such as organisational role. Hierarchical analyses (Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Laursen, 1993; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) also contend that power relations can be determined by the importance of the relationship. Therefore, in the current study, scenario, and relationship closeness could represent structural and/or hierarchical factors, depending on the criteria that formed the basis for the young people’s
perceptions of power relations. Gender and year group represent structural and hierarchical factors respectively.

There was consistent evidence throughout the study of the importance of scenario differences and very little support for gender or year group differences. More specifically, there was support for gender and year group differences on the form (physical, verbal, social) of interpersonal difficulty, but not on the type of response (adapting, distancing, dominating, engaging) or the outcomes (affect, relationship, evaluation). There was support for relationship closeness differences on the outcomes (affect, relationship, evaluation) of interactions only. In general, the findings suggest support for the role of power and power relations in the nature of adolescents’ school-based interactions with peers.

There were gender and type (physical, verbal, social) differences on the interpersonal difficulties within the three power-differentiated scenarios. However, it was not possible to identify whether the gender and type differences arose in response to the power relations or whether the nature of the power relations in the interpersonal context contributed to gender and type differences. Some researchers have argued that gender contributes to the nature of interpersonal behaviours because of role socialisation (Olweus, 1993; Rigby & Slee, 1993) whilst others have argued that gender differences can be explained by rate of socio-cognitive maturation (Owens & MacMullin, 1995). Gender differences were not consistent throughout the current study, therefore, it seems more likely that that the results can be explained by the nature of the power relations within each context.

Some researchers have placed findings of behavioural differences in adolescents’ school-based interactions in the wider socio-political contexts of the school and society (Cullingford & Morrison, 1995, 1997; Kreisberg, 1992; Malen, 1994; Wittes, 1970). They argued that students might reproduce externally determined power and power relations in their own relationships and that they could use interpersonal behaviours in ways consistent with authorities, such as teachers. Others have located differences within the peer group itself (Cullingford, 1991; Laursen, 1993; Laursen & Collins, 1994; Selman, et al., 1986), arguing that behavioural differences can be a function of the importance of the relationship. However, there were relationship closeness differences on outcomes but not on the type of difficulty or the type of responses, suggesting that this factor played an important but varied role in shaping the nature of peer interactions.
The findings that scenario, gender, year group, and relationship closeness each contributed differently to differences in interpersonal difficulty type, response methods, and outcomes indicates that the young people’s power relations could not be explained by one approach to power only. This finding adds further support to the contention of Beckwith (1999) that models of power and power relations bridging structural and post structural theories, and including psychological and other discourses are needed to explain power and power relations more comprehensively. The current study finds support for Kitzinger’s (1991, 1994) contention that the socio-political ramifications of alternate approaches to power need to be considered when explaining the formation and operation of power. However, the current study demonstrates that one theoretical approach, whichever that might be, can limit the understanding to be gained from exploring young people’s experiences of interpersonal relationships with peers and can limit the expansion of knowledge about power and power relations.

7.8 Discussion: Conclusion

This chapter has considered the findings resulting from the study of adolescents and power. The following chapter will specify a range of implications and propose ways of implementing this information within the school setting.
CHAPTER 8: SYNTHESIS OF THE STUDY OF ADOLESCENTS AND POWER

8.1 Overview

This chapter draws together the findings of the study of power between adolescents. The main findings and the possible explanations for them are synthesised. It suggests a range of therapeutic implications for school counsellors and implications for schools and school personnel. It appraises methodological issues that may have limited the research possibilities of the current study and which could be addressed differently in future studies. Subsequently, a preliminary model for understanding the nature of power and power relations between school-based adolescents is proposed. Finally, the chapter indicates possible directions for further exploration of adolescents and power.

8.2 Adolescents and power: Main findings

The current study gained information on how some young people understand the construct of power and power relations, the interpersonal difficulties that they can experience, how they can handle these situations, and the types of outcomes that they can experience. The study gathered information on some of the factors that can mediate young people’s negative interpersonal difficulties with peers. It gained some insights into ways of considering young people’s negative interactions with peers that are alternative to constructions of bullying and conflict, but which can be used in conjunction with these. The following sections synthesise these findings.

8.2.1 Understandings of power

The language used by the young people conveyed an overriding sense that, for those surveyed, power was more representative of principles of morality, integrity, and justice than principles of domination, subjugation, and control. The three themes that emerged of ‘power-within’, ‘power-with’, and ‘power-over’ demonstrated the young people’s relatively mature understanding of this complex phenomenon. The themes partly paralleled the three main theoretical frameworks for explaining power and power relations, that is, psychological, social psychological, and feminist psychological
approaches. However, it was clear that explaining the data from within a theoretical framework rather than allowing a theory or theories to emerge was not an adequate approach and could have lead to distortions or misrepresentations. Subsequently, it was evident that a single theory could not explain the findings comprehensively.

The young people’s descriptions indicated that internal and external factors played a role in their formulations of power and power relations. The findings support contentions that knowledge of power and power relations within the wider socio-political contexts of the peer group, school, and society (see Foucault, 1980; Kreisberg, 1992; Wittes, 1970), in addition to factors related to drive and motivation (Adler, 1927), is needed to explain and understand the nature of power between adolescent students. Therefore, explanations of the young people’s understandings of power need to draw on each of the available theoretical approaches, since these contribute individual and systemic accounts.

8.2.2 Interpersonal difficulties

The current study found that the two factors of initiator (form) and behaviour (type) emerged from the young people’s descriptions of interpersonal difficulties, suggesting a structure for the way that they view problems with peers. The young people were able to differentiate between difficulties based on their perceptions of the interpersonal power relations. The power relations specific to the context appeared to be more important than predetermined power relations based on gender, year group, and relationship closeness when considering the nature of the difficulties. However, in forming their perceptions, the young people used criteria that were not clearly identified. The criteria could relate to the culture of the peer group itself.

8.2.3 Responses

The young people described a wide range of strategies that they used to handle the difficulties with their peers, suggesting competency and creativity. Many of the responses matched those identified in other studies. However, attempts to partially replicate Falbo and Peplau’s (1980) two-dimensional model of the strategies used to resolve differences between close adults were not successful in the current study. Instead, four response groups of adapting, distancing, dominating, and engaging were
formed by appraisals of the thematic similarity of individual responses. It emerged that the young people in the current study used a responses type, adapting, possibly not found in other studies. The adapting responses reflected the young people’s willingness to take responsibility for making personal adjustments, consistent with the sense of personal agency that was evident in some of their descriptions of power and power relations. Furthermore, the current study found that when a group of psychologists rated the similarity of response item pairs the range of ratings indicated a divergence of opinion regarding the nature of the response items. This suggests the need for further exploration of individual items and their relationships with other items.

Analysis of the data indicated that the perceived power relations specific to the situation appeared to be more important compared with power relations based on gender, year group, and relationship closeness with respect to the selection of responses. However, again, the criteria used for forming these perceptions remain unclear. It was found that the young people most frequently used the adapting responses, although they were more discerning in their use of engaging, distancing, and dominating. The results indicated that the young people had a process for assessing the situation, assessing the best approach(es) to take, and then implementing the approach(es) with a view to resolving the problem (Raven, 1992, 1993).

8.2.4 Outcomes

The young people appraised the outcome of each difficult interpersonal situation by rating the three criteria of affect (their subsequent feelings), relationship (the subsequent relationship status), and evaluation (how well they handled the situation). The power relations characterising the particular situation and the power relations in the specific relationship appeared to be more important than the more global power relations determined by gender and year group with respect to the outcomes. Interestingly, perceptions of more power in the situation were not accompanied by better outcomes. Those in situations where the power relations with peers were perceived to be balanced reported the most favourable outcomes.

Although adapting responses were reported most frequently, the use of engaging was generally connected with the most favourable outcomes, and the use of distancing and dominating with the least favourable outcomes. Adapting and engaging responses are similar in tending to be prosocial and directed towards an enhanced outcome, by
contrast with dominating responses, which tend to be confrontational and directed towards maintaining the status quo regarding power divisions. Therefore, it could be predicted that responses that could improve situations are more likely to be preferred. Distancing responses appear to be less definable because they could be either aggressive or defensive and therefore, it is not surprising that they were associated with less favourable outcomes.

8.2.5 Theories of power

No unitary theoretical model for explaining power and power relations was comprehensive enough to explain the findings in the current study. However, each model contributed partial explanations. It became clear that psychological approaches focusing on the individual (Adler, 1927; Glasser, 1984; McAdams, 2001) provided some explanations for variation in the difficulties and responses reported by participants. Social psychological approaches focusing on context-specific hierarchical divisions (French & Raven, 1959; Kipnis, 1976; Laursen & Collins, 1994; Raven, 1992, 1993) and feminist psychological approaches focusing on socio-political structures (see Foucault, 1980) appeared to be most useful in explaining the scenario differences regarding difficulties, responses, and outcomes. Feminist post structural analyses of language (Carli, 1999; Reid & Ng, 1999) and personal or collective empowerment (Yuval-Davis, 1994) demonstrated the importance of deriving rather than only applying theory to the findings.

Models of power and power relations that bridge the divisions between these alternative theoretical approaches (Beckwith, 1999) without further entrenching or reproducing inequities in relationships between people (see Kitzinger, 1991, 1994) could be beneficial. This is particularly true regarding explanations of the power relations between school-based adolescent peers, given that the findings in the current study pointed to the roles of a range of individual, hierarchical, and structural factors.

8.3 Adolescents and power: Implications

As suggested in the introductory chapter, this study was intended to be dynamic and exploratory and it was anticipated that the findings could be useful for those engaged with secondary school adolescents. The following sections attempt to consider
the implications of the current study for those involved in a counselling relationship with school-based adolescents and for school personnel responsible for the education and well-being of the young people.

8.3.1 Therapeutic implications for school counsellors

School counsellors are required to assess negative interpersonal situations, identify appropriate therapeutic interventions for clients, who can include adolescents, administrators, teachers, and parents, and evaluate the outcomes of interventions. The current findings locate peers’ negative interpersonal interactions within the socio-political frameworks of the school and the peer group. Therefore, assessment of the nature of power in these contexts is important. Assessments that include the perceptions of both parties and possibly bystanders, whether in person or by using perspective-taking approaches, appear to arise from the findings relevant to this study.

The current study suggests that assessment procedures could include identification of clients’ (and others’) perceptions of the nature of the power division between themselves and others, clarification of clients’ processes for assessing situations, and identification of clients’ perceptions of their access to processes for methods of handling difficulties. The assessment process could take into account a range of personal factors, such as clients’ drives for power in conjunction with their desires for social interest and interpersonal factors, such as information about criteria for peer group divisions. It could consider the school environment, since this appears to frame the divisions and workings of power within it.

The current findings indicate that interventions designed to assist clients and other parties to engage in working out difficulties could be preferable to interventions designed to help clients adapt to situations. Interventions designed to assist clients with not using domination strategies to manage situations are suggested. Assisting clients with the use of distancing strategies may or may not be useful, since the strategies require further investigation. The preference for ‘power-within’ constructions of power followed by ‘power-with’ and ‘power-over’ constructions suggest a readiness amongst some young people to develop further their skills in personal and interpersonal agency. Therefore, interventions designed to assist clients (whatever their school status) towards enhancing their skills of engagement appears to be consistent with the young people’s approaches to power in general and could be consistent with the apparent receptivity of
the school environment. Furthermore, therapeutic interventions designed to assist clients with less power to enhance their sense of personal empowerment and to assist those with more power to understand the experience of others less powerful are suggested.

The three outcome criteria of affect, relationship, and evaluation appear useful methods of evaluating the effectiveness of interventions. The desire to protect a friendship or to maintain equality in a relationship appears to be a protective factor for the outcomes of peer interactions. An important challenge for school counsellors appears to be assisting young people who perceive themselves as being more powerful than the other(s) to achieve the most favourable outcomes. This seems to involve helping them to moderate their use of power so as to feel better after the difficulty and to achieve a better relationship rather than rate their handling as effective, irrespective of the affective and relationship outcomes.

The findings imply that school counsellors could contribute to the development of collaborative power relations between all members of the school community.

8.3.2 Implications for schools and school personnel

The identification of the contribution of contextual factors to the young people’s understandings of power, access to power, and use of power highlights the importance of school environments in teaching school-based adolescents about power and power relations (Kreisberg, 1992). The current study showed that the nature of power in the young people’s school-based interactions with peers involved both internal, individual factors and external, contextual factors. Therefore, the findings suggest that school practices and relationships with school personnel are important sources of knowledge and provide important learning opportunities for students about power and power relations. Awareness of the power divisions within the school, differences in access to power and differences in the use of power could contribute useful information to school personnel.

The current findings suggest that school personnel could avoid procedures that too readily label peer interactions as bullying or conflict. It seems that developing procedures that assess the interpersonal relationship by acquiring information from at least dual perspectives (agent, target) on students’ perceptions of the power relations, their perceptions of the initiator of the difficulty, the behaviours involved and the responses made could be a useful starting point. The study supports the findings of
Guerin and Hennessy (2002) and demonstrates that deconstruction of interpersonal situations into the perceived power divisions rather than application of predetermined typologies could contribute to outcomes that are more favourable for peers.

It seems that schools have the opportunity to explore ways of interacting and methods of managing difficulties between those who are power-differentiated, such as between staff and students, that legitimise engaging rather than dominating types of strategies. The use of power-sharing (engaging) rather than power-assertive (dominating) approaches could provide students with alternative approaches to interpersonal relationships and could provide relationships training that enhances rather than diminishes the relationship quality (Huesmann et al., 1984).

Models of power relations that address inequities arising from power-differentiated relationships within hierarchically and/or structurally determined contexts could provide useful information for school personnel (Tamasese & Waldegrave, 1993; Tamasese et al., 1998). More specifically, recognition of the potential negative effects of power-differentiation between peers and restorative principles of power sharing rather than power-assertion are captured in the Method of Shared Concern (Pikas, 1989) and in peer mediation (Scrumpf et al., 1997). These methods could be useful in addressing negative interpersonal interactions between peers who are relatively equal in power. However, the findings of the current study that the outcomes of interpersonal interactions were connected with the contextual power relations suggests that these methods might not necessarily be as useful in addressing difficulties where the power divisions between peers are more pronounced. In such situations, it seems that the power relations themselves need to be addressed before interpersonal difficulties are approached. Therefore, attention to the power relations using, for example, the partnership accountability model (Tamasese & Waldegrave, 1993) might need to precede the use of models for addressing specific interpersonal difficulties (Pikas, 1989; Schrumpf et al., 1997).

The findings that the young people described power in ways that did not emphasise domination and that the group was relatively robust in terms of perceptions of their power provide support for the potential value of the school environment in contributing to healthier approaches to power access and use and to power relations. Therefore, the current study has implications for the nature of the power relations expressed by all personnel within the school environment.
8.4 Adolescents and power: Methodological issues

Three main methodological issues arose in conducting this study. The first relates to the composition of the participant sample. The second concerns the presentation of the survey. A third issue concerned the use of a self-report questionnaire. Discussion of each issue follows.

8.4.1 Participant sample

The sample in the current study comprised participants from one single sex girls’ secondary school and one co-educational high school. The study was limited to some extent by the lack of data from a single sex boys’ secondary school. The availability of such data would have allowed for further examination of the role of gender (a structural factor) in the nature of the students’ peer relations. In addition, participants were recruited from two schools with a similar religious affiliation. Analysis of the data relating to understandings of power indicated that the ideas of some participants’ suggested their internalisation of an external authority, possibly religious in nature. Therefore, recruitment of participants from schools that had a different religious affiliation, or none could have allowed for comparisons of the role that religious context might contribute to students’ understandings of power.

8.4.2 Survey presentation

The “Young People’s School Relationships” survey was presented in the same way for each participant. Counterbalancing the ordering of the power scenarios could have allowed for the collection of a more even spread of power-differentiated data. This could have allowed for further analyses, which were sometimes limited in the current study because of the expected number of participants who completed the questions relating to the last presented scenario (more perceived power). Specifically, counterbalancing the ordering of the scenarios before presentation of the survey could have allowed for an increase in data related to situations in which participants perceived themselves at a power-advantage (more power scenario).
8.4.3 Self-report survey

The survey design required participants to provide self-reports of their experiences. There was evidence that participants sometimes discounted their need for social acceptance, for example, when identifying themselves as the initiators on interpersonal difficulties and when nominating themselves as the power-holder in the power-advantaged situations (more power scenario). However, desire for social acceptance can confound and/or limit the potential of self-report data for exploring a topic as fully as possible (Murphy & Davidshofer, 2001). Self-report questions do not allow for the gathering of corroborative data from the other(s) in the nominated interpersonal difficulties.

However, perception is a fundamental feature of interpersonal interactions and the current study was designed to investigate the role of perception in adolescent’s understandings of power and experiences of power relations. To extend on the information gained from self-report data, the perceptions and experiences of both parties (at least) in an interpersonal interaction could be obtained.

8.5 A possible model of power and power relations: Overview

Theoretical approaches to power and the findings of the current study support the power-differentiated nature of the peer group and contribute to an understanding of the nature of power relations between school-based adolescents. The current findings showed that adolescents’ seemed to have differential access to, and made differential use of power. A range of factors mediating differential power use was identified, as were the outcomes of power usage in interpersonal situations with peers. Because of these explorations, several issues regarding the nature of the power relations between school-based adolescents were raised.

The issues include how to synthesize available analyses of power to account adequately for power relations within the school and peer contexts. They include the indication of a need to deconstruct current categorisations of peer interactions and to develop additional ways of describing and understanding peer interactions. Finally, they question how to develop ways of dialoguing with the power-holders and non power-holders of the school and peer group that allow for the development of a shared language of power relations.
The Power Interaction Model (Raven, 1992, 1993) emerged as a useful tool for explaining aspects of the processes involved in the young people’s selection and of power usage methods. In addition, the multi-causal approach to explaining bullying described by Mooij (1993) appears to have application to the power relations of school-based adolescents because it can provide a further framework for explaining peer relations, whether bullying or not. The following sections present a preliminary model that attempts to synthesize some of the information gained from theoretical approaches to power, research related to power and power relations, and the findings of the current study. Used in conjunction with the Power Interaction Model and Mooij’s multidimensional approach, it is intended to suggest some ways of addressing the nature of power between school-based adolescents. The model could provide a basis for further theoretical and research interest.

8.5.1 Peer power relations model: Features

The importance of the current investigation and the main issues were outlined in chapter 1. It is proposed that a model of peer relations that begins to synthesize current knowledge about power and peer relations and draws on the findings of the current study could highlight the potential benefits to all school personnel of understanding the nature of power between school-based adolescents.

It seems that a model of peer power relationships could incorporate the features of context, identity, perception, motivation, language, process, and outcomes. The possible roles of each factor in understanding the nature of power in peer relations is described below. It is intended that all school personnel have access to the questions associated with the power relations of peers in a school-context and to the construction of responses to such questions. Therefore, the model of peer relations suggested here is intended to be accessed by all parties irrespective of their relative positionings.

8.5.2 Context

Structural and hierarchical analyses of power suggest that school-based adolescents are located within societal, school, and peer group contexts. Peer group contexts comprise the whole peer cohort and the sub-groups of peers, including friendship groups. Contexts may create or reproduce inequitable power relations.
Context also refers to the nature of specific peer relationships and the extent to which it is close and/or important. An understanding of contextual factors could contribute to knowledge of peers’ differential access to power. To understand the nature of peer relations, knowledge of the relative positionings of students seems important.

8.5.3 Identity

Peer relations are a product of history and history in the making. Arguably, peers bring to their current relationships previous learnings about power and power relations, about how people relate, and the relational behaviours to which they have access. Peers bring with them a personal history of desire for power and concern for their place in society, whether that is the peer group, peer cohort, or the school group. The personal histories and present circumstances of peers could contribute to the nature of their immediate relations with others. Possibly, the school, peer cohort, and peer subgroups could be considered to have individuality as well, raising the possibility that school-based groups can have differential access to power arising from their collective histories, drives for power, and concerns for social appeal.

8.5.4 Perception

Relative positionings within structures and hierarchies involves the facility to perceive the status of oneself relative to the other(s) and of the other(s) relative to the group(s). Peer relations involve mutual perceptions. Understanding peer relations could involve discerning and articulating the perceptions of parties with respect to power. The criteria contributing to perceptions of relative power could assist with understanding the ways in which peers use available methods of power. There might be collective perceptions ascribed by the school, peer cohort, and peer subgroups to each other. Gathering multi perceptions can contribute to clarity regarding the nature of problems (Guerin & Hennessy, 2002) and avoid the imposition of predetermined constructions or untested assumptions about the nature of interactions.
8.5.5 Motivation

Peer relations appear to involve to some extent individual motivations, which may or may not be resonant with the individual. Parties can attribute motivation to each other with degrees of accuracy. The motivation of parties in a relationship seems to contribute to the ways in which parties resolve differences and the extent to which they are committed to maintaining the relationship. Understanding the motivations of peers could contribute to an understanding of the relative importance of the relationship and the responses made by peers during occasions of interpersonal difficulty. The school, peer cohort, and peer subgroups could have collective motivations, which peer relations could match to a greater or lesser extent.

8.5.6 Language

Power-holders have access to the means of maintaining power through language. The language used to describe, define, and characterise the peer relations of school-based adolescents appears to be more accessible to school-based adults. The language of peers with respect to describing, define, and characterising their relations, appears to be relatively unheard and/or not articulated. Addressing this silence by providing school-based adolescents with greater access to language could help to develop new knowledge about how they understand power, how they understand their relations, and how they could become involved with the transformation of power relations within the peer group. Conversely, it seems the extent to which shared dialogue is accommodated mutually and encouraged could assist with identifying the nature of the power relations in a school or peer context.

8.5.7 Process

Theoretically, peers have access to a range of procedural steps for achieving their interpersonal and/or personal goals. Knowledge of these steps and understanding of their usage could contribute to an understanding of the enactment of power relations. In addition, knowledge of the processes by which other groups determine their access to power and decide on their use of power could also help to provide insight into the workings of power between peers.
8.5.8 Outcomes

Theoretically, peers could have differential access to the outcomes deriving from their interpersonal relations. Knowledge about the factors associated with differential outcomes may or may not be available to peers. Understanding the nature of power between school-based peers, could involve peers in clarifying, articulating, and naming their experiences with a view to generating mutually agreeable outcomes. It could be argued that the outcome of peer power relations are in tension with the outcomes of other groups and that the extent to which these are consistent suggests the extent to which there is transformation of unhealthy power relations.

8.5.9 Peer Power Relations Model: Representation

A representation intended to illustrate the interconnections between the seven factors is presented in Figure 8.1.
8.5.10 Peer power relations model: Description

The peer power relations model shown in Figure 8.1 aims at representing the seven factors identified from available theory and research and from the findings of the
current study related to the power relations between school-based peers. It is proposed that there are four main contexts for the power relations of school-based peers: school, peer group, peer groups, and self. It is theorized that power relations could be layered, with structural approaches to power proposed as underpinning other power relations and power relations involving an interplay between structural, hierarchical, peer group, peer groups, and individual factors.

It is suggested that language could provide a gateway through which power relations are reproduced and/or created. The language gateway allows for the dynamic and interconnected flow of information and knowledge. It is proposed that perception, motivation, individuality, and outcomes are in dynamic relationship with each other and with the contexts.

The model is intended to partly describe and explain power relations between school-based adolescent peers and to contribute to dialogue between those involved in negative interactions.

8.5.11 Peer power relations model and the current study

It is hoped that the peer power relations model might contribute to further explorations of the nature of power between school-based adolescents with a view to enhancing the relationships of all school personnel.

8.6 Adolescents and power: Future directions

The current study aimed to explore the nature of the power relations between school-based adolescents. Therefore, there is scope for further and more extensive exploration of this topic. More specifically, the findings suggest the need for the research of five main issues. The first relates to the young people’s understandings of power. Secondly, there is scope for exploration of the criteria and continuums that form the basis for young people’s assessments of the power relations with peers. A third issue concerns the use of alternative methodologies for exploring the power relations involved in adolescents’ peer interactions. There is scope for investigating further the types of responses that young people use in interpersonal interactions and the nature of power in these responses. Finally, the findings suggest the need for a theoretical
framework within which to explore the power relations between school-based adolescents more comprehensively.

The thematic representations of the young people’s descriptions of power and power relations in the current study were preliminary and were limited by the lack of data from a broader representation of adolescents. Therefore, there is scope for the gathering of data from a wider cross-section of school-based adolescents, such as from those in rural areas and from those in non-government schools.

The current study highlighted the need for more information on the basis for students’ perceptions of the power relations with peers. The study demonstrated the importance of perception, as distinct from predetermined constructions, in the nature of young people’s understandings of, and experiences with power and power relations. The language and culture of school-based adolescents is hidden from other school-based personnel. Therefore, it is difficult to identify the criteria by which students differentiate those within a peer group and between peer groups. This information could be helpful in assessing the nature of peer interactions more comprehensively.

The self-report methodology used in the current study did not allow for communication between participants and those with whom they had experienced difficulties. Methodologies that allow for the generation of corroborative data from both parties in an interaction could contribute further insights into the processes by which adolescents assess the power relations of others and select response strategies.

The current study demonstrated the difficulties in attempting to categorise responses to interpersonal difficulties. It seems that individual responses could be power-differentiated. Responses can also reflect variation in the motivation of users and in the effects on recipients. The behavioural correlates of interactions form the basis for classifications of interactions. Therefore, it is important to understand the nature of responses, whether termed strategies, tactics, or behaviours, in order to make accurate assessments of the interactions between school-based adolescents.

Psychological, social psychological, and feminist psychological approaches to power provide, to a certain extent, competing explanations of the nature of power between school-based adolescents and have different socio-political ramifications. The current study indicates the limitations to single perspective explanations of the results. There was evidence to suggest that a more comprehensive approach to explaining the power relations between school-based adolescents is required.
Overall, the findings of the current study suggest that silence from young people is not productive. Alternatively, inviting, listening to, and dialoguing with school-based adolescents could make a significant contribution towards the immediate and long-term quality of interpersonal relationships and of socio-political power relations.
REFERENCES


Rigby, K., & Barnes, A. (2002). To tell or not to tell: The victimized student’s dilemma. *Youth Studies Australia, 21*, 33-36.


APPENDIX A

“Young people’s school relationships” survey

PART A

Please circle your gender, A or B, and your Year level.

People talk about having POWER. Write or draw…

…..what it means to have POWER within yourself…

…..what it means to have POWER between people…
Now, please circle the letter showing how much **POWER** you think **you** have in each situation:

**Amongst your friends?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lots&amp;lots</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Almost No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>B.</td>
<td>C.</td>
<td>D.</td>
<td>E.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Within your class...?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lots&amp;lots</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Almost No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>B.</td>
<td>C.</td>
<td>D.</td>
<td>E.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Within yourself...?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lots&amp;lots</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Almost no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>B.</td>
<td>C.</td>
<td>D.</td>
<td>E.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Remember the biggest problem between you and someone(s) your age at school this year when it seemed you had less power than the other person(s).

NO NAMES, PLEASE!

What happened during this problem was....

The things I did to handle the problem were....

I thought I had less power because.....

My relationship with this person(s)...
Put the letters in the boxes.

During the problem, we were   Now, we are   .
My thoughts about the power between us.....
Put the letters in the boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lots&amp;lots</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Almost No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>B.</td>
<td>C.</td>
<td>D.</td>
<td>E.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the problem, I had [ ] power and the other(s) had [ ] power.

Now, I have [ ] power and the other(s) has [ ] power.

My feelings towards the other(s).....
Put the letters in the boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very friendly</th>
<th>Friendly</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Angry</th>
<th>Very Angry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☀</td>
<td>⭐</td>
<td>☁</td>
<td>⬇️</td>
<td>⚡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>B.</td>
<td>C.</td>
<td>D.</td>
<td>E.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the problem, I felt [ ] towards the other(s).

Now, I feel [ ] towards the other(s).

How are things between you now?
Circle the letter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Much better</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>The Same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>Much Worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🔻</td>
<td>⬆️</td>
<td>⬠</td>
<td>⬇️</td>
<td>⬠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>B.</td>
<td>C.</td>
<td>D.</td>
<td>E.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do you think you handled the problem?
Circle the letter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Not well</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☀</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⬠</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| A.        | B.        | C.           | D.       | E. }
Next, remember the biggest problem between you and someone(s) your age at school this year when it seemed you had about the same amount of power as the other person(s). NO NAMES, PLEASE!

What happened during this problem was....

The things I did to handle the problem were....

I thought I had about the same amount of power because.....

My relationship with this person(s)...
Put the letters in the boxes.

Friends, same group

Not friends, same group

Friends, different group

Not friends different group

A. B. C. D.

During the problem, we were    . Now, we are    .
My thoughts about the power between us.....
Put the letters in the boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lots&amp;lots</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Almost No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the problem, I had ☐ power and the other(s) had ☐
Now, I have ☐ power and the other(s) has ☐ power.

My feelings towards the other(s).....
Put the letters in the boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very friendly</th>
<th>Friendly</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Angry</th>
<th>Very Angry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☀</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>☁️</td>
<td>☁️️</td>
<td>⚡️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the problem, I felt ☐ towards the other.
Now, I feel ☐ towards the other(s).

How are things between you now?
Circle the letter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Much better</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>The Same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>Much Worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>←</td>
<td>↘️</td>
<td>↔️️️</td>
<td>↘️️️</td>
<td>↓️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do you think you handled the problem?
Circle the letter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Not well</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🌟</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️️</td>
<td>⭐️️️</td>
<td>⚡️️️️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, remember **the biggest problem between you and someone(s) your age** at school this year when it seemed you had **more power** than the other person(s).

NO NAMES, PLEASE!

What happened during this problem was....

The **things** I did to **handle** the problem were....

I thought I had **more power** because.....

**My relationship with this person(s)....**

*Put the letters in the boxes.*

- Friends, **same group**  
- Not friends, **same group**  
- Friends, **different group**  
- Not friends, **different group**

**During the problem,** we were  
**Now, we are**
My thoughts about the power between us.....
Put the letters in the boxes.

Lots&lots A Lot Some A little Almost No

A. B. C. D. E.

During the problem, I had [ ] power and the other(s) had [ ].

Now, I have [ ] power and the other(s) has [ ] power.

My feelings towards the other(s).....
Put the letters in the boxes.

Very friendly Friendly Neutral Angry Very Angry

A. B. C. D. E.

During the problem, I felt [ ] towards the other(s).

Now, I feel [ ] towards the other(s).

How are things between you now?
Circle the letter.

Much better Better The Same Worse Much Worse

A. B. C. D. E.

How do you think you handled the problem?
Circle the letter.

Excellent Very well Satisfactory Not well Poor

A. B. C. D. E.
These are some other things that I would like to say, or draw, about problems between people my age. Or, these are some other ideas about good ways of handling problems. Or, these are some other ideas about power....

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR BEING INVOLVED IN THIS SURVEY
Dear Parents/Guardians and Students,

I am writing to tell you about a research project that I am conducting, and to invite students to participate. The project title is “Young People’s School Relationships” and it aims to explore some of the factors affecting the quality of young people’s relationships with their peers. In particular, it aims to explore the effects that differences in the power between young people might have on their relationships. I am hoping that the findings of the project will assist staff and students with making school as friendly a place as possible.

The project invites students from Years 7 to 10 complete a “School Peer Relationships Survey”. The survey is constructed to be as respectful as possible of participants. So, it invites participants to respond to a minimum number of questions, and it hopes to be engaging in its presentation. This is a brief outline of the questions:

♦ Background Information (gender, Year level)
♦ Your understandings regarding “power” between people your age
♦ Recall tasks: personal experiences of problems with peers, how you felt about your experiences and handled these problems.

The survey will take between 35 and 45 minutes to complete during school time. Participants will not be asked for any personal information, so all answers will be anonymous and confidential. Any participants completing the survey will be able to stop at any time. Depending on their experiences, some participants may experience some discomfort. Information on what to do should there be need for any follow-up afterwards will be provided.
I would like to carry out the survey towards the end of term 3, 2000. I envisage that a preliminary report will be available early in 2001. I will advise you of how to access the report in future communications.

Any questions regarding the project titled, “Young People’s School Relationships” can be directed to the Senior Investigator Professor Sue Moore of the Department of Psychology on 9214 5694. Any complaints or questions not answered satisfactorily can be directed to the Head of the Psychology Department, Dr Ann Knowles on 9214 8000. Alternatively, you can forward the same to:

The Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee
Swinburne University of Technology
P.O. Box 218
Hawthorn VIC 3122
Phone: (03) 9214 5223.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of this request.

Yours sincerely,

Jenny Ricketts
Consent of Parent(s)/Guardian(s) for adolescent to participate in the study, “Young People’s School Relationships”

I/we have read the above information and understand what will be required of my/our adolescent. I/we have been satisfied with the answers provided for any questions. I/we also understand that my/our adolescent may withdraw from the study at any time. I/we agree that the data collected will remain anonymous and that only group findings might be published or used in any way.

Thus, I/we give permission for my/our adolescent,

___________________________________________________________(name),

to participate in this study of the factors affecting young people’s relationships with their peers at school.

SIGNATURE:_______________________________________________DATE:…

Mother □   Father □   Guardian □

SIGNATURE:_______________________________________________DATE:…

Mother □   Father □   Guardian □
Consent of student to participate in the study,
“Young People’s School Relationships”

I _____________________________(name) understand what will be required of me and agree to participate in the study. I also understand that I can withdraw from the study at any point.

SIGNATURE: …………………………………………………..DATE:………….

Please return this consent form immediately to the Pastoral Care Teacher.

Thank you for your time.

Jenny Ricketts
I am currently studying at Swinburne University of Technology. As part of the work requirements, I would like to conduct a research project into the relationships between students whilst at school. To be able to make this project worthwhile, I need to get some important information from young people in Years 7, 8, 9, and 10. I hope that you will participate in this study by completing this survey.

The following survey should take you no more than 40 minutes to complete. I would like you to concentrate on your own experiences at school this year and to answer some questions about them. The survey has three main parts:

Part A: Background Information: gender, Year level, views about “power” between people
Part B: Recall tasks: experiences with other students at school this year, feelings, responses, outcomes
Part C: Any further ideas about relationships between peers.

No-one will know who gives which answers. Your answers will be totally anonymous and confidential. You are NOT asked to put your name or any identification on the survey. Your answers will be put together with about 300 others and only this whole group information will be reported. Please take your time to answer as many questions as you can, and as fully and honestly as possible.

You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to. You can also stop at any stage once you have started. You will not be in any trouble if you do withdraw.

If you have any questions about the survey or about the project please Sue Moore (9214 5694) or Jenny Ricketts here at school. If you would like some help with anything that you have written about here, or any thoughts or feelings that it has aroused, then please talk to someone you trust. You might think of talking to:
♦ a trusted adult (parent/guardian, teacher, counsellor..)
♦ a trusted friend or sibling
♦ someone at Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800

Any one of these people will help you to work out what you might do next.

Thank you very much for your help.
APPENDIX C

Follow-up letter to parents/guardians

5 October 2000

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s),

Thank you for giving permission for your daughter(s) to take part in the research project “Young People’s School Relationships” which I am conducting as part of my studies at Swinburne. The topic arises from my experiences in schools - working with young people, staff and parents. Undertaking such a project at a tertiary institution carries the benefits of expert supervision and careful scrutiny. I am hoping that the results will be useful in developing strategies to teach students how to cope better in peer relationships, and ultimately, to further enhance school friendliness.

Aim

My main aim in the study is to try to understand the effects that power has on relationships and how adolescents cope with problems involving a difference of power between themselves and others. To examine this aim, I have developed a “Peer School Relationships Survey”. It is designed to be creative, appealing, and as respectful as possible. It acknowledges the value of adolescents’ experiences and insights, and invites them to share these, as they are comfortable to do so.

Survey Questions

You may be interested in some more information on the kinds of questions I will be asking your daughter(s). This is an overview:

- The first section asks for some background information on gender and Year Level. It also explores adolescents’ understanding of power in their relationships with their peers, and asks them to estimate how much power they think they have with their friends, within their class, and within themselves.
- In the second section, I ask adolescents to remember a problem they have had at school this year with someone else their age, to describe it briefly,
and to say how they handled it. I am interested in how they estimated the balance of power in this situation, and how they rated the impact of what happened and the effectiveness of what they did.

- The third section invites adolescents to contribute any other relevant insights or thoughts.

I think that most or all of the students will find the exercise challenging, interesting and enjoyable. However, it is possible that, in recalling a problem, some young people may experience some upset, because of that problem or because of other situations in their lives. In the unlikely event that your child does experience distress after completing the survey, you have several options. You could call me, or speak to another member of staff, or ring Parent Line on 132289. The young people themselves will be informed of people to whom they can talk should they become upset. These include a trusted adult, myself, and Kids Help Line on 1800 551 800.

The results of this study will be used to inform, complement, and enhance current school policies, such as the “Healthy Relationships Policy”. The findings may eventually be published in a professional journal, and so be of benefit to other educators and school counsellors. You can be assured that neither the school nor any participant will be identified (or indeed identifiable) in the final report. This report will be written in consultation with the School Principal to ensure that anonymity is maintained. My focus will be to present the study findings in ways that emphasize the strengths of young people and their management strategies in the face of problems.

Please let me know if you would like any further information. I will be only too pleased to show you a copy of the survey and to explore with you any ideas that you have regarding this topic. This could happen now, or when the study is completed.

Yours sincerely,

Jenny Ricketts
### APPENDIX D

**Coding sheet: Meaning of power**

Meaning of power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quoted Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power-within</strong></td>
<td>Actions, relationships, and attributes that are self-directed, self-generating and for which the individual takes personal responsibility.</td>
<td>To do what you think is right and not let anyone push you around. To be able to have a say in things with people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power-with</strong></td>
<td>Actions, relationships and attributes that are based on mutuality, collaboration and interconnectedness.</td>
<td>Together having the strength to do hard things and be civilized. To trust and show respect for each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power-over</strong></td>
<td>Actions, relationships and attributes that are self-generating, directed against others, and involve domination and control.</td>
<td>One could be higher or stronger. Someone seeing another person feel small and helpless.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX E

**Coding sheet: Interpersonal difficulties**

### Interpersonal Difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quoted Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-way physical</td>
<td>Both parties are reported using negative physical actions towards each other.</td>
<td>She pushed so I pushed her and then we started hitting each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way verbal</td>
<td>Both parties are reported using negative verbal exchanges.</td>
<td>An argument over ideas for school work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way social</td>
<td>Both parties are reported instigating a change, or disruption to the relationship.</td>
<td>She was being annoying by disturbing me and when I told her to stop it she turned her back on me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way physical</td>
<td>The respondent reports the other(s) directing negative physical actions towards him/her.</td>
<td>The girl with the locker on top of me would not let me in to get my things, then I would be late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way verbal</td>
<td>The respondent reports the other(s) directing negative verbal communication towards him/her.</td>
<td>A boy said I would never have friends because I was a loner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way social</td>
<td>The respondent reports the other(s) instigating change, or disruption to the established relationship.</td>
<td>She tries to push me out of the group I’m in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way physical</td>
<td>The respondent reports directing negative physical actions towards the other(s).</td>
<td>I stole something of his and he found out it was me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way verbal</td>
<td>The respondent reports directing negative verbal communication towards the other(s).</td>
<td>I told her no wonder she didn’t have any friends because she was just a bitch to everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-way social</td>
<td>The respondent reports causing change, or disruption to the established relationship.</td>
<td>I don’t want this boy to stay with us but he doesn’t go away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third party</td>
<td>The respondent reports voluntary or involuntary involvement in another(s) problem.</td>
<td>People were calling each other names.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

Coding sheet: Responses

Definitions and Examples of the 15 Response Types Found in the Survey Topic, “The things I did to handle the problem were..”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Adjusting</td>
<td>Letting go, establishing a new outlook or friendship</td>
<td>I just tried to get on with my life I just forgot about her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Asking</td>
<td>Making a simple request</td>
<td>I asked her what I did I asked her not to do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Asserting</td>
<td>Forcefully asserting one’s way</td>
<td>I told them I didn’t want to get involved I stood up for myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Avoiding</td>
<td>Keeping out of the way, removing physical presence</td>
<td>I stayed as far away as possible I didn’t look at her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Coaching</td>
<td>Talking oneself through the situation</td>
<td>I changed the problem around It’s not the end of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 disclosing</td>
<td>Telling a third party, confiding in another(s)</td>
<td>I told my parents I talked to the counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Disengaging</td>
<td>Refusing to do, think or say anything about the situation</td>
<td>I didn’t really do anything I just let it fade away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Ignoring</td>
<td>Giving them no attention, overlooking</td>
<td>I ignored him I didn’t listen to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Persuading</td>
<td>Simple statements about using persuasion, convincing or coaxing</td>
<td>I tried to make the person believe me I tried to get them to talk to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Reconciling</td>
<td>Restoring the relationship by making up, apologizing, or compromising</td>
<td>I apologized We just went and had a picnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Regulating</td>
<td>Choosing how to behave, using self-control</td>
<td>I tried not to get embarrassed I took it slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Retaliating</td>
<td>Seeking revenge or retribution through physical or verbal means</td>
<td>I did to him what he did to me I called her a slut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Talking</td>
<td>Discussing the matter, engaging in conversation about the matter</td>
<td>I talked it over with him I talked out the problem with her</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Welcoming</td>
<td>Acting positively towards the other party, encouraging, inviting</td>
<td>I smiled at her I started being nicer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Withdrawing</td>
<td>Withdrawing affection, growing silent, becoming cold and distant</td>
<td>I didn’t hang round them again I stopped talking to them</td>
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APPENDIX G
Multidimensional scaling procedures

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE RESPONSE TYPE MATRIX

1. Read the description and example of each response type.
2. Move down the left hand column and across each row of the matrix.
3. In turn, consider how closely a response resembles each other response type.
4. Rate this closeness on a 10-point scale:

no resemblance 0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9 almost identical
RATINGS MATRIX

Please rate the closeness of the response groups on a scale of 0 to 9. That is, the more closely you rate the resemblance of two response groups, the higher the number you will use. The less closely you rate the resemblance of two response groups, the lower the number you will use. The matrix is symmetrical, so only half needs to be completed.

No resemblance 0……1……2……3……4……5……6……7……8……9 Almost Identical

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Please return the completed matrix to me in the envelope provided, or e-mail it if you prefer.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Jenny Ricketts