Explaining the gender differences in perceptions of child sexual abuse

By

Andrea Bennet

B.A. (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University

September, 2011
I am the author of the thesis entitled: Explaining the gender differences in perceptions of child sexual abuse.

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This thesis may be made available for consultation, loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

'I certify that I am the student named below and that the information provided in the form is correct'

Full Name: Andrea Bennet

Signed: [Signature Redacted by Library]

Date: 24.09.14
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
CANDIDATE DECLARATION

I certify the following about the thesis entitled: “Explaining the gender differences in perceptions of child sexual abuse” submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

a. I am the creator of all or part of the whole work(s) (including content and layout) and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

b. The work(s) are not in any way a violation or infringement of any copyright, trademark, patent, or other rights whatsoever of any person.

c. That if the work(s) have been commissioned, sponsored or supported by any organisation, I have fulfilled all of the obligations required by such contract or agreement.

I also certify that any material in the thesis which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any university or institution is identified in the text.

‘I certify that I am the student named below and that the information provided in the form is correct’

Full Name: Andrea Bennet

Signed: [Signature Redacted by Library]

Date: 24.09.14
Abstract

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious problem, often leading to severe mental health consequences for victims into adulthood and beyond (Higgins & McCabe, 1994; Mullers & Dowling, 2008). The World Health Organization (2004) has described CSA as a ‘silent emergency’ as it often goes unnoticed and is grossly under-reported, the rate of reporting being approximately 2-7.5% of all abuse globally (Anderson, Martin, Mullen, & Romans, 1993; Finkelhor & Hotaling, 1984; Russell & Walker, 1988).

Furthermore, CSA is a crime with one of the lowest convictions rates (Taylor, 2007). Reasons for the low conviction rates include cases being characterised by a lack of eyewitnesses, as well as a lack of forensic and other corroborative evidence. Consequently, successful prosecution of these cases often hangs on the testimony of a child (Cossins, 2006a,b, 2008; Yurchesyn, Keith, & Renner, 1992), and therefore, the credibility of the child's evidence becomes a critical factor (Cossins, Goodman-Delahunty & O'Brian, 2009).

Another reason why child sex offenders may avoid conviction is that jurors may be affected, to some extent, by misconceptions surrounding children’s testimonies (Andrews, Gould, & Corry, 2002; Berkoff et al., 2008; Cossins, 2006a,b, 2008; Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins & O'Brien, 2011, Taylor, 2007). In a report by the Victorian Law Reform Commission (2004), it was concluded that “Juries can be influenced by their own experience and attitudes and may rely on common myths about sexual assault during decision making” (p.xxxviii). Because of these findings, the Australian Institute of Criminology has called for research addressing juror’s belief
structures and how these may impact upon judgements in sexual abuse cases (Taylor, 2007), which the current thesis aimed to do.

The aim of the current thesis was to investigate adults’ (i.e., potential jurors’) judgements (victim/complainant credibility, sexual naivety and culpability) regarding CSA and how perceiver gender, empathy, myth endorsement and complainant age (5, 10 and 15 year old female) may influence how CSA complainants are perceived. The main focus of the thesis was understanding why previous research has consistently found that women are more pro-victim than men. Three studies (surveys) were conducted: Study 1 utilised a qualitative research design while studies 2 and 3 were quantitative research designs.

Studies 1 and 2 addressed some methodological limitations in research into judgements regarding CSA and how these limitations may have contributed to what is currently known about gender differences in perceptions of CSA. Study 1 addressed whether gender perception differences in CSA studies could be explained by vignette characteristics, namely the amount of detail about the CSA abuse that vignettes provide (vignette length) and how this may impact on participants’ inferences about the case. Study 2 extended Study 1 by assessing whether varying vignette length impacted on participants’ judgements and their ability to relate to (sympathise, empathise and identify) the complainant and perpetrator of CSA and how varying vignette length impacted on gender differences in reported judgements or perceptions.

The results of Study 1 found that men were more likely than women to infer information about a CSA case when they were presented with a short vignette but no
significant gender differences in inferences were found between participants who responded to a long vignette. The results of study 2 indicated that it was unlikely that inferences would impact on the dependent variables because although there were significant differences in the judgement variables between those who responded to short and long vignettes, the differences were deemed not to be meaningful (small effect sizes). Although Study 2 indicated that these gender differences in inferences were not likely to have a strong impact on the judgement variables, the decision was made to carry out Study 3 with an adapted version of the long vignette with the inclusion of a statement from the defendant, to increase ecological validity.

The aim of study 3 was to understand how perceiver gender, empathy, myth endorsement and complainant age would impact on perceptions of complainant credibility, sexual naivety and culpability. The results of Study 3 indicated that generally, women were more pro-complainant than men; dispositional empathy was not found to significantly impact on attributions towards an alleged CSA complainant; the adolescent complainant was seen in a more negative light than her younger counterparts, and child sexual abuse myth endorsement was the independent variable most strongly associated with perceptions of credibility, sexual naivety and attributions of culpability. The results of the current study lend further support for the need to educate jurors regarding child sexual abuse to dispel myths before they process a CSA case. Alternatively, the results of the current study also lend further support to the recommendations made by the National Child Sexual Assault Reform Committee (Cossins, 2006a,b) to remove jurors all together
from sexual abuse cases and to trial these cases in specialised courts in an effort to reduce the biased way in which jurors process CSA cases.
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my best friend and husband, Aiden. We did it!
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people for their support in undertaking the current research. I wish to thank Doctor Bianca Klettke, my primary supervisor who has provided me with support throughout the duration of my candidature. I am grateful for your guidance and your unfailing enthusiasm for this amazing topic. I have enjoyed our journey, including the joys that came with having three babies between the two of us combined.

To Professor David Mellor, thank you wholeheartedly, for getting me through the final year of my candidature. Your patience and support in the final year of my candidature was invaluable. Thank you for giving me confidence in my work and for all of your guidance in my analyses.

To Doctor Lucy Zinkiewitz, my associate supervisor. Thank you for your emotional support throughout the past 8 years as well as your help with the research methodology, when it was needed.

Most importantly, I thank my family. Firstly, my three boys Owen, Noah and Toby. You are too young to realise the sacrifices that you have made in time spent away from me so that I can achieve my education goals, I thank you for that. I wish to express love and gratitude to my husband, Aiden, you enabled my dream to become reality. I thank you for the many sacrifices you have made, and for your unwavering support throughout not one, not two, but three degrees and the wonderful challenges that came with the three babies we had during that time!
# Table of Contents

OVERVIEW .............................................................................................................................................1

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND ..................................................................................................................5

1.1 Prevalence of child sexual abuse in Australia and internationally ...........................................9
   1.1.1 Challenges inherent in statistics relating to prevalence data ..............................................9
   1.1.2 Prevalence of CSA in Australia .............................................................................................11

1.2 Incidence of child sexual abuse in Australia .............................................................................12

1.3 Conviction rates for alleged child sexual abuse offenders .......................................................14

1.4 Possible reasons for low conviction rates ....................................................................................16

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW OF FACTORS AFFECTING PERCEPTIONS AND JUDGEMENTS REGARDING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE .................................................................20

2.1 Endorsement of child sexual abuse myths ..................................................................................20

2.2 Complainant age ..........................................................................................................................23

2.3 Complainant gender .....................................................................................................................25

2.4 Observer/juror gender ..................................................................................................................27

2.5 Empathy ........................................................................................................................................31
   2.5.1 Antecedents ..........................................................................................................................31
   2.5.2 Processes ..............................................................................................................................34
   2.5.3 Interpersonal outcomes .........................................................................................................35

2.6 Empathy in the courts ..................................................................................................................36
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES THAT MAY EXPLAIN GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS AND JUDGEMENTS REGARDING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: VIGNETTE LENGTH AND INFERENCE GENERATION

3.1 Perceiver gender and perceptions and judgements regarding CSA

3.2 Potential application to understanding of CSA gender differences

CHAPTER 4 KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE LITERATURE

CHAPTER 5 STUDY 1

5.1 Method

5.1.1 Participants

5.1.2 Materials

5.1.3 Procedure

5.2 Results

5.2.1 Vignette length, gender and recall

5.2.1.1 Short vignette

5.2.1.2 Long vignette

5.3 Discussion
CHAPTER 6 STUYD2: METHODOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES AS AN EXPLANATION FOR GENDER DIFFERENCES IN EMPATHY AND PERCEPTIONS AND JUDGEMENTS REGARDING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

6.1 Method

6.1.1 Participants

6.1.2 Materials

6.1.2.1 Demographic questionnaire

6.1.2.2 Credibility measures

6.1.2.3 Culpability measures

6.1.2.4 Seriousness of event

6.1.2.5 Relating to complainant (sympathy, empathy and similarity)

6.1.3 Procedure

6.2 Results

6.2.1 Demographic Analyses

6.2.1.1 Vignette length and participants’ education

6.2.1.2 Vignette length and participants’ parental status

6.2.1.3 Vignette length and working with children

6.2.2 Hypothesis 1

6.2.3 Hypothesis 2

6.2.4 Responding differences to vignettes within gender

6.3 Discussion
6.3.1 Summary of studies 1 and 2

CHAPTER 7 STUDY 3

7.1 Methodology

7.1.1 Participants

7.1.2 Materials

7.1.2.1 Demographic questionnaire

7.1.2.2 Mock trial vignette

7.1.2.3 Interpersonal Reactivity Index

7.1.2.4 Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale

7.1.2.5 Sympathy, empathy and similarity measures

7.1.2.6 Complainant credibility measures

7.1.2.7 Complainant sexual naivety measures

7.1.2.8 Culpability measures

7.1.2.9 Comprehension check

7.1.3 Procedure

7.2 Results

7.2.1 Demographic Analyses

7.2.1.1 Participants’ education

7.2.1.1.1 Education and dispositional empathy

7.2.1.1.2 Education and myth endorsement
7.2.1.3 Education and with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified…………………………..106

7.2.1.4 Education and complainant credibility and sexual naivety…………………………………………107

7.2.1.5 Education and complainant culpability…………………………………………………..107

7.2.1.2 Participants’ parental status……………………………………107

7.2.1.2.1 Parental status and dispositional empathy……………107

7.2.1.2.2 Parental status and myth endorsement………………..107

7.2.1.2.3 Parental status and with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified……………..108

7.2.1.2.4 Parental status and complainant credibility and sexual naivety…………………………………………108

7.2.1.2.5 Parental status and complainant culpability……….…108

7.2.1.3 Participants’ working experience with children……………..108

7.2.1.2.1 Working with children and dispositional empathy……108

7.2.1.2.2 Working with children and myth endorsement………109

7.2.1.2.3 Working with children and with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified………………..109

7.2.1.2.4 Working with childrenand complainant credibility and sexual naivety…………………………………………109

7.2.1.2.5 Working with childrenand complainant culpability…109
7.2.2 Hypothesis 1 .................................................................................................. 110
7.2.3 Hypothesis 2 .................................................................................................. 111
  7.2.3.1 Gender and with whom participants sympathised .................. 111
  7.2.3.2 Gender and with whom participants empathised ................. 112
  7.2.3.3 Gender and with whom participants identified ..................... 113
7.2.4 Hypothesis 3 .................................................................................................. 113
  7.2.4.1 Gender and complainant credibility and sexual naivety ....... 113
  7.2.4.2 Gender and complainant and defendant culpability .......... 114
7.2.5 Hypothesis 4 .................................................................................................. 116
  7.2.5.1 With whom participants sympathised and dispositional empathy .................................................. 116
  7.2.5.2 With whom participants empathised and dispositional empathy .................................................. 118
  7.2.5.3 With whom participants identified and dispositional empathy .................................................. 118
7.2.6 Hypothesis 5 .................................................................................................. 119
  7.2.6.1 Complainant credibility and sexual naivety and dispositional empathy .................................................. 119
  7.2.6.2 Complainant culpability and dispositional empathy .......... 120
7.2.7 Hypothesis 6 .................................................................................................. 121
7.2.8 Hypothesis 7 .................................................................................................. 123
  7.2.8.1 With whom participants sympathised and myth endorsement .... 123
7.2.8.2 With whom participants empathised and myth endorsement..........................124
7.2.8.3 With whom participants identified and myth endorsement..........................124
7.2.9 Hypothesis 8.................................................................................................126
  7.2.9.1 Complainant credibility and sexual naivety and myth endorsement..............126
  7.2.9.2 Complainant culpability and myth endorsement..........................................126
7.2.10 Hypothesis 9.................................................................................................128
  7.2.10.1 Complainant age, credibility and sexual naivety........................................128
  7.2.10.2 Complainant age and culpability..............................................................131
  7.2.10.3 Exploratory analysis: Complainant age and with whom participants
  sympathised and empathised and identified......................................................132
7.3 Discussion...........................................................................................................137
  7.3.1 Summary of the main findings........................................................................137
  7.3.2 Participant gender........................................................................................137
    7.3.2.1 Gender, dispositional empathy, sympathy, empathy and similarity............137
    7.3.2.2 Gender and complainant credibility, sexual naivety and culpability...........140
  7.3.3 Dispositional empathy and demographics.....................................................144
  7.3.4 Dispositional empathy and sympathy and similarity........................................144
  7.3.5 Dispositional empathy, perceptions and judgements.......................................145
List of Tables

Table 1. Legal defences of age of consent laws ......................................................... 6

Table 2. Vignette word length and number of attitudinal variables (%) men and women differed on ................................................................. 48

Table 3. Mean percentage and standard deviations for vignette length and gender on proposition recall, errors made and inference generation ................................. 61

Table 4. Median, means and standard deviations for vignette length, gender and perceptions of the victim and perpetrator ................................................................. 76

Table 5. Median, Means, standard deviations and percentage (of participants who agreed with the statements) for participant’s education and responding to the dependent variables .................................................................................. 102

Table 6. Median, Means, standard deviations and percentages (of participants who agreed with the statements) for responding to the dependent variables by participant’s parental status and work experience with children ................................................................. 104

Table 7. Means and standard deviations for the four subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index by gender .................................................................................. 111
Table 8. With whom men and women sympathised, empathised and identified........112

Table 9. Gender and perceptions of complainant credibility and sexual naivety........114

Table 10. Gender and perceptions of complainant culpability (blame, responsibility and guilt).................................................................................................................115

Table 11. Means and Standard Deviations/Standard Errors on the Interpersonal Reactivity Index subscales and whom participants sympathised, empathised, identified with and complainant culpability........................................................................................................117

Table 12. Partial correlations of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index with measures of complainant credibility and sexual naivety........................................................................119

Table 13. Means, Standard Deviations and Mann Whitney U test scores for gender and scoring on the Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale..........................................................................................122

Table 14. Kruskal-Wallis results for Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale scores and with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified........................................125

Table 15. Partial correlations and correlations (Spearman’s rho) between the Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale subscales and complainant credibility and sexual naivety...............127

Table 16. Mann-Whitney U results for the Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale scores and ratings of complainant blame and guilt..................................................................................................129
Table 17. Mean scores and standard deviations for perceptions regarding child sexual abuse as a function of complainant age........................................................................................................131

Table 18. Percentage of participants whom found the complainant to be culpable for abuse................................................................................................................................................132

Table 19. Complainant age and the percentage of whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified with..............................................................................................................................133

Table 20 Summary of the results of Study 3: Significant and non-significant findings..134
List of Figures

Figure 1. Children subject of a child protection substantiation, by abuse type, 2008-08 to 2011-12

Figure 2. Acquittals in the higher court (Australia) for finalised defendants pleading not guilty (percent)

Figure 3. Davis’ model of empathy

Figure 4. Graphic representation of the hypotheses

Figure 5. Graphic representation of the hypotheses and significant main effects
Overview

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious problem, often leading to serious mental health consequences for victims into adulthood and beyond (Higgins & McCabe, 1994; Mullers & Dowling, 2008). Higher rates of major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, dysthymia, anxiety disorder, suicide ideation and attempts, substance abuse and re-victimization (to name a few) have been found among those with a history of CSA than among those without a history of such abuse (Mullers & Dowling, 2008). The World Health Organization (2004) has described CSA as a ‘silent emergency’ as it often goes unnoticed and is grossly under-reported, the rate of reporting being approximately 2-7.5% of all abuse globally (Anderson, Martin, Mullen, & Romans, 1993; Finkelhor & Hotaling, 1984; Russell & Walker, 1988).

The above figures suggest that many CSA offenders remain unreported, yet of those who are, most will not face trial as in many cases the complainant chooses not to proceed with their complaint. Even then, of those offenders who do proceed to trial, many are acquitted (Cossins, 2006a). Reasons for the low conviction rates include cases being characterised by an absence of eyewitnesses, as well as a lack of forensic and other corroborative evidence. Consequently, these cases often hang on the testimony of a child (Cossins, 2006a,b, 2008; Yurchesyn, Keith, & Renner, 1992) and as jurors often have no particular experience or knowledge of the nature of child sexual abuse, nor the behavior of child sex offenders, the credibility of the child’s evidence becomes a critical factor for the outcome of the case (Cossins, Goodman-Delahunty & O’Brien, 2009).

Another reason why child sex offenders may avoid conviction is that jurors, as members of the community, may be affected to some extent, by misconceptions surrounding children’s testimonies (Andrews, Gould, & Corry, 2002; Berkoff et al., 2008; Cossins, 2006a,b, 2008; Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins & O’Brien, 2011, Taylor, 2007). Despite the media and research attention child sexual abuse has received since the 1980s, prevalent myths
still exist, particularly that children fanaticise or lie about child sexual abuse, and that child sexual abuse is committed by deviant men, who are strangers to the child (Cossins, 2006a,b). In a report by the Victorian Law Reform Commission (2004), it was concluded that “Juries can be influenced by their own experience and attitudes and may rely on common myths about sexual assault during decision making” (p.xxxviii). In light of these findings, the Australian Institute of Criminology has called for research addressing juror’s belief structures and how these may impact upon judgements in sexual abuse cases (Taylor, 2007).

The successful prosecution of offenders is an important step in order to combat CSA. Successful prosecution provides a means of reinforcing community condemnation of the crime, and may be a means of mandating treatment of offenders. Criminal convictions are important for preventing further abuse (recidivism rates among child sex offenders is high, ranging between 4-40%; Marshall & Barbaree, 1990) and for the protection of the community that is provided by custodial sentences (Parkinson et al., 2002). Furthermore, convictions provide a basis for other prevention measures. For example, teachers, youth workers, health workers, foster carers and others who have unsupervised contact with children are subject to criminal record checks in many jurisdictions, some of which place prohibitions on the employment of convicted sex offenders in child-related work (Parkinson et al., 2002).

The focus of the current thesis was twofold. Firstly, the aim of the current thesis was to extend our understanding of adults’ (i.e., potential jurors’) perceptions or judgements about CSA, and how perceiver gender, empathy and myth endorsement may influence the process of how CSA victims are perceived. In the studies reported the victims are female, because 71% of victims are female (AIHW, 2009), and in excess of 95% of CSA is perpetrated by males (Sentencing Advisory Council, 2013). Secondly, based on the findings of previous research addressing perceptions regarding CSA which found a consistent gender differences
in attitudes towards victims and perpetrators (women being more pro-victim than men), a further aim was to understand why these gender differences in perceptions exist.

The thesis was structured in three parts as follows. Part 1 provides an introduction to and rational for the thesis. More specifically, Chapter 1 provides an overview of CSA, including a definition of child sexual abuse in Australia, its prevalence and incidence, the conviction rate of offenders, and a proposed explanation for these low conviction rates. Chapter 2 presents a literature review addressing the currently known factors affecting perceptions and judgements regarding CSA including the endorsement of CSA myths, victim age, victim gender, observer/juror gender, and the unexplored area of dispositional and situational empathy.

Part 2 of the thesis addresses some methodological limitations in research into perceptions and judgements regarding CSA and how these limitations may have contributed to what is currently known about gender differences in CSA. More specifically, Chapter 3 includes a brief discussion of the research methodological issues related to the use of vignette designs to gauge perceptions and judgements regarding CSA. Chapter 4 presents the key questions arising from these analyses, and a case is then presented for a series of studies that address these methodological limitations and knowledge gaps.

Chapter 5 presents Study 1 which addresses whether gender attitude differences in CSA studies could be explained by vignette characteristics, namely the amount of detail about the CSA abuse that vignettes provide (vignette length) and how this may impact on participant’s inferences about the case. The methodology of the study, results and discussion of the results is also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 6 presents Study 2 which extends Study 1 by assessing whether varying vignette length impacts on participants’ perceptions, judgements, and ability to relate to (sympathise, empathise and identify) the alleged victim and perpetrator of CSA, and how
varying vignette length impacts on gender differences in reported perceptions and judgements. The findings of Studies 1 and 2 are used to inform the chosen research methodology of Study 3.

Part 3 of the thesis presents Study 3. This large study, described in Chapter 7, had two aims. One was to address whether gender differences in perceptions of complainant credibility, culpability and ability to relate to the complainant and defendant of CSA can be explained by dispositional empathy and CSA myth endorsement. The second aim was to address, in a more general sense, whether dispositional empathy, child sexual abuse myth endorsement and complainant age (5, 10 and 15 year old) would impact on participants’ propensity to relate to the complainant and defendant, as well as evaluations of the complainant’s credibility, sexual naivety and culpability, whilst controlling for the effects of gender. Study 3 uses a mock court case summary (modeled from the ‘long vignette’ used in the previous two studies). The chapter includes a brief introduction to the study, followed by the methodology, results and discussion.

Finally, Chapter 8 provides a discussion of the findings of the three studies in relation to previous literature on the impact of perceiver gender, CSA myth endorsement, and empathy on judgements and perceptions regarding CSA. Suggestions are also provided in relation to the theoretical and practical implications of the research.
Chapter 1: Background

Child sexual abuse is a topic that can make many people feel uncomfortable and thus it becomes a silent and a taboo topic, discouraging victims from reporting or talking about their abuse. Child sexual abuse however, is currently receiving a lot of attention in the Australian media with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission, 2014), which has arguably brought this taboo topic out of the darkness into the public arena. Since its beginning in January 2013 until now (June, 2014), the Royal Commission has received 16,739 submissions (11,902 phone calls and 4,837 letters and emails) from individuals telling their stories of child sexual abuse whilst they were in the care of an institution. This level of media coverage is important as it has the potential to start discussions among the public about child sexual abuse, and hopefully lead to education to dispel common myths that the public holds about CSA.

Defining sexual abuse however is a complicated task. A general definition of child sexual abuse proposed by the Victorian Department of Human Service (2008) is as follows:

Sexual abuse is non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g., a 14 year old and a 10 year old); or when an adult uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity and the child's parent or caregiver has not protected the child. Physical force is sometimes involved. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. It includes fondling of the child's genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, or exposure of the child to pornography.

Whether or not sexual activity is consensual or abusive is dependent on the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. For example, sexual behaviour between two adolescents may or may not be considered abusive, depending on whether the behaviour
was consensual, whether any coercion was present, or whether the relationship between the two young people was equal (Ryan, 1997). Sexual behaviour between a child and a member of their family (e.g., parent, uncle) would always be considered abusive, as would any sexual behaviour between a child under the age of consent and any adult.

Criminal law definitions in Australia, are more complex. The age of consent refers to the age at which a person is considered to be capable of legally giving informed consent to sexual acts with another person. When a person engages in sexual behaviour with someone below the age of consent, they are committing a criminal offence (child sexual abuse) (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2012). However, the legal age for consensual sex varies across Australian state and territory jurisdictions (see Table 1). It is 16 years in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Victoria and Western Australia. In Tasmania and South Australia the age of consent is 17 years. Queensland is the only state that makes a distinction between different forms of sexual activity and the age of consent. In that state, the age of consent for anal sex (referred to as sodomy in legislation) is 18 years, for all other sexual behaviour (described as carnal knowledge) it is 16 years (AIFS, 2012).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Age of consent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>The age of consent for sexual interactions is 16 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Territory</td>
<td>If a person is charged with engaging in sexual activities with a person under the legal age, a legal defence is outlined in section 55(3). It states that: It is a defence to a prosecution for an offence against subsection (2) if the defendant establishes that -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(a) he or she believed on reasonable grounds that the person on whom the
offence is alleged to have been committed was of or above the age of 16
years; or
(b) at the time of the alleged offence -
   (i) the person on whom the offence is alleged to have been committed was of
       or above the age of 10 years; and
   (ii) the defendant was not more than 2 years older; and that that person
consented to the sexual intercourse.

New South Wales  The age of consent for sexual interactions is 16 years.

There is no legal defence in legislation when charges are made to a person
charged with engaging in sexual activities with a person under the legal age.

Northern Territory  Age of consent for sexual interactions is 16 years.

If a person is charged with engaging in sexual activities with a person under
the legal age, a legal defence is outlined in section 127(4). It states that:
It is a defence to a charge of a crime defined by this section to prove:
(a) the child was of or above the age of 14 years; AND
(b) the accused person believed on reasonable grounds that the child was of
or above the age of 16 years.

Queensland  The age of consent for anal sex (referred to as sodomy in legislation) is 18
years, and for all other sexual acts (referred to as carnal knowledge in
legislation) is 16 years.

If a person is charged with engaging in sexual activities with a person under
the legal age, a legal defence is outlined in section 215(5). It states that:
If the offence is alleged to have been committed in respect of a child of or
above the age of 12 years, it is a defence to prove that the accused person
believed, on reasonable grounds, that the child was of or above the age of 16
years.

Note: This defence does not apply to acts of sodomy.
South Australia
The age of consent for sexual interactions is 17 years.

If a person is charged with engaging in sexual activities with a person under the legal age, a legal defence is outlined in section 49(4). It states that:

It shall be a defence to a charge under subsection (3) to prove that -
(a) the person with whom the accused is alleged to have had sexual intercourse was, on the date on which the offence is alleged to have been committed, of or above the age of sixteen years; and
(b) the accused -
   (i) was, on the date on which the offence is alleged to have been committed, under the age of seventeen years; or
   (ii) believed on reasonable grounds that the person with whom he/she is alleged to have had sexual intercourse was of or above the age of seventeen years.

Tasmania
The age of consent for sexual interactions is 17 years.

If a person is charged with engaging in sexual activities with a person under the legal age, a legal defence is outlined in section 124(2). It states:

It is a defence to a charge under this section to prove that the accused person believed on reasonable grounds that the other person was of or above the age of 17 years.

The consent of a person against whom a crime is alleged to have been committed under this section is a defence to such a charge only where, at the time the crime was alleged to have been committed -
(a) that person was of or above the age of 15 years and the accused person was not more than 5 years older than that person; or
(b) that person was of or above the age of 12 years and the accused person was not more than 3 years older than that person.

Victoria
The age of consent for sexual interactions is 16 years.

If a person is charged with engaging in sexual activities with a person under the legal age, a legal defence is outlined in section 45(4). It states that:

Consent is not a defence to a charge unless at the time of the alleged offence the child was aged 10 or older and -
(a) the accused satisfies the court on the balance of probabilities that he or she believed on reasonable grounds that the child was aged 16 or older; or
(b) the accused was not more than 2 years older than the child; or
(c) the accused satisfies the court on the balance of probabilities that he or she believed on reasonable grounds that he or she was married to the child.

Western Australia

The age of consent for sexual interactions is 16 years.

Australia

If a person is charged with engaging in sexual activities with a person under the legal age, a legal defence is outlined in section 321(9-10). It states that:
- It is a defence to a charge under this section to prove the accused person -
  - (a) believed on reasonable grounds that the child was of or over the age of 16 years; and
  - (b) was not more than 3 years older than the child.

Note: Under subsection 9(a) it is no defence if the child was under the care or supervision of the accused person. Under subsection 10, it is a defence to a charge to move that the accused was lawfully married to the child.

Source: Australian Institute of Family Studies (2012)

1.1 Prevalence of CSA in Australia and internationally

1.1.1 Challenges inherit in statistics relating to prevalence data.

Data related to the occurrence of CSA are reported in terms of either incidence or prevalence rates. Prevalence of CSA refers to the proportion of a population that has experienced sexual abuse at any time during their childhood (under 16 or 18 years of age, depending on the definition of CSA used) (Singh, Yiing & Nurani, 1996). Prevalence data are gathered using surveys, administered either by mail, by telephone or in person to community samples, or specific subsamples (e.g., sex offenders or other offenders) (Singh et al., 1996).

A concern raised by prevalence studies has been the wide range of rates that have been uncovered by researchers. These rates have ranged from 8.3% to 38% for females.
(Russell & Walker, 1988; Singh, Yiing, & Nurani, 1996) and 2.1% to 16% for males (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990; Schein et al., 2000; Singh, Yiing, & Nurani, 1996). Generally, studies investigating the prevalence of CSA have relied on surveys eliciting retrospective information from adults, however, such surveys have many potential sources of bias such as subjective impressions, memory deterioration and distortion (Wynkoop, Capps, & Priest, 1995). International prevalence rates of CSA vary greatly between countries which may be due to biases in research methodology, sample (i.e., only looking at CSA among women or students) and differences in the definition of CSA.

Of the 15 studies (see Appendix A) addressing the prevalence rates of CSA across varying countries (United States, United Kingdom, Norway, New Zealand, Malaysia, Texas, South Africa and El Salvador), 7.97% (range between 3% and 16%) of men indicated that they had been sexually abused as a child. This rate was almost 3 times higher among women with an average of 22.98% (range between 8.3% and 38%) indicating that they had experienced sexual assault as a child. The studies used varying definitions of what constitutes a ‘child’ with ages of consent ranging between 15 years and 18 years. Together there were 9 different definition of CSA among 15 studies. Some definitions specified any sexual contact while others used unwanted sexual contact, implying that a child under the age of 16 would be capable of indicating consent. One particular study (Russell & Walker, 1988) even differentiated between intrafamilial and extrafamilial assault with extrafamilial assault only constituting sexual assault between the ages of 14 and 17 if the assault was rape alone. According to this definition, fondling a 14 year old and coercing them into oral sex would not constitute sexual assault. Interestingly, this study found the highest rate of reported sexual abuse among women of all the studies.

Not all of the studies addressed the prevalence of CSA among both men and women of the 15 studies reviewed only 9 included both men and women. Data gathering techniques
also varied between the studies with 9 of the studies opting for self-administered questionnaires, 4 using face to face interviews, one study using a telephone survey and one using a combination of face to face interview as well as an anonymous questionnaire.

Furthermore, as noted by Deering and Mellor (2007), the difficulties with defining female-perpetrated child sexual abuse adds more complexity to understanding the true prevalence of child sexual abuse. The authors noted that there are various cultural differences regarding the appropriateness of maternal behaviour towards children. In some cultures, behaviours that would typically be viewed in Western cultures as inappropriate (e.g. Hopi mothers in North America may fondle the genitals of their nursing infants), may not be considered as sexually abusive in other cultures. Together, these factors indicate that obtaining the true prevalence and incidence of CSA is troublesome.

1.1.2 Prevalence of CSA in Australia.

According to Price-Robertson, Bromfield and Vassallo (2010), the prevalence of child sexual abuse among Australian males in the general community is approximately 4-8% for penetrative abuse and 12-16% for non-penetrative abuse, while for females the prevalence rates are 7-12% for penetrative abuse and 23-36% for non-penetrative abuse. International prevalence rates of CSA vary greatly between countries and this variability may be due to differences in research methodology, sampling techniques (i.e., looking at CSA among women only, or student samples) and differences in the definition of CSA. However, when averaging the prevalence rates of CSA in countries other than Australia (see Appendix A for studies), it was found that CSA was prevalent among 7.97% (range between 3% and 16%) of men and 22.98% (range between 8.3% and 38%) of women. These statistics are comparable to the penetrative abuse rates among men in Australia (4-8%) and the non-penetrative abuse rates among Australian women (23-36%).
While the above listed statistics indicate that female children are more likely to be victims, Smallbone and Wortley (2000) found that this may not be the case. In a study for the Queensland Crime Commission and the Criminology Research Council, they gathered official demographic and offence history along with confidential self-report data from 182 men who were serving sentences in Queensland for sexual offences against children. The study found that the 169 offenders who admitted to having committed at least one sexual offence against a child, had disclosed offences against a total of 1010 children, of whom 748 were boys and 262 were girls. The study also found that the large majority (92.4%) of intrafamilial offenders (those who had offended only within family settings) offended initially against a female victim. Victim gender was more evenly distributed among those who had offended only outside family settings and those who had offended both within and outside family settings. For extrafamilial offenders, 46.7% of the first victims were male and for mixed-types offenders, 43.3% of first victims were male. These results may indicate that the incidence of sexual abuse among boys may be comparable to girls but perhaps men are less willing to report or acknowledge their abuse in studies, or male victims are less willing to report their abuse in community studies.

1.2 Incidence of child sexual abuse in Australia

Incidence rates refer to the number of victimizations that occur during any given time period, typically a year (Singh, Yiing & Nurani, 1996). According to a report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2013), in the year 2011-12, the National Child Protection and Support Services (NCPASS) reported that a total of 252,962 allegations of child abuse were made in Australia. Of the finalised investigations (116,528) 48,420 were substantiated cases of child abuse, and of these, 5,828 were cases of child sexual abuse. The report also indicated that there has been a steady and consistent rise in the number of
substantiations of child sexual abuse between 2007–08 and 2011–12 while other types of abuse (physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect) have fluctuated (see Figure 1).

![Graph showing the number of child protection substantiations per 1,000 by abuse type, 2007-08 to 2011-12. Source: AIHW (2013)](image)

Figure 1: Children subject of a child protection substantiation, by abuse type, 2007-08 to 2011-12. Source: AIHW (2013)

While these statistics may be alarming, it is important to note that the incidence of CSA is believed to be grossly under reported, as it is estimated that only 2-7.5% of all abuse cases are ever reported to authorities (Anderson et al., 1993; Finkelhor & Hotaling, 1984; Russell & Walker, 1988). Furthermore, false allegations are believed to be uncommon with an average of only 2% to 8% of CSA reports by children judged by professionals to be untrue (Everson & Boat, 1989; New South Wales Child Protection Council, cited in Ronken & Johnston, 2012). Many of the victims who do report their abuse usually do so many months and even years after the abuse had occurred (Jensen, Gulbrandsen, Mossige, Reichelt & Tjersland, 2005; Yurchesyn, Keith & Renner, 1992).

A number of factors have been found to influence children’s ability and/or willingness to disclose abuse. For example, the victim may be too young to understand the wrongness of the conduct, or may be persuaded by the offender that what is occurring is
normal or natural (Flatman & Bagaric, 1997/98). Once children do have sufficient knowledge and understanding to realise the wrongness of sexual abuse, they are often reluctant to complain out of fear of not being believed or of the possible negative effects for the family unit (Jensen et al., 2005). Children may also be reluctant to complain because the offender is commonly a person whom they love, respect, or have reason to fear (Jensen et al., 2005). In a qualitative study investigating the context in which children were able to report their abuse experiences, a 13-year-old girl described her ordeal in wanting the abuse to stop, but also having positive feelings towards the offender:

And then there was one time he had a talk with me. He said: ‘You must never tell anyone, it’s our secret, and if anyone finds out, I have to go to jail, and that’s the worst thing that could happen to anyone and then I’ll get beaten up in jail.’ He said all this stuff. And then it wasn’t very tempting to tell. After that it took even longer before I could tell.

(Jensen et al., 2005, p 1405-1406).

1.3 Conviction rates for alleged child sexual abuse offenders

Not only is CSA grossly under-reported, it is also a crime with one of the lowest conviction rates of all crimes (see Figure 2) (Taylor, August 2007). Evidence from New South Wales indicates that an increased rate of prosecutions in the 1980s did not lead to an increase in the number of convictions for CSA. In fact, the conviction rates dropped sharply. Cashmore (1994) reported that in 1992, that the number of cases accepted for prosecution (143 cases) was more than four times the number in 1982 (34 cases). However during the same period, the overall conviction rate fell from 92.3% to 76.5%. Thus, while the prosecution of CSA cases was increasing, conviction rates were declining.
In a later analysis for the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research addressing the attrition of sexual offence cases from the NSW criminal justice system, Fitzgerald (January, 2006) found that less than one in ten of sexual offences reported to police involving a child aged 0-15 years resulted in an offender being found guilty. Furthermore, of those found guilty, only 56.8% received a sentence of full-time imprisonment. Of 3752 incidents of sexual offences against a child reported to the NSW Police in 2004, only 243 of the 547 alleged offenders were found guilty of at least one child sex offence, and of these only 138 received a sentence of full-time imprisonment.

Figure 2: Acquittals in the higher court (Australia) for finalised defendants pleading not guilty (percent). Source: Taylor (2007)

In order to document the high proportion of CSA victimizations reported to the police in South Australia that do not progress through to a prosecution in court, Wundersitz (May, 2003) tracked 952 police incident reports involving a sexual offence against a victim less than 18 years of age that were lodged during the 2000/01 financial year. Wundersitz found that of
the 952 incidents, only an estimated 10.6% had moved from an initial report through to some form of sanctioning (whether a police caution, family conference, or court penalty).

Fitzgerald (2006) also found that most sexual offences did not proceed further than the investigation stage (at which point the police begin to investigate the claims of abuse), with only 15% of sex incidents involving children resulting in the initiation of criminal proceedings against the alleged perpetrator. The most common cause for this attrition was the victim requesting the police not to proceed with the investigation. Other factors that have been cited in previous research (Parkinson, Shrimpton, Swanston, O’Toole & Oates, 2002) for not proceeding to trial in CSA cases include: the offence not being reported to police; parents wishing to protect their children, the perpetrator or other family members; evidence not being strong enough to warrant proceeding; the child being too young; the offender threatening the family; or the child being too distressed. Decisions to prosecute are also influenced by the difficulties in securing a conviction, which means that prosecutors will only run those cases that have the highest chances of success - for example cases in which there is corroborating evidence - although it has been noted that these would likely represent a small minority of CSA cases due to the common problem of delay in complaint (Cossins, 2006a).

1.4 Possible reasons for the low conviction rates.

In cases that do go to prosecution, conviction of alleged CSA offenders is not a simple matter as in the majority of cases sexual abuse is committed in private (Andrews, Gould, & Corry, 2002; Berkoff et al., 2008; Yurchesyn et al., 1992), and therefore such cases are often characterised by a lack of witnesses. In addition, there is often a lack of clear medical evidence of abuse (Andrews et al., 2002; Berkoff et al., 2008), and even if medical evidence is present, it rarely identifies the specific perpetrator as in many cases, children report the abuse many months and even years after the abuse has occurred. Thus, unless the alleged defendant pleads guilty, determination of whether sexual abuse occurred, and by whom it was
committed rests largely on the word of the child (Cossins, 2006a,b). If cases proceed to trial, the outcome therefore rests largely on the credibility of the child complainant (De Jong & Rose, 1991; Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins & O’Brien, 2011) whose evidence needs to be accepted by a jury of laypeople who are inexperienced in matters of CSA.

The importance of the child complainant’s testimony was demonstrated by De Jong and Rose (1991) who found that even the presence of physical evidence of abuse alone was not enough to ensure convictions. In a review of 115 CSA criminal court cases from a 12 month period, the authors found no significant difference in rates of conviction between cases with or without physical evidence of injury, sexually transmitted disease or seminal fluid (De Jong & Rose, 1991). Furthermore, the authors concluded that if verbal evidence was not sufficiently supported by physical evidence, judges and juries would not convict alleged perpetrators. These results highlight the importance of the complainant’s testimony and quite possibly, their perceived credibility. Juror beliefs about children’s credibility therefore, are a critical element in understanding why evidence may or may not be accepted by jurors, and whether a particular sexual assault case is likely to result in a conviction (Taylor, 2007).

Research suggests that rather than be impartial and objective in their assessments of witness credibility and veracity, jurors’ judgements are likely to be affected by a variety of misconceptions about children, offenders, and child sexual abuse (Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins & O’Brien, 2011). Studies conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology have concluded that juror judgements are influenced by attitudes, beliefs and biases about rape and victims, and that jurors interpret what they see in light of their own beliefs, experiences and expectations (Taylor, 2007). Such beliefs were evident in a telephone survey of 720 adults aged 18 years and over in Australia conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation in conjunction with Child Abuse Prevention Research Australia, that found that one in six (16%) of respondents were unclear about whether or not sex between a 14 year old
and an adult would constitutes sexual abuse, and 31% of respondents would not believe children if they reported that they were being abused (Australian Childhood Foundation, 2006).

In a study examining Australian jury-eligible citizens’ endorsement of a range of misconceptions about children’s suggestibility and reactions to sexual abuse, Cossins, Goodman-Delahunty and O’Brien (2009), found that fewer than half of the participants provided accurate responses to two thirds of the CSA misconception questions, indicating that most of the critical information about CSA is outside of the experience and knowledge of laypeople, which can ultimately affect jurors' ability to appropriately evaluate the veracity of a child’s testimony and as well as their credibility. For example, Cossins et al. found that many participants did not anticipate that a child could be misled to falsely report sexual abuse by an adult, but expected that a child may be personally motivated to report sexual abuse that did not occur, whereas empirical studies show that the reverse is true. Furthermore, although it is rare for children to have physical or medical signs of sexual abuse (Hobbs, 2012), one fifth of Cossins et al.'s participants incorrectly agreed that a physical examination would show whether a child has been abused, while half were uncertain. The possible effect of these misconceptions on trial verdicts was demonstrated by Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins and O’Brien (2010) who found that the more mock jurors endorsed misconceptions about CSA, the less likely they were to find that defendant guilty.

It may be that in the absence of specialised knowledge about CSA, many jurors erroneously interpret a child’s counterintuitive behavior (delay in complaint or ongoing contact with the offender) as indicators of the unreliability of the complaint and may disregard the testimony of a child complainant who does not conform to their stereotyped expectations about CSA and victims (Cossins, Goodman-Delahunty & O’Brien, 2009; Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins & O’Brien, 2011). Furthermore, once beliefs and causal
theories are formed, their influence on subsequent judgements is difficult to counteract (Nestler, 2010; Savion, 2009). Evidence for this comes from research which has attempted to provide mock jurors with myth-dispelling information (usually through scientific expert evidence in the form of an expert’s testimony), particularly early on in a trial before participants have an opportunity to interpret evidence through biases and misconceptions. The results of these studies have found that myth-dispelling information enhanced perceptions of victim credibility (Brekke & Borgida, 1988; Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins & O’Brien, 2011) and in turn, increased conviction rates (Brekke & Borgida, 1988; Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins & O’Brien, 2011; Klettke, Grasser & Powell, 2009; Kovera, Levy, Brogida & Pennrod, 1995). They are a strong indication that there is a need to understand community beliefs and myths in order to know what changes could be made to improve them. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

In summary, child sexual abuse is complex in many ways, including the nature of the crime (occurs in private with a lack of witnesses and forensic evidence). It is heavily under reported and under prosecuted, and the conviction rates are among the lowest of all crimes (see Figure 2). One of the reasons offered for the low conviction rate includes a lack of understanding of the nature of child sexual abuse by jurors who are thought to rely on myths and misconceptions regarding CSA which in turn, affects their perceptions of the complainant’s credibility. The following chapter will report on some of the factors which have been found to impact upon perceptions and judgements regarding CSA.
Chapter 2: Literature review of factors affecting perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse

In the past three decades, findings of experimental research have indicated that people hold misconceptions about both child and adult sexual abuse victims. A variety of factors, including the characteristics of the victim and the perpetrator, and the nature of the assault situation have been shown to influence judgements about victims (Michelle Davies & Rogers, 2006). This chapter will explore factors that have been shown to affect perceptions and judgements regarding CSA, namely: endorsing myths about child sexual abuse, victim age, victim gender and juror/perceiver gender. A discussion of the unexplored factor of empathy, which may also affect reported perceptions and judgements, will also be presented.

2.1 Factors affecting perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse:

Endorsement of child sexual abuse myths

Although CSA myths have been found to parallel rape myths (Collings, 1997; Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010), research in the area of CSA myths is limited (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). For example, Cromer and Golsmith (2010) found that a PsychINFO search of the phrase “child sexual abuse myth” produced only six items; in contrast, a comparable PsychINFO search of “rape myth” yielded 247 citations. Studies addressing CSA myths however, have found that the myths surrounding CSA and rape are comparable. In establishing a scale to capture CSA myths, Collings (1997) found that the three CSA Myth Scale factors were remarkably similar to the three ‘types’ of rape myths suggested by Hall, Howard and Boezio (1986): excusal, denial of the seriousness of rape, and denial of the existence of rape. Understanding CSA myths is important as the endorsement of CSA myths has been found to be negatively correlated with believing victims (Cramer, 2009; Cromer & Freyd, 2007); knowledge about CSA has been found to positively affect perceived victim
credibility (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2011); and juror attitudes and beliefs are also believed to influence trial outcomes (Goodman et al., 1998; Taylor, 2007).

While most studies have shown that a majority of research participants do not endorse CSA myths, a significant proportion of participants do (Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins & O’Brien, 2011; Quas, Thompson & Clarke-Stewart, 2005). If these participants are representative of the jury-eligible members of the community then this finding may explain the low conviction rates in Australia in CSA trials when compared to non-sex related cases (Fitzgerald, 2006). Indeed, Cossins, Goodman-Delahunty and O’Brien (2009) and Taylor (2007) argued that due to the nature of CSA cases (frequently there is a lack of corroborative evidence), the relatively low conviction rates may be due in part, to misconceptions that jurors bring to the court room which impact on their decision-making, more so than the evidence that is presented in court. For these reasons, examining how CSA myths affect perceptions of victims and perpetrators in CSA trials is an important step in understanding why conviction rates of CSA are so low, and how best to improve those rates. However, as pointed out by Cossins et al. (2009), little is known about the extent of misconceptions about child sexual abuse that are common among the Australian population.

Cossins et al. (2009) investigated jury-eligible Australian’ beliefs about child sexual abuse. They found that on average, participants correctly answered only eight out of 20 items on a CSA misconceptions questionnaire, and fewer than half correctly answered 60% of the items. The most common myth related to victim behaviour in response to abuse. For example, one third of participants endorsed the myth that a victim of sexual abuse would avoid the abuser, one fifth of the participants believed that a victim would typically cry for help or try to escape, and 26.5% expected an abused child to display strong emotional reactions. Three quarters of the participants were unaware that a physical examination rarely provides evidence of sexual abuse (Cossins et al., 2009). Furthermore, whereas empirical
studies have found that the former is more likely than the latter (Cossins et al., 2009), participants did not anticipate that a child could be misled to falsely report sexual abuse by an adult, but instead they believed that a child could be personally motivated to falsely report sexual abuse. Cossins et al. concluded that these findings indicate that the Australian public lacks an understanding of children’s reactions to sexual abuse, and their memory, reliability, and suggestibility when disclosing and reporting sexual abuse. The potential implications of these results in CSA cases is concerning as jurors making decisions about guilt and innocence are required to make assessments of witness credibility (Cossins, 2008), and such credibility has been found to be central in determining verdict (Goodman et al., 1998; Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2011).

If myths about CSA are prevalent among laypeople then a juror’s ability to appropriately evaluate evidence that is presented in court could be affected (Cossins et al., 2009). It can then be argued that if a large number of jurors hold misconceptions or false schemas about the way in which children who have been sexually abused should behave, and these children do not behave accordingly, it may reduce the complainant’s perceived credibility which in turn could affect whether the prosecution secures a conviction or not. Researchers in the area of CSA myths (Collings, 1997; Cossins et al., 2009) have called for studies to address the extent to which moral judgements of CSA (i.e., attributions of causal blame, moral responsibility, and blameworthiness to both victims and offenders) are related to CSA myth acceptance. Furthermore, studies addressing the extent of CSA myth acceptance in Australia are limited and it is unknown whether members of the Australian public hold the same perceptions as citizens in the United States (Cossins et al., 2009).
2.2 Factors affecting perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse: Victim age

Research shows that judgements or perceptions regarding child victims of sexual abuse vary depending on the age of the child. For example, younger children have been rated as being more believable witnesses (Golding, Alexander, & Stewart, 1999; Hicks & Tite, 1998; Holcomb & Jacquin, 2007) than adolescents who appear to be perceived as being quasi-adults, that is, possessing the ability to understand sexual meaning, to engage in sexual activity consentingly and to resist unwanted sexual contact (Davies, Rogers, & Whiteleg, 2009; Davies & Rogers, 2006; Klettke & Simonis, 2011). As a result, as they move through adolescence, children are subjected to similar evaluations as adults are (Davies et al., 2009; Michelle Davies & Rogers, 2006; Klettke & Simonis, 2011).

Existing studies support the presumption that younger children are perceived by adult members of the community to be low on competence (cognitive ability, resistance to suggestion), and high on trustworthiness (honesty, sincerity), but also sexually naïve, lacking in the knowledge and cognitive capacity to fabricate sexual encounters. These are perceptions that would increase jurors’ attributions of credibility to young CSA complainants. Furthermore, studies have found that as the child ages, the perceived severity of abuse (Waterman & Foss-Goodman, 1984; Maynard & Widerman, 1997) and his/her perceived credibility diminishes (Bottoms & Davies, 2004; Gabora, Spanos & Joab, 1993) while perceived responsibility for the abuse increases (Bottoms & Davies, 2004; Collings & Payne, 1991). In addition, the depicted perpetrators of CSA against older children (when compared to younger children) are perceived to be more credible (Bottoms & Davies, 2004), less guilty (Gabora et al., 1993), less responsible and blameworthy for the abuse (Maynard & Widerman, 1997; Waterman & Foss-Goodman, 1984).
In order to increase the ecological validity of studies addressing juror judgements in CSA cases, Gabora, Spanos and Joab (1993) sought to examine the effect of victim age (13 and 17-year old) on victim and perpetrator credibility and knowledge to fabricate abuse using a videotape of a simulated CSA trial. Undergraduate university students were randomly assigned to one of 60 mock juries with each jury containing between 5 and 8 participants. Juries were shown a videotaped trial ranging in duration from 69 to 85 minutes, and then given 70 minutes to reach a unanimous verdict. The results indicated that participants considered a sexual assault victim to be less credible and the defendant less guilty when the victim was portrayed as 17 years old, as compared to 13 years old. The mock jurors believed that the 13 year old was less likely than the 17 year old to possess the knowledge required to fabricate the alleged abuse, thereby making her more credible. The defendant was also rated as less credible when the victim was 13 than when she was 17 years old. Furthermore, the mock juries rendered more guilty verdicts in trials depicting a 13 year old child than in those depicting a 17 year old. One limitation of this study was that the authors only looked at adolescent victims and did not explore younger age groups. Future studies could explore a range of ages (5, 10 and 15 year olds for example), particularly with such a unique methodology to see if the credibility of the child decreases with age and how the credibility of the perpetrator is affected.

In summary, the above research suggests that attributions of victim responsibility in cases of CSA increase with victim age, particularly as the child approaches adolescence, but it is not clear at which age this begins because vignettes or scenarios have generally depicted children in mid-childhood and mid-adolescence. Furthermore, while these studies have typically relied on undergraduate university students for their sample, the three studies which will be presented in this thesis will attempt to address this issue by using community samples from Australia.
2.3 Factors affecting perceptions and judgements regarding sexual abuse: Victim gender

Another factor that has been shown to affect judgementstowards CSA isthegender of the victim. Studies addressing victim gender and attributions of victim and perpetrator culpability and credibility have reported mixed results. The results of some of these studies (e.g., Everson, Boat, Bourg & Robertson, 2009), indicate that there is an interaction between the victim’s age and gender. That is, when a child is younger (i.e. under the age of 13), sexual interaction is viewed as being wrong, regardless of the gender of the child. However, when ratings of guilt (guilty or not guilty) were also measured and children were approaching adolescence, gender effects appear to emerge. These victim gender effects have been found among both professionals (those working with children) as well as among student populations (Everson, Boat, Bourg & Robertson, 2009).

Statistically, girls are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse than males (Andrews et al., 2002) and are therefore more likely to fit the stereotype of the sexual abuse victim. Back and Lips (1998) theorised that female CSA victims may be attributed more blame than male victims because they best reflect the stereotype of the "normal victim". Furthermore, girls are often depicted as being seductive and provocative instigators of their own abuse (Bell, Kuriloff & Lottes, 1994), and are often referred to as having "charming and attractive personalities" (Waterman & Foss-Goodman, 1984) indirectly implying that she, the victim, somehow invited the sexual encounter. On the other hand, studies by Waterman and Foss-Goodman (1984) and Rogers and Davies (2007) found that male respondents tended to downplay abuse severity of the CSA on male victims (while no gender effects were found for female respondents based on the gender of the child). Waterman and Foss-Goodman theorised that this may be indicative of male respondents having more rigid male role expectations and thus, they may view adolescent males who are victimised as failing to live
up to the stereotypic male role. There is an assumption that perhaps males should enjoy sex with a woman.

To explore the frequency with which professionals believe boys and girls lie or fail to tell the truth when they allege sexual abuse, Everson et al. (2009) surveyed a total of 244 judges, police officers, mental health practitioners, and child protection workers. The ages (3-5, 6-12 and 13-17 years) and gender of the victim were manipulated in each question asking professionals to rate how many children (out of a total of 100 CSA cases) they would expect to be lying or not telling the truth about having been abused. The results indicated that professionals viewed allegations made by adolescent females (13-17 year olds) to be the least credible of all child allegations. Child gender did not significantly affect professionals' perceptions of credibility in children between the ages of 3 to 5 and 6 to 12 but they did emerge in the 13 to 17 year old age groups. Males and younger children were perceived as more credible than females and adolescents. In their conclusions, the authors expressed concern for the high percentage of extreme views held by some professionals. For example, a subgroup of 7% of district court judges felt that half or more of adolescent girls alleging sexual abuse would knowingly make a false allegation. The authors believe that this level of distrust towards adolescent girls among some professionals raises questions about the likelihood of fair and impartial dispositions in their cases.

Examining the roles of perpetrator and victim gender on attributions of credibility, culpability and perceived assault severity toward a 10 or 15 year old child and an adult perpetrator, Rogers and Davies (2003) asked a sample of undergraduate university students to read a 350 word vignette depicting a sexual encounter between a man and a child (gender and age of the child were manipulated) and then respond to a short questionnaire. The results of the study showed that male participants rated a 15-year-old male victim assaulted by a woman, to be more culpable and less credible, and the abuse to be less severe, than when he
was assaulted by a man. No such gender effects were found for the 10-year-old child in which cases the abuse was rated as being very severe regardless of the gender of the child or the perpetrator.

Victim gender effects were also found by Maynard and Wiederman (1997) whereby less blame was ascribed to the perpetrator when the victim was a 15-year-old male and the perpetrator was female (heterosexual encounter). Similarly, Waterman and Foss-Goodman (1984), found that 15-year-old male victims were attributed greater fault for their abuse but by male participants only. No significant gender effects were found among the younger children (7 and 11-year-olds). Likewise, Broussard and Wagner (1988) found that male respondents attributed less responsibility to the perpetrator when the victim was a 15-year-old male as opposed to a 15-year-old female.

In summary, studies have found that perceptions and judgements regarding CSA victims are not affected by the gender of the child until the child reaches adolescence. This was true among both professional and non-professional samples. Results varied between studies, with some finding that adolescent females are perceived to be less credible and culpable than their male counterparts, yet other studies found contrasting results. When exploring how perceptions or judgements are affected by the gender of a CSA victim, future studies will need to explore a variety of age groups, as there appears to be an interaction between the age of the victim, gender of the victims, and the gender of the perceiver.

2.4 Factors affecting perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse:

Observer/juror gender

Observer gender has also been found to be associated with perceptions and judgements regarding CSA. Specifically, research has found that women tend to be more ‘pro-victim’ than men. Research addressing CSA attitudes indicates that female respondents have better knowledge of CSA, are less accepting of CSA myths, are less likely to believe
that media publicity regarding CSA is exaggerated, to believe that incest and genital touching constitute sexual abuse, and to believe that boys as well as girls can be sexually abused (Calvert & Munsie-Benson, 1999; Gabora et al., 1993; Hubbard & Singg, 2001; Quas, Thompson, & Clarke-Stewart, 2005). They also rate abuse to be more severe than do men (Davies & Rogers, 2009; Graham et al., 2007; Hubbard & Singg, 2001; Insquith et al., 1993; Reynolds & Birkimer, 2002; Rogers & Davies, 2007).

Similar gender differences have been noted in studies examining ratings of credibility and culpability of CSA victims. For example, in studies using vignettes as well as mock trial transcripts, female respondents have been found more likely to rate the alleged victim’s report of sexual abuse as believable and honest, than males (Golding, Alexander, et al., 1999; Golding, Fryman, Marsil, & Yozwiak, 2003; Golding, Sego, & Sanchez, 1999; Golding, Stewart, Yozwiak, & Sanchez, 2000; Rubin & Thelen, 1996; Yozwiak, Golding, & Marsil, 2004). Female respondents have also been shown to: be more certain in their belief that the crime of CSA occurred when depicted via a vignette; be more influenced by a complainant’s testimony (Golding et al., 2003; Yozwiak et al., 2004); and to have more confidence in children’s cognitive abilities, rating children as less likely to lie, less likely to confuse reality with imagination, and more likely to have good memories, than male respondents (McCauley & Parker, 2001; Rubin & Thelen, 1996). Men have been found to: be more likely than women to rate CSA victims to be less credible (Bottoms et al., 2004; Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Davies & Rogers, 2009; Gabora et al., 1993; Hicks & Tite, 1998; Insquith et al., 1993; McCauley & Parker, 2001; Rogers & Davies, 2007; Rogers et al., 2007; Taylor, 2007; Wiley & Bottoms, 2009); more likely to attribute responsibility and blame to the victim (Back & Lips, 1998; Bottoms et al., 2004; Insquith et al., 1993; Wiley & Bottoms, 2009); and to rate child victims as more culpable for the abuse, than female respondents (Graham et al., 2007; Rogers & Davies, 2007; Rogers et al., 2007). Further, relative to women, men are more likely
to perceive children to have misunderstood the intentions of the perpetrator, and to agree with the statement that the victim “encouraged the event in some way” (Quas et al., 2005).

Studies addressing gender and perceptions of perpetrators have also found a difference in the way men and women respond to child sexual abuse. For example, female respondents have been shown to assign more blame to perpetrators of CSA than male respondents (Waterman & Foss-Goodman, 1984), while male respondents have been found to be more empathic toward perpetrators (Goodman et al., 1998), to rate a perpetrator of CSA as less culpable (Davies & Rogers, 2009; Graham, Rogers, & Davies, 2007; Rogers & Davies, 2007; Rogers, Josey, & Davies, 2007) and more credible (Bottoms et al., 2004; Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Gabora et al., 1993; Insquith, Levine, & Scheiner, 1993; McCauley & Parker, 2001; Wiley & Bottoms, 2009).

Gender differences have also been noted in studies of decisions in cases involving child victims of sexual crimes. Several studies have found that females are more likely to assign a higher degree of guilt and more likely to convict CSA perpetrators than are men (Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Golding, Bradshaw, Dunlap, & Hodell, 2007; Golding, Sego, et al., 1999; Golding et al., 2000; Goodman et al., 1998; Insquith et al., 1993; McCauley & Parker, 2001; Redlich, 2001; Redlich, Myers, Goodman, & Qin, 2002; Yozwiak et al., 2004). Golding, Stewart, Yozwiak and Sanchez, (2000) found that even corroborating evidence in the form of DNA did not reduce the gender gap in the belief that the abuse had occurred, nor subsequent conviction rates.

Interestingly, mock jury studies that have examined pre and post deliberation verdicts have found that women are more likely to convict a perpetrator before deliberation but then vote in the same manner as men at post-deliberation (Gabora et al., 1993; Golding et al., 2007; Insquith et al., 1993). One explanation for this could be that post-deliberation verdicts are more strongly influenced by the deliberation process (e.g., exposure to other participants.
raising salient issues such as treatment specific evidence and reasonable doubt instructions, and deliberation-induced compliance pressure to reach a unanimous verdict) than by initial attitudes and biases (Gabora et al., 1993).

In one study of juror behaviour, Golding et al. (2009) asked participants to listen to an audio recording of a mock CSA trial, indicate a verdict of guilty or not guilty and then deliberate in a mock jury of 6 members. The researchers also sought to explore whether female majority (1 male and 5 females) or male majority (1 female and 5 males) mock juries would render a different verdict. The study found that female majority juries rendered more guilty verdicts (40%) than did male majority juries (7%), and male majority juries had more not guilty verdicts (93%) than did female majority juries (60%). Furthermore, female participants were more likely to switch from guilty to not guilty verdicts. It was found that the switching of verdicts depended on the mock jury gender mix. When there was a female majority, the group verdict changed from not guilty to guilty more often than in juries in which there was a male majority. Participants in a male majority jury, were more likely to switch from a guilty verdict to a not guilty verdict more often than those in female majority juries. The study also found that in male majority juries, males spoke the most and presented significantly more pro-defense arguments than pro-prosecution arguments, whereas women spoke less but presented both sides of the case. This dialogue during deliberations may sway jurors who voted guilty to feel that it was important to consider both sides of the case before rendering their verdict, and this may have accounted for the switching in verdicts from guilty to not guilty (Golding et al., 2009).

In summary, the gender difference between women and men regarding the perceptions of victims and perpetrators of child sexual abuse is one of the most robust findings in research addressing attitudes toward child sexual abuse. The research outlined above suggests that this translates into juror behaviour, with female jurors being more likely
to convict alleged perpetrators of sexual abuse, while male jurors are more likely to acquit
them. Whether this acquittal or conviction pattern is a direct result of attitudes is not entirely
clear. Some researchers (Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Golding et al., 2003; Graham et al.,
2007; Yozwiak et al., 2004) have called for researchers to address the attitude difference
between genders, to assist in explaining why men and women differ in their perceptions and
judgements.

2.5 Factors affecting perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse:

Empathy

One possible explanation for the gender differences in the way CSA victims are
viewed identified above may be the degree of empathy exhibited by the perceiver (Bottoms,
1993). Kerr, Hymes, Anderson and Weathers (1995) theorised that when a juror is faced with
a victim or alleged perpetrator who is similar to them (in-group), they tend to favor the
individual who is the most similar to them (similarity-leniency hypothesis) and thus
convicting less often and/or sentencing for shorter periods. Kerr et al.’s theory was based on
the findings by Marques (1990) who developed the theory of the Black Sheep Effect (BSE).
The BSE posits that in-group members are more polarized in evaluations of in-group versus
out-group members. For example, positively valued in-group members would be viewed
more favourably than positively valued out-group members. However, when an in-group
member is perceived negatively and as a threat to the positive in-group image, it would result
in an extremely negative perception of the in-group member. Kerr et al. (1995) applied this
theory to the dynamics between jurors and defendants. In order for the BSE to be observed,
evidence against a defendant must be strong. It is argued that strong evidence against the
defendant promotes jurors’ certainty of the defendant’s guilt, which increases the likelihood
of a negative evaluation of the defendant. However, jurors identifying a defendant as a
member of their in-group need to be in the numerical minority on the jury. This creates a
situation where the in-group member(s) will perceive a greater threat to their self-image when evaluating a member of the “out-flock” (negatively valued in-group members).

Therefore, it can be argued that if a juror has more empathy for an individual with similar characteristics, it may in turn, result in particular views about the case, depending on with whom the juror identifies. Perceived similarity with a victim may include being the same gender as the complainant, or having been a victim of sexual abuse. Alternatively, jurors may relate to a defendant through gender, occupation, race or having themselves been accused of sexual assault. Given that most victims of CSA are females and most perpetrators are male (Yurchesyn et al., 1992), it is therefore likely that male jurors will identify and empathises with the perpetrator, while female jurors will identify with the complainant.

Empathy has been of considerable interest to psychologists, philosophers and theologians dating back as far as 350 years in the writing of Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1651). This interest in empathy has meant that many definitions of the construct exist yet little consensus has been reached as to how it should be defined and operationalised (Day, Casey & Gerace, 2010). In most cases, however, empathy is defined as the process of taking another’s perspective, to feel with another (cognitive aspect of empathy, commonly referred to as perspective taking), and/or experiencing affect that either essentially matches that of the target (emotional aspect of empathy) (Snow, 2000).

While some believe that sympathy (feeling for another’s emotions and situation) and empathy are two separate construct (Escalas & Stern, 2003; Haegerich & Bottoms, 2000). Davis (1994) argues that sympathy (or empathic concern) is a part of the construct of empathy. Through the synthesis of previous theories and research, Davis adopted a multidimensional approach to defining empathy which he presented as an organizational model (See Figure 3). He defined empathy as a set of constructs having to do with the responses of one individual to the experiences of another. According to Davis (1994), these
constructs include the processes taking place within the observer and the affective and non-affective outcomes which result from those processes. According to the model, four related constructs can be identified within an empathic “episode”: 1) antecedents, which refer to the characteristics of the observer, target or situation; 2) processes, which refer to the mechanisms by which empathic outcomes are produced; 3) intrapersonal outcomes, which are the cognitive and affective responses produced in the observer that are not manifested in overt behavior toward the target; and 4) interpersonal outcomes, which refer to behavioural responses directed toward the target.

**Figure 3. Davis’ (1994) model of empathy.**

**2.5.1 Antecedents.**

According to Davis’ model of empathy, antecedents are personal and situational characteristics that can aid or hinder empathy. Personal characteristics include differences in
an individual’s capacity to empathise, which may be inherit or exhibited due to environmental factors. Situational characteristics include how ‘’strong’’ the situation is and the similarity between the target of empathy and the observer.

2.5.2 Processes.

According to Davis’ model, processes are the different ways in which empathy may occur and include non-cognitive, simple cognitive and complex cognitive processes. The non-cognitive methods of empathic arousal are primary circular reaction (e.g., the tendency of newborns to cry when they hear another infant crying) and motor mimicry (e.g., when the observer imitates the target, both facially and posturally, with small mimicking movements). Both of these refer to spontaneous affective response of the individual to the unconscious perception of the target’s emotional state.

The simple cognitive processes include classical conditioning, direct association and labeling. According to Davis’ model, classical conditioning involves the affective reactions to others that result from past situations in which the individual perceived affective cues in another person while directly experiencing the same affect. Direct association does not require the individual to experience the emotion simultaneously with the other, but only that they experience an emotion similar to the one that they are observing.

The more advanced cognitive processes by which empathy can occur are language-mediated association, elaborated cognitive networks, and role taking. Language-mediated association occurs when an individual’s reaction to the target’s plight is produced by activating language-based cognitive networks which then trigger associations of the individual’s own feelings or experiences. The empathic reactions to the target, therefore, do not result from the inferences drawn of the situation or the target’s non-verbal expressions, but explicitly through the language used by the target.
Elaborated cognitive networks are situations in which the target’s cues cause an individual to access their own knowledge and use this to make inferences about the target. Elaborated cognitive networks do not focus exclusively on language cues.

The most cognitively advanced process of empathy as described Davis, is role taking or perspective taking. This process requires a deliberate effort by an individual to imagine how they would feel if they were faced with the same circumstances affecting the target. This process involves both the suppression of one’s own egocentric perspective on events and the active entertaining of the target’s.

2.5.3 Interpersonal outcomes.

Interpersonal outcomes are the “affective and non-affective responses of the individual that result from the exposure to the target” (Davis, 1994, pp 17). Affective responses can be of two types, parallel and reactive. Parallel affective responses are those in which there is a match between the affect of the target and that of the individual or observer (e.g., an individual becoming happy because the target is laughing). Reactive affective outcomes are the reactions of an individual’s emotional reactions to the target’s affect (e.g., an individual reacting with compassion upon seeing someone who is sad because they have lost a child).

The non-affective impersonal outcomes refer to perceptual accuracy, attributions, and evaluative judgements of others. Interpersonal accuracy is the individual’s ability to discern the thoughts and emotions of the target. Attributional judgements are causal attributions that an individual offers for the target’s behaviour. Evaluative judgements of others include judgements about the likeability, acceptability, or general characteristics of others.

The interpersonal outcomes component of Davis’ model also focuses on the relationship between empathy and three general areas: altruism and helping behaviour, aggression and antisocial behaviour, and social relationships and social behaviour. Altruism and helping behaviour encompass the tendency of an individual to come to the aid of another,
whether selfish or unselfish motives induce such aid. The outcomes related to aggression and antisocial behavior occur when empathy decreases the incidence of aggression and antisocial behaviour. Social relationships and social behaviour refers to the operation of empathy related processes and outcomes within the domain of social relationships, that is, the impact of empathy on a variety of behaviours which occur within the context of the formation and maintenance of relationships with other people. The behaviours which Davis includes under this heading are conflict avoidance/management, good communication, considerate social style and global evaluation.

2.6 Empathy in the courts

Empathy is commonly used by lawyers in the courtroom to persuade jurors to place themselves in the plaintiff's or the defendant's shoes in order to understand how they were affected by the crime or alternatively, understand why someone may have committed a crime (Gallacher, 2011). For example, in his text on trial tactics, Gallacher (2011) asserted that using empathy is a “core lawyering skill” (pp. 110) just as much as knowledge of applicable laws. He further argued that if lawyers cannot establish empathy between their client and jurors, then the results could be “disastrous for their clients” (p. 124).

Lawyers may also attempt to elicit empathy in jurors during opening and closing statements, or through the use of emotionally disturbing evidence. Prosecuting attorneys may use gruesome post-mortem photographs or victim impact statements to make jurors angrier at the defendant. Defence attorneys on the other hand, might make appeals to jurors’ empathy during closing statements in hopes of making the jurors more lenient toward their client (Salerno & Bottoms, 2010).

The role of empathy in juror decision making has been demonstrated by previous research addressing juror judgments in sexual harassment cases. For example, Gowan and Zimmermann (1996) found that the amount of damages awarded to the plaintiff was heavily influenced by jurors’ sexual harassment history. When compared to those with no history of
sexual harassment, individuals who had indicated being victims of sexual harassment were more likely to award higher monetary damages to the plaintiff, regardless of the severity of the sexual harassment scenarios they were presented with (innocuous, ambiguous or severe). Similarly, Schwartz and Hunt (2011), found that self-referencing (i.e identifying) with a sexual harassment plaintiff, was able to partially account for a positive case outcome for a plaintiff in a sexual harassment case.

**2.6.1 Empathy in CSA trials.**

While jurors view some complainants as more worthy than others, and empathise most with those they see as worthy (Gravey, 2000), it is not inconceivable that jurors could empathise with an alleged perpetrator of child sexual abuse, particularly if the evidence presented is ambiguous and does not definitively prove that abuse has taken place (Kerr et al., 1995). In cases where evidence is not strong and jurors have the opportunity to learn more about the defendant during the penalty phase, there is a greater opportunity to empathise with him/her.

It has been theorised that survivors of sexual abuse, especially child sexual abuse, may be more likely than others to identify and empathise with a child victim because they have suffered a similar negative event (Bottoms, 1993). As suggested above, statistics also indicate that women are more likely to be victims of abuse (Yurchesyn et al., 1992), and therefore to be more empathic than men toward child victims. Further, they are likely to have internalized societal gender roles, which demand women to be more caring, empathic, and child-oriented than men, and thereby to identify with children generally (Barnett & Sinisi, 1990; Maynard & Wiederman, 1997). Perhaps this dynamic may be why women might be more likely to be empathic towards child victims than men.

Such gender differences in empathy have been found in cases examining jurors’ perceptions of infanticide of disabled and non-disabled infant victims (Bottoms et al., 2011).
Therefore, there is reason to suspect that jurors’ empathy for CSA complainants may be related to judgements in cases of CSA. More specifically, men and women may differ in their levels of empathy for child complainants, and these differences may contribute to gender differences in CSA case judgements (Bottoms, 1993). Thus far, these suggestions regarding the role of empathy in judgements or perceptions regarding CSA remains untested.

2.7 Empathy, perceptions and judgements regarding CSA

Research regarding the role of empathy in CSA attitudes is in its infancy. Some researchers have speculated that empathy may explain gender difference in perceptions or judgements regarding CSA victims (Insquith et al., 1993), but studies have either not used validated measures of empathy, and simply inferred that empathy was the cause of gender differences. However, inferences may be supported by studies of victims of other crimes. For example, Haegerich and Bottoms (2000) studied mock jurors' responses in a patricide trial in which a child defendant claimed that the patricide was a result of self-defense after years of sexual abuse. In this study participants in an empathy-induction condition were asked to take the perspective of the defendant, and detail how they would be thinking and feeling if they were in the defendant’s position. Compared to jurors in the control condition, jurors in the empathy-induction condition had more empathy for the defendant, were more lenient in their guilt judgements, considered the defendant to be less responsible for the killing, and were more likely to think that the abuse was a mitigating factor in the trial. One limitation of the study was that jurors did not deliberate to reach a verdict, and therefore decisions made by individual jurors may have not mirrored decisions that might be made by a jury. Haegerich and Bottoms (2000)suggested that if the mock jurors had deliberated, it may have increased empathic pre-deliberation tendencies.

Also investigating the effects of empathy induction on trial outcomes, Plumm and Terrance (2009), used a simulated trial involving a woman charged with the murder of her
physically and emotionally-abusive husband. Mock jurors were presented with opening and closing statements either including or not including instructions aimed at inducing empathy. Results indicated that those receiving empathy induction were more likely to rate the defendant as mentally stable than those who did not receive instructions. Men, in particular, were found to benefit from empathy induction instructions (women tended to score higher on empathy in both groups). When considering the perceptions of the defendant, empathy induction aided male jurors to take the perspective of the defendant and to rate her as being more mentally stable than men in the no instruction condition. Future studies could explore the role of empathy induction in a CSA case scenario, exploring how empathy induction affects perceptions and judgements regarding both victims and perpetrators, and what effects empathy induction has on men’s and women’s decision making in trials.

In order to investigate predictors of perceptions and judgements regarding child abuse and rape, Tennfjord (2006) explored demographic variables (participant gender and education), social and cultural factors (social support, view of women and cultural biases), as well as personality variables (empathy as measured by the Interpersonal Reactivity Index [IRI], normlessness, mastery, masculinity and femininity). Tennfjord found that by far, the strongest predictor of perceptions and judgements regarding child abuse and rape was empathy ($\beta = -0.30$), indicating that the more empathic the perceiver, the more averse to sexual abuse they were (as measured by the Attitudes towards Child Sexual Abuse scale (ACA)).

In another study exploring various factors that may predict victim blame in cases of physical child abuse and rape, Muller, Caldwell and Hunter (1994) found that when all factors under investigation (socioeconomic status, participants’ history of physical abuse, empathy, belief in a Just World, external locus of control, personal similarity, current derogation of childhood self and current blame of childhood self) were taken into
consideration, the best predictor of child blame and rape victim blame was empathy (β = - .23). Participants who demonstrated less empathy (as measured by the IRI) had a greater tendency to ascribe blame to the victim. These results suggest that one factor contributing to individuals blaming victims for their misfortune may be a lack of empathic connectedness on part of the observer.

In order to explore factors that may explain gender differences in judgements regarding CSA, particularly focusing on empathy, Bottoms (1993) used a mock jury method to evaluate attributions of guilt and victim credibility. She found that across four hypothetical case scenarios, females were significantly more pro-victim than males. However, differences in mock jurors’ empathy and attitudes were more informative in explaining their case judgements than was their gender alone. More specifically, empathy was a stronger predictor of attitudes towards child victims than gender. Thus, differences in empathy were interpreted to be a partial explanation for gender differences in case judgements. Bottoms did point out that the reliability and predictive validity of the empathy and attitudes scales she used have not been assessed. It would be beneficial if a future study addressing the role of empathy as an underlying factor in attitudes used validated measures of empathy and attitudes.

2.8 Summary

In summary, the literature reviewed to date suggests that CSA myth endorsement, perceiver gender, and victim age may shape people's perceptions and judgements about victims and perpetrators of CSA, and in a jury context these factors may influence the outcomes of CSA trials and account in part for the low conviction rates for CSA (see Figure 2). Furthermore, empathy could help to explain why researchers have found consistent gender differences in perceptions and judgements about victims and perpetrators of alleged CSA.
Research indicates that the Australian public lacks an understanding of children’s reactions to sexual abuse, their memory, reliability, and suggestibility when disclosing and reporting sexual abuse. Australian and international studies indicate that a significant proportion of the population endorse CSA myths but the impact of this lack of understanding about CSA on perceptions of victim credibility and culpability is not yet understood, particularly among the Australian community. Further research is needed to examine the types of myths that the Australian community holds and what the potential impact of these endorsements are on perceptions of victim credibility and culpability.

Although research has indicated that victim age has an impact on perceptions of victims, it is unclear when victim age becomes an important factor. Generally, the research indicates that as children get older, their age appears to become an influencing factor in their perceived credibility and culpability. Further research needs to be conducted to empirically test this hypothesis by varying complainant age groups from different stages of childhood including early childhood, late childhood and adolescence.

One of the more robust findings among studies addressing perceptions of CSA victims has been the consistent gender divide in perceptions and judgements about CSA victims. Generally, research indicates that women are more knowledgeable about CSA and are more ‘pro victim’ than men. Whilst the majority of research has found this pattern of results, research has neglected to address why there is a difference between men and women in the way in which they process CSA cases. Explanations that have been offered for this gender difference in perceptions include research methodological factors (more on this in the following chapter) and the role of empathy. It has been proposed that women have higher levels of empathy (whether it be due to socialization or it being a personality trait) towards CSA victims than men, which may explain why they are more favourable towards CSA victims (rating them as more credible and less culpable, for example) than men. Further
research is needed to understand whether dispositional and/or situational empathy can explain
gender differences in perceptions of victims as well as perpetrators (another area which has
been neglected by research). Finding an explanation for why there is a gender difference in
perceptions and judgements regarding victims of CSA will inform targeted education
campaigns, juror compositions (ensuring equal genders), and perhaps even jury directions.
The following chapters begin this endeavour, with the focus first being on methodological
factors that may have influenced research outcomes.
Chapter 3: Methodological issues that may explain gender differences in perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse: Vignette length and inference generation

Experimental studies exploring child sexual abuse (CSA) attributions have been based on varying methodologies including, for example, responses to hypothetical vignettes, questionnaires, trial summaries, or court transcripts. While written vignette studies comprise the majority of stimuli in research in the area of CSA such vignettes have varied from brief summaries to rather detailed realistic accounts. An example of each is provided below:

Brief Vignette

County police are currently investigating a case of alleged sexual molestation against (victim’s name.) These offense charge is based on the report of an 11-year-old girl who told police that (offender’s name) had stopped her on the way home from school and then sexually assaulted her in his car last Tuesday. She gave the same account to police on two separate occasions. (Offender’s name) runs an investment business and is the president of the (name) Chamber of Commerce. (Rubin & Thelen, 1996)

Extended Vignette

Mary, a 15 year-old child, was home alone when the 35 year-old man who lived next door came to visit while Mary’s parents were out shopping. Mary was sitting on the sofa in the living room. She smiled at the neighbour and asked the man to sit beside her. The neighbour sat down and the two of them began talking. The man placed his hand on Mary’s leg and began rubbing the child’s body. Mary pushed the man’s hand away and told him to stop. The man told Mary to lie down on the sofa telling her she would enjoy this, that it would feel good. Mary tried to break free but the man was too strong for her. The man continued petting Mary’s body and then slowly undressed her. When Mary was naked, the neighbour began kissing the child’s body. Starting with her face and working his way down to Mary’s thighs. Then the neighbour sat up and made Mary put her hand inside the man’s slacks on the front
of his underpants and tried to make Mary pet the man’s body as the neighbour had done to her. Once again Mary tried to get away but was unable to do so. Then the neighbour undressed and lay on top of Mary while he fondled the child’s buttocks. The man fondled Mary’s genitals as he continued to caress the child’s body. Mary struggled to break loose. The neighbour had an orgasm while rubbing himself against the child. The man brought Mary her clothes and warned her not to tell her parents what had happened. The neighbour told Mary this game was to remain their secret. (‘resisting victim’ vignette used by Broussard & Wagner, 1988).

Vignette lengths have varied from a few words (a brief statement that abuse occurred) to a 350 word, detailed narrative of abuse. Some vignettes describe the child victim in great detail, while others give the name and age of the child only. One study by Rogers, Josey and Davies (2007) was even accompanied by a photograph of the alleged victim. Readers are typically required to respond to a series of questions related to variables such as victim or perpetrator blame, credibility, and culpability, after reading the vignette, and differences in responses between vignettes are statistically compared (Davies & Rogers, 2006).

Despite the common methodological approach, using a hypothetical vignette, studies have varied substantially with regards to their findings. This observation raises the possibility that perhaps the nature, or language of the materials used may have impacted on the results. Specifically, it may be that differences in perceptions may be in part be influenced by the language and discourse instead of reflecting actual attributional differences. Previous research has shown that something as simple as essay length can have a significant impact on the final mark that students receive for their essays (Ericson & Haswell, 2006; Grasser & McNamara, 2012). For example, Tollefson and Tracy (1980) examined the factors which influence essay scoring by comparing the grades assigned by 88 in-service and pre-service teachers to a set of essay responses which varied in length and quality. The results found that
teachers gave significantly higher grades to long essay responses than to short or moderate length essay responses regardless of the quality of the essay. The good quality long response had the highest mean rating and the smallest variance. The mean score of the poor quality long response did not differ significantly from the mean score for the short or moderate length response of good quality. This implies that markers may mistake more content for higher quality work. It can then be argued that something such as vignette length can potentially affect the way in which participants respond to vignettes in CSA studies. For example, it may be that participants who read long vignettes, may interpret the length of the vignettes (lot of information about a case) to be an indicator of more evidence that the crime occurred as opposed to when they are provided with little information in the form of a short vignette.

Evidence that the language in the materials that these studies have used may impact on the perceptions of the reader stems from Collings and Bodill's work (2003). They explored the influence of lexical descriptions on perceptions based on a vignette that either used consensual (“affair”, “having sex”) or ‘abusive’ terminology (“rape”, “sexual abuse”). It was found that consensual descriptions of abuse were associated with increased perceptions of victim blame, while abusive lexical descriptions increased perceptions of situational and social blame.

Further evidence that language may impact on the perceptions of the reader stems from Rempala and Bernieri's (2005) study in which they presented participants with a vignette depicting an alleged rape case in which the amount of information about the defendant and plaintiff was manipulated (low vs. high). The high information vignettes included information about the defendant’s or plaintiff’s subject of study, their employment or their close relationships. Participants were then asked to provide their judgements regarding verdict (guilty vs. not guilty) and report their perceived responsibility of the
defendant and plaintiff for the alleged incident. The results of the study indicated that when participants received more irrelevant information about the plaintiff (vs. the defendant), they were more likely to blame the plaintiff for what happened and were less likely to find the defendant guilty of rape. Furthermore, participants who had received more irrelevant information about the defendant (vs. the plaintiff) were less likely to blame the plaintiff and more likely to find the defendant guilty of rape.

3.1 Perceiver gender and perceptions and judgements regarding CSA

As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the most prominent variables that has been investigated in the course of attribution research is that of gender. While many studies (e.g., Golding, Alexander, & Stewart, 1999; Golding, Fryman, Marsil, & Yozwiak, 2003; Golding, Sego, & Sanchez, 1999; Golding, Stewart, Yozwiak, & Sanchez, 2000; McCauley & Parker, 2001; Rubin & Thelen, 1996; Yozwiak, Golding, & Marsil, 2004) have found a marked difference between genders, with women generally having more pro-child victim attitudes than men, this finding has not been consistent. For example, Rogers, Josey and Davies (2007) found that men rated a child victim (10 or 15 year old) significantly more culpable for the alleged abuse than did women. Rogers and Davies (2009) also found that men tended to perceive the victim as less credible, less honest, and the abuse to be less severe, and to rate the perpetrator as less culpable, than did women. Maynard and Wiederman (1997), on the other hand, found no gender differences in ratings of abusiveness, perpetrator responsibility and perpetrator blame. Similarly, Waterman and Foss-Goodman (1984) examined variables relating to attributions of fault to child sexual abuse victims, offenders, and nonparticipating parents. Participants were presented with a vignette depicting CSA (270 words describing the sexual abuse encounter) in which the victim’s gender, age (7, 11 or 15 years) and offender-victim relationship (parent, acquaintance or stranger) were varied among participants. There were no significant main effects for gender, and the participant gender x
victim gender x victim age interaction identified only one gender difference in attribution of fault, that being that male participants attributed significantly more fault than female participants to 15-year-old male victims.

Upon closer investigation of these studies it can be observed that studies that did not observe any significant gender differences in perceptions (or found minimal ones) tended to be based on vignettes providing detailed accounts of the alleged abuse, thus providing the reader with a lot of information about the alleged abuse. On the other hand, studies that did find a gender difference were often based on brief vignettes which did not provide detailed accounts of the abuse. An overview of these studies can be found in Table 2. As there has not been a standardised definition of ‘short’ and ‘long’, for the purposes of this thesis, vignettes lacking in a detailed description of the abuse scenario or having descriptions of 100 words or less are classified as ‘short’, while and detailed or vignettes based on more than 100 words are classified as ‘long’.

When comparing vignettes on the basis of the number of words that were used to describe the abuse, gender differences in attributions/perceptions/beliefs were considerably more likely in the ‘short’ (89.16% of variables assessed) group than in the ‘long’ group (34.71% of variables assessed) (see Table 2). A two-proportion z-test was conducted comparing these two percentages and the results indicate that this difference is statistically significant $X^2(1, N = 47) = 14.02, p < .001$. Thus, the more detail participants were given in a sexual abuse vignette, the less likely men and women were to differ in their perceptions and beliefs. This may indicate that men process short vignettes in a different way to women, and it may be the case that men require more information about a child sexual abuse scenario before they are willing to accept that the abuse occurred whereas women may be more believing of the victim’s account, regardless of the amount of information that is provided about the abuse scenario. Specifically, it may be that the more detail or elaboration about the
sexual abuse encounter that men are presented with in the text, the less likely that they are to make inferences, that may be informed by stereotypes or myths.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Vignette length</th>
<th>Word length of abuse description</th>
<th>No. of variables men and women differed on (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rubin &amp; Thelen (1996)</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4/4 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogers, Josey &amp; Davies (2007)</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4/5 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson &amp; Nuttal (1993)</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1/1 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, Rogers &amp; Davies (2007)</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3/4 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogers &amp; Davies (2007)</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4/4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davies &amp; Rogers (2009)</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4/5 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collings &amp; Payne (1991)</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back &amp; Lips (1998)</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>2/4 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maynard &amp; Weiderman (1997)</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>0/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broussard &amp; Wagner (1988)</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>2/2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reynolds &amp; Birkimer (Experiment 1, 2002)</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>0/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reynolds &amp; Birkimer (Experiment 2, 2002)</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>3/5 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterman &amp; Foss-Goodman (1984)</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1/3 (33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total mean 89.16%

Total mean 34.71%
Such an interpretation is consistent with constraint satisfaction theory (MacDonald & Seidenberg, 2006). The constraint-satisfaction model suggests that the understanding of text (as well as other linguistic mediums, such as a vignette) involves constructing an interpretation of information that fits the constraints of the available information better than alternative interpretations (MacDonald & Seidenberg, 2006; Mitchell, Graesser & Louwerse, 2010). According to the constraint satisfaction theory, an important property of processing information is that bits of information that are not very informative in isolation become highly informative when processed in conjunction with other information (MacDonald & Seidenberg, 2006). In other words, a reader can build a more coherent situation model (about the alleged abuse) if more information is available (e.g., more detail about the abusive event as provided by the long vignette) than when a limited amount of information (e.g., few details about the abusive event are provided by the short vignette) is presented. It could be argued that when participants read a shorter, thus more ambiguous account of child sexual abuse, they will need to rely more heavily on previous knowledge (and possibly stereotype based inferences) to fill in the gaps to counter this ambiguity in order to construct a mental representation of what happened during the abuse. On the other hand, when participants read a long vignette, the text provides more information and constrain potential inferences based on stereotypes.

Further, previous research has found that when external facts are uninformative and ambiguous, individuals are more likely to rely on their inferences rather than situational facts when judging an event so they systematically overestimate their level of information (Dunning & Sherman, 1997; Kunda & Sherman-Williams, 1993). For example, Klettke, Graesser and Powell (2009) examined the effects of expert credentials, evidence strength, and testimony coherence on juror decision making. Mock jurors read cases of child sexual abuse followed by expert testimony and then rated the guilt of the defendant, the effectiveness of
the expert testimony, and the credibility of the complainant. The results indicated that guilt ratings of the defendant were lower and the complainant was rated as less credible when both evidence strength and coherence were low. These results highlight the importance of using research materials (vignettes) that are coherent and high in evidence strength.

Other research on reading comprehension has found that readers build mental models (Johnson-Laird, 1983) or situation models (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978) of a scene depicted in a text, comprising both explicit and implicit elements. The latter are based on general knowledge and are referred to as inferences which include: the goals and plans that motivate the characters’ knowledge and beliefs, character emotions, causes of events, the consequences of events and actions, properties of objects, spatial contexts, spatial relationships among entities, a global theme or point of the text, the attitudes of the writer, and the appropriate emotional reaction of the reader (Graesser, Millis & Zwaan, 1997). Graesser et al. (1997) also proposed that readers encode inferences that address their comprehension goals and inferences which are generated during reading and are often considered necessary to allow readers to maintain local as well as global coherence of the text (Graesser, Singer, & Trabasso, 1994). Those readers establishing or maintaining local coherence connect adjacent elements of the text, whereas those establishing or maintaining global coherence connect most elements of the text by deeper features such as the theme of a narrative.

3.2 Potential application to understanding of CSA gender differences

It may be that men and women differ in the way in which they process the vignettes with which they are presented in CSA studies. Past research has shown that women are less likely than men to accept CSA myths, have more knowledge about CSA (Calvert & Munsie-Benson, 1999; Gabora, Spanos, & Joab, 1993; Hubbartt & Singg, 2001; Quas, Thompson, & Clarke-Stewart, 2005) and are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse (Price-Robertson,
Bromfield & Vassallo, 2010; Yurchesyn, Keith, & Renner, 1992). Thus, due to lack of prior knowledge of CSA (and possible lack of personal experience) men may rely more on their stereotypes and construct more inferences when little information is presented to them about the crime, and they may be more likely than women to ‘fill in the gaps’ in vignettes that lack detail about the abuse scenario. Therefore, whatever stereotypes men may hold, these would be more prominent in responses to shorter texts. On the other hand, long texts may act as information sources by elaborating on the major ideas in the text and eliminating the need for men to rely on their stereotype based inferences and could thus equalise perceptions between genders.

The review of the literature outlined above indicates that there may be serious methodological questions which need to be addressed before any further research is conducted on attributions relating to victims and perpetrators in CSA cases, particularly when research is reliant on the use of vignettes to gauge these perceptions or attributions. If the outcomes of research addressing community perceptions regarding CSA are going to impact on law reform recommendations then it is crucial to understand whether these attitude studies are measuring what they are proposing to measure. More research is needed to address the impact of research methodological choices on reported perceptions and judgements in CSA cases/studies. The following chapter explores how the studies conducted for this thesis will contribute to this research.
Chapter 4: Key issues arising from the literature

One of the most robust findings in previous research addressing perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse has been the consistent gender differences reported. Specifically, the research has found that women tend to be more ‘pro-victim’ than men, and men tend to favour the defendant/perpetrator more than women. Although research has consistently reported that these gender differences exist, the factors underlying these differences have been largely ignored. One of the major aims of the current thesis is to address some of the factors that may explain these gender differences.

Despite the above, a review of research into perceptions and judgements regarding CSA (Chapter 3) found that when participants in studies were provided with longer more detailed accounts of a CSA scenario, there were fewer significant gender differences in perceptions and judgements. This led to the supposition that perhaps the reported gender differences in past research may be due largely to methodological factors rather than true differences in attitudes. More specifically, it was suggested that men may rely more on their inferences than women when responding to short vignettes which lack detail about the abuse scenario. On the other hand, when participants are provided with more information (longer vignettes) about a CSA scenario, men will not rely as much on their inferences but rather on the information that is provided to them. Therefore, one of the aims of the current thesis is to assess whether gender differences in CSA attitude research can be explained by methodological factors (Studies 1 and 2) and also to ensure that the materials used to investigate Australian community attitudes towards CSA (Study 3), would be reliable.

Chapter 2 argued that if attitudinal gender differences do exist, one explanation for them is gender differences in empathy. Although some other researchers have also proposed that empathy may explain the gender differences in perceptions and judgements regarding CSA victims (Bottoms, 1993; Haegerich & Bottoms, 2000; Insquith et al., 1993), this theory
has not been empirically tested in the context of CSA. It therefore, remains unclear whether empathy may help to explain the gender differences in perceptions and judgements regarding CSA that previous research has found. Addressing this question is another aim of the current thesis (Study 3). Furthermore, Study 3 will not only assess participants’ dispositional empathy (person's stable character trait) but also their situational empathy (empathic reactions in a specific situation) toward both complainant and defendant, something that previous research has not addressed in the context of CSA.

Due to the nature of CSA cases (frequently there is a lack of corroborative evidence) Chapter 1 suggested that the relatively low conviction rates may be due in part, to misconceptions that jurors bring to the court room which impact on their decision-making, more so than the evidence that is presented in court. Thus far, little is known about the extent of beliefs and misconceptions about child sexual abuse that are common among the Australian population. While most studies have shown that a majority of research participants do not endorse CSA myths, a significant proportion of participants do. If these participants are representative of the jury-eligible members of the community then this finding may explain the low conviction rates in Australia in CSA cases when compared to non-sex related cases. For these reasons, examining how CSA myths affect perceptions of victims and perpetrators in CSA trials is an important step in understanding why conviction rates of CSA are so low, and how best to improve those rates.

Finally, previous research also suggests that attributions of victim responsibility in cases of CSA increase with victim age, particularly as the child approaches adolescence, but it is not clear at which age this begins because vignettes or scenarios have generally depicted children in mid-childhood and mid-adolescence. An important issue to highlight when it comes to victim age is that children often delay in the reporting of their abuse (which can be months and even years after abuse occurs) and the length of time between reporting and trial
(which can ranged from 8 to 36 months across all jurisdictions in Australia [Eastwood & Patton, 2002]) means that by the time a child is in front of a jury, it could be a number of years after the abuse had occurred. Although the current thesis did not examine the impact of delayed reporting on judgements, it may be the focus of future research.

The current thesis aims to test the hypothesis that attributions of complainant responsibility in cases of CSA increase with complainant age by varying the age of the complainant in the mock trial vignette (Study 3). The ages that were chosen were 5, 10 and 15 years. The age of 5 years was selected because children under the age of 6 years have been found to be a high-risk age group, for example, Cashmore (1994) found that the majority of young children (mostly under the age of 6 years) do not get called to give evidence in trials and if they are to be called, they are likely to be deemed incompetent witnesses. The age of 10 years is another high-risk age group as studies have shown that the onset of abuse occurs at a mean age of 10 years, with most abuse starting before the age of 12 years (Andrews, Gould & Corry, 2002). Finally, the age of 15 years was selected based on previous findings that adolescents approaching adulthood appear to be perceived as quasi-adults, that is, possessing the ability to understand sexual meaning, to engage in sexual activity consentingly, and to resist unwanted sexual contact (Davies & Rogers, 2006; Davies, Rogers, & Whiteleg, 2009; Klettke & Simonis, 2010) thus making them another high-risk age group.
Chapter 5: Study 1

On the basis of the analyses of previous research and theorizing outlined in the preceding chapters, the aim of this first study was to explore whether the type of vignette (particularly vignette length) can account for the observed gender differences in CSA studies. Participants read a short or a long vignette and then recalled as much of the information as they could. The participants’ recall was then analysed for the ratio of correct information, errors and inferences generated. Due to the exploratory nature of the current study, there are no hypotheses regarding gender differences in the percentage of correct information or errors made. However, it is hypothesised that gender differences in the percentage of inferences generated will be reduced as a function of vignette length. More specifically, men who are presented with a short vignette will generate a greater ratio of inferences than women who are presented with a short vignette but no significant gender differences are expected when participants are presented with a long vignette.

5.1 Method

5.1.1 Participants.

A total of 194 participants (97 males [50%] and 97 females [50%]) who met the criterion of being jury-eligible in Australia, completed the study. Participants were aged between 18 and 69 years (M = 30.82 years, SD = 10.66). Of the participants, 16 (8.2%) had attained an education level of year 11 or below, 37 (19.1%) had completed year 12, 39 (20.1%) had attained a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) certificate, and 102 (52.6%) had attained a Bachelor degree or above. Furthermore, of the participants surveyed, 101 (52.1%) had children, and 93 (47.9%) indicated that they worked or had worked with children. It is important to acknowledge that the mean age of the study participants was slightly younger than that of the Australian population of 37.3 years (ABS, 2014), and the gender composition of the participants in the current study is not in line with the Australian
population with 50.21% (ABS, 2014) of Australian residents being female. The 2006 Census also found that 15% of the Australian population had attained a Bachelor degree or above which is a significantly lower proportion than that the 52.6% of the participants in the current study (ABS, 2009). Furthermore, according to the Census, 27% of the Australian population had attained a TAFE qualification which is a slightly higher proportion than the 20.1% in the current study. The Census does not separate levels of high school achievement in its analysis of population education attainment. Therefore comparisons between the current study participants and the Australian reference data could not be made for proportions of participants in the categories of year 11 or below, and year 12 education.

Participants were recruited from various online fora and social network sites. The fora included parenting fora, music fora, sporting fora (Australian Football, wrestling, and paintball), gaming fora, fashion fora, caravanning enthusiasts as well as astronomy enthusiasts. These fora were chosen so that people from a wide cross-section of society were targeted and people from a variety of backgrounds and interests could participate. An invitation to participate in the study, along with a link to the survey was posted on each forum. Participation was completely anonymous and voluntary. Specifically, once participants agreed to consent they could withdraw at any stage. Once participants were directed to the survey, they were randomly presented with a short or a long vignette. Prior to undertaking the study, ethics approval was granted for the project from the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendix B).

5.1.2 Materials.

The study comprised of two vignettes which were varied for word length (long = 181 words and short = 31 words). The long vignette was adapted from Broussard and Wagner (1988), while the short vignette was adapted from Kelley (1990).

Long vignette:
Mary is a 5 year old girl who was home alone with her father, James. She was sitting on the sofa in the living room watching TV. She smiled at her father and asked him to sit beside her. He sat down and the two of them began talking. He placed his hand on Mary’s leg and began rubbing the child’s body. Mary pushed her father’s hand away and told him to stop. He told Mary to lie down on the sofa telling her she would enjoy this, that it would feel good. Mary tried to break free but he was too strong for her. He continued petting Mary’s body and then slowly undressed her. When Mary was naked, he began kissing the child’s body. Starting with her face and working his way down to Mary’s thighs. Then her father sat up and made Mary put her hand inside his slacks on the front of his underpants and tried to make Mary pet his body as he had done to her. Mary did as she was told; once again Mary tried to get away but was unable to do so. Then her father undressed and lay on top of Mary while he fondled the child’s buttocks. The man fondled Mary’s genitals as he continued to caress the child’s body. Mary struggled to break loose. The father had an orgasm while rubbing himself against the child. The man brought Mary her clothes and warned her not to tell her mother what had happened. He told Mary this game was to remain their secret.

**Short vignette:**

Mary is a 5 year old girl who was home alone with her father, James when he sexually abused her. The sexual abuse involved fondling activity and Mary’s father masturbating on her. Physical force was used to gain control over the child. Mary resisted and did not tell her mother as she was warned not to tell anyone what had happened, that this was a game and it would remain their secret.

**5.1.2.1 Comprehension check.**

In order to ensure that participants had read the material and understood it, they were asked to answer a four-item true or false questionnaire about the vignettes. For example,
“Mary was home alone with her babysitter, James, when he sexually abused her”. The answer to the question is true as James was home alone with Mary. Only participants who answered a minimum of three out of four questions correctly were included in the data analysis.

5.1.3 Procedure.

The study was in the form of an online survey which was constructed using Adobe Dreamweaver and launched through the Deakin University server (ie. no external survey platform was used) which ensured that the data was safe and only accessible to the researcher. An invitation to participate in the study, along with a link to the survey was posted on the forum detailed above. After reading the Plain Language Statement (Appendix C), participants could indicate their consent by clicking I AGREE. If participants chose not to participate then they could close the window and exit the survey. Each consenting participant was then directed to the survey which they could complete and submit.

During the study, participants were asked to provide some demographic information (age, gender, education level achieved, parental status and whether they had previously worked with children). Participants were then randomly presented with one of the two vignettes and were instructed to read it carefully as they would later be asked to recall it. This method was chosen, as one way to assess the inferences that readers generate is through story retells which can be a reliable indicator of the degree to which people remember facts contained in stories and how they may integrate such information with past experiences (Hansen, 1978).

Once participants read the vignette, they were presented with a distractor task (counting backwards by 3s from the number 135, timed for 15 seconds). Participants were then asked to recall as much detail about the vignette as they could by typing their response into a text box. In order to ensure that participants had read the vignette and understood it,
they were then asked to answer four true or false questions about the vignette. For example, “Mary was home alone with her babysitter, James, when he sexually abused her”. The answer to the question is false as James was Mary’s father, not babysitter.

5.2 Results

Five participants’ data were removed prior to the analysis due to incomplete data (participants who failed to write a summary of the vignette), or for failing to answer comprehension check questions correctly. An analysis of missing data was conducted and it was found that for the remaining participants (after deletion of aforementioned five participants), less than 5% of data was missing completely at random. Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess whether the demographic variables had a significant impact on the dependent variables. With the exception of participant gender (results discussed below), the results revealed no significant differences in participants’ responding across the various demographic variables.

An adapted version of a proposition analysis by Hansen (1978) was conducted on each of the recall measures. Inferences and two types of propositions (correct and incorrect) were assessed and recorded. Actual propositions were the propositions contained in the text and incorrect propositions were errors (for example, the incident took place in the bedroom instead of lounge room). Inferences included any information that was inferred from the text, unrelated to the text, or contradicted what was in the text. For example, in the vignette James handed Mary her clothes but never said anything to her. Inferences would include a participant recalling that James “told her to get dressed”.

In order to compare propositions and inferences between the two vignettes, propositions and inferences were converted to percentages. For example, if a participant recalled a total number of 150 words and 50 of those words were errors, then the participant had an error score of 33%. Histograms for the three measures were inspected separately. As
the data were skewed, Mann-Whitney’s U-test was adopted in statistical analyses. Table 3 summarises the mean percentages and standard deviations of propositions (correct and incorrect) and inferences participants generated as a function of the length of the vignette (either the short or the long vignette) and the gender of respondent.

5.2.1 Vignette length, gender and recall.

The ideal choice of analyses for this study would have been a Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), however, due to the skewed distribution of the dependent variables which could not be corrected by transformation, and violations of too many assumptions underlying this method, Mann-Whitney U tests were chosen. Analyses were conducted in order to examine how each gender processed the different vignette lengths. More specifically, potential gender differences within the short and long vignette were investigated in separate analyses.

5.2.1.1 Short vignette.

Results indicate that, men recalled a significantly lower percentage of correct propositions than women ($U = 1580.00$, $n_1 = 47$, $n_2 = 49$, $p < 0.05$, $r = 0.33$). No significant difference were found ($U = 1244.50$, $n_1 = 47$, $n_2 = 49$, $p > 0.05$, $r = 0.08$). Men generated significantly greater percentage of inferences than women ($U = 775.50$, $n_1 = 47$, $n_2 = 49$, $p < 0.05$, $r = -0.32$).
Table 3

Mean percentage and standard deviations for vignette length and gender on proposition recall, errors made and inference generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correct propositions</th>
<th></th>
<th>Errors made</th>
<th></th>
<th>Inferences generated</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (%) (SD)</td>
<td>M (%) (SD)</td>
<td>M % (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td>M % (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short vignette</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (n=47)</td>
<td>89.8 (9.5)</td>
<td>1.5 (3.0)</td>
<td>8.54 (10.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (n=49)</td>
<td>94.4 (13.1)</td>
<td>2.4 (6.3)</td>
<td>3.06 (7.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>92.2 (11.5)</td>
<td>1.9 (4.9)</td>
<td>5.80 (9.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long vignette</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (n=50)</td>
<td>84.8 (10.2)</td>
<td>8.2 (12.7)</td>
<td>10.0 (14.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (n=47)</td>
<td>90.7 (7.0)</td>
<td>4.1 (4.4)</td>
<td>5.13 (5.8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>87.9 (9.1)</td>
<td>6.0 (9.6)</td>
<td>7.49 (11.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (n=97)</td>
<td>87.4 (10.1)</td>
<td>4.8 (9.7)</td>
<td>9.26 (12.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (n=96)</td>
<td>92.5 (10.5)</td>
<td>3.2 (5.5)</td>
<td>4.13 (6.8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>90.0 (10.6)</td>
<td>4.0 (7.9)</td>
<td>6.65 (10.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.1.2 Long vignette.

Results indicate that men again recalled a significantly lower percentage of correct propositions than women ($U = 1599.00, n_1 = 50, n_2 = 47, p<0.05, r=0.31$). Men made a significantly greater percentage of errors than women ($U = 813.00, n_1 = 50, n_2 = 47, p<0.05, r=-0.26$). No significant differences were found between men and women in the percentage of inferences generated in the recall protocol ($U = 917.00, n_1 = 50, n_2 = 47 p>0.05, r=-0.19$).
These findings support the hypothesis that men will generate more inferences when they are presented with short vignette, than women. Also supporting the hypothesis, there were no significant gender differences in the percentage of inferences generated for participants who responded to a long vignette.

5.3 Discussion

The present study provides support for the proposition that vignette length in child sexual abuse studies has an impact on gender differences in recall and information processing. It was hypothesised that gender differences in the percentages of inferences generated would reduce as a function of vignette length. The results of the current study supported this hypothesis. It was found that when participants were presented with a short vignette, men generated a significantly greater percentage of inferences than women, but there were no significant gender differences in the ratio of inferences generated when responding to a long vignette. Furthermore, irrespective of vignette length (whether they recalled a long or a short vignette) women were significantly more accurate in their recall (of their total recall, a greater proportion was made up of correct propositions) than men. No significant gender differences were found in the ratio of errors made when responding to a short vignette, however, men made significantly greater errors when responding to a long vignette than women.

The results of the current study, therefore, lend support to the notion that men may generate more inferences when responding to a short description of a child sexual abuse scenario possibly due to their lack of prior knowledge of CSA and the use of their stereotypes to construct more inferences. For example, previous research has found that lack of background knowledge about a topic in a text can hinder peoples’ ability to comprehend and thus, recall information from that text (Graesser, Millis & Zwaan, 1997). It may be that when
little information is presented to them, men ‘fill in the gaps’ in vignettes that lack detail about the abuse scenario.

The results that men generated a greater ratio of inferences in a short vignette than women, may also indicate that men are more affected by text constraints than women. As noted earlier, constraint satisfaction theory suggests that the understanding of text (as well as other linguistic mediums, such as a vignette) involves constructing an interpretation of information that fits the constraints of the available information better than alternative interpretations (MacDonald & Seidenberg, 2006; Mitchell, Graesser & Louwerve, 2010). According to the constraint satisfaction theory, an important property of processing information is that bits of information that are not very informative in isolation become highly informative when processed in conjunction with other information (MacDonald & Seidenberg, 2006). In other words, a reader can build a more coherent situation model (about the alleged abuse) if more information is available (e.g., more detail about the abusive event as provided by the long vignette) than when a limited amount of information (e.g., few details about the abusive event as provided by the short vignette) is presented. It may be that men are more likely to be affected by text constraints than women, more specifically, it may be that men rely more on their inferences to fill in the gaps to account for the greater ambiguity of a short vignette.

The current study is not without limitations. One possible limitation is the content or characteristics of the vignette. We manipulated the amount of information participants received about the abuse scenario only and did not look at other possible factors that could have affected inferences (e.g., the relationship between the alleged victim and perpetrator). Future research could focus on the content of the inferences that men and women generate and the differences in the content of inferences between vignette types. Furthermore, future research could also explore other vignette characteristics such as background information
about the victim or the alleged perpetrator (e.g., perpetrator’s standing in the community, occupation, criminal record, victim’s academic achievement etc), corroborating evidence, witness testimony etc. However, the focus of this study was vignette length.

In summary, the results indicated that men generate a higher ratio of inferences than women when they are asked to recall a short CSA vignette but not when they are asked to recall a long vignette. Men also appear to be less accurate than women in recalling the information presented to them in CSA vignettes (irrespective of vignette length) and make significantly more errors in their recall than women when responding to long vignettes. The results of the current study may indicate that the gender differences observed in previous research may be the result of the inferences participants generate. Future research in this area should be aimed at comparing samples of texts in order to generalise over texts; and varying vignette length to examine if this variation affects reported perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse. Study 2 will address the latter issue. More specifically, Study 2 will assess how varying vignette length impacts upon: participants’ propensity to sympathise, empathise, and identify (more on these in the following chapter) with an alleged victim of CSA and perpetrator, perceptions of the victim’s credibility and abuse severity, as well as judgements regarding victim culpability.
Chapter 6

Study 2: Methodological differences as an explanation for gender differences in empathy and perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse

The purpose of Study 2 was to further investigate the role of vignette length and perceiver gender in perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse. The perception and judgement variables include perceptions of credibility, culpability, and perceived abuse seriousness/severity. One possible explanation for the gender differences in the way in which vignettes are comprehended or processed may be the level of detail (or the lack thereof) participants are presented with and the impact this has on participants’ empathy. In most studies, empathy is defined as the process of taking another’s perspective, to feel with another (cognitive aspect of empathy, commonly referred to as perspective taking), and/or experiencing affect that either essentially matches that of the target (emotional aspect of empathy) (Snow, 2000). Prior research has suggested that, in general, men appear to be more empathic toward defendants in CSA cases, whilst women appear to be more empathic toward victims of CSA (Bottoms, 1993). This is worthy of investigation as jurors’ propensity to empathise with the complainant of CSA or the defendant may affect judgements in cases of CSA (Bottoms, 1993). Furthermore, Kaufmann, Drevland, Wessel, Overskeid and Magnussen (2003) suggested that victim credibility ratings are strongly influenced by the emotions and/or behaviours displayed by the witness rather than the factual content of their testimonies.

It may be that the more information participants are provided with about the victim and the perpetrator, the more opportunity there is for participants to relate to the victim (or perpetrator) and identify with the parties involved. It may also be the case that women generally have a high level of empathy for children, irrespective of the amount of information presented about the case. Men, on the other hand, may need to be presented with more
information about an alleged child sexual abuse case, before their levels of inference making (Study 1), and empathy for the victim approaches that of women. This may explain the lack of significant difference in gender that were found in the percentage of inferences generated by participants responding to long vignettes (Study 1) compared to those participants who responded to a short vignette.

Therefore, it was predicted that:

1) When responding to a short vignette (vignette containing less than 100 words to describe a sexual abuse scenario) men and women will differ significantly in their perceptions and attributions of abuse severity, victim credibility, and perpetrator and victim culpability. More specifically, women will be more pro-victim than men in their reported attributions. When responding to the longer vignette (vignette containing more than 100 words to describe a sexual abuse scenario) however, men and women will not differ in perceptions and attributions.

2) Women will be more likely to sympathise, empathise and feel a sense of similarity with the victim than men in response to the short vignette but not in response to the longer vignette.

3) Based on the literate review regarding gender and empathy (Chapter 2), it was expected that men will sympathise, empathise and identify with the perpetrator more than women, irrespective of vignette length.

6.1 Method

6.1.1 Participants.

Two hundred and nine (82 males [39.2%] and 127 females [60.8%]) Australian jury-eligible participants completed the study. Participants were aged between 18 years and 64 years ($M = 37.74$ years, $SD = 12.40$). Of the participants, 12 (5.7%) had attained an education level of year 11 or below, 27 (12.8%) had completed year 12, 47 (22.3%) had attained a
Technical and Further Education (TAFE) certificate, and 123 (59.2%) had attained a Bachelor degree or above. Of the participants surveyed, 127 (61.10%) had children, and 32 (15.30%) indicated that they worked with children. The mean age of the study participants is almost identical to that of the Australian population of 37.3 years (ABS, 2014), however the gender composition of the participants in the current study is not in line with the Australian population with 50.21% (ABS, 2014) of Australian residents being female versus 60.8% here. The 2006 Census also found that 15% of the Australian population had attained a Bachelor degree or above which is significantly lower than that of the participants in the current study of 59.2% (ABS, 2009). Furthermore, according to the Census, 27% of the Australian population had attained a TAFE qualification which is slightly higher than that of the participants in the current study (22.3%). The Census does not separate levels of high school achievement in its analysis of population education attainment. Therefore comparisons between the current study participants and the Australian reference data could not be made for proportions of participants in the categories of year 11 or below, and year 12 education.

6.1.2 Materials.

The vignettes from study 1 were also used for the current study. Therefore, participants were randomly presented with either a short or a long vignette and were asked to rate the alleged victim and perpetrator on variables such as blame, guilt and responsibility for the abuse as well as other attitude factors such as: victim competence, perceived abuse severity, seriousness of the event and whether the victim would be negatively affected and traumatised by the event. A female victim was chosen for the current study because research indicates that the majority of victims of child sexual abuse are female (Bricknell, 2008).
6.1.2.1 **Demographic questionnaire.**

Items in the demographic questionnaire included: age, gender, education (year 11 or below, year 12, Bachelor degree or above, or Training And Further Education (TAFE) certificate, whether participants had children, whether they work with children (if yes, participants were asked to indicate how long), in which state or territory participants lived, and whether participants know someone who has been sexually abused.

6.1.2.2 **Credibility measures.**

Attributions of victim credibility were assessed through a two item (competence and reliability), 5-point scale (1 = Not at all competent/reliable, 5 = very competent/reliable), questionnaire. For example “How competent do you think the average child of Mary’s age is to give accurate information about this kind of event?” and “How much do you believe that Mary will be able to give an accurate description of what happened to police?”. The two items were summed to create the ‘Victim Credibility’ variable ($r=0.80$, $p<.001$).

6.1.2.3 **Culpability measures.**

Culpability was measured across six items pertaining to the level of blame, guilt and responsibility of both the victim (3 items) and the perpetrator (3 items) for the abuse again, on a 5-point-Likert scale (1 = Not at all guilty/blameworthy etc, 3 = some guilt/blame etc, 5 = completely responsible/to blame etc). The items included: “How responsible (guilty or how much blame) do you think James (or Mary) was for this event?” Due to a low correlation between the three items pertaining to victim culpability (Cronbach’s $\alpha=0.02$) and the three items pertaining to perpetrator culpability (Cronbach’s $\alpha=0.03$), the 6 items will be treated as separate constructs and analyzed separately.
6.1.2.4  **Seriousness of the event.**

Perceived event seriousness was also assessed through three items, again rated on a 5-point-Likert scale. Participants were asked: “How much do you think Mary’s life will be affected by the event?” (1=Positively affected, 3= Not affected, 5= Negatively affected); “How much do you think Mary will be traumatised by the event?” (1= Not at all traumatised, 3= Not traumatised enough to cause problems with relationships, 5= She will have lasting problems (depression, fear of men etc) for life due to her trauma); “How serious do you think this event is?” (1= Not at all serious, 3= Somewhat serious, 5= Very serious). Due to the low alpha scores (Cronbach’s $a = 0.54$) when combing the three items to produce one measure, the three items were treated as separate constructs.

6.1.2.5  **Relating to the victim (sympathy, empathy and similarity).**

Sixteen questions with a 5-point response scale (1= Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree) were used to assess sympathy and empathy toward and identification with the victim and the perpetrator. Five questions were used to assess sympathy, two item for the victim and three for the perpetrator; the questions were “I feel sorry for Mary (or James)”, “Based on what was happening in the vignette, I understood what Mary (or James) was feeling” and “While reading the vignette, I tried to understand James”. The two items pertaining to victim sympathy yielded a low correlation ($r=0.11, p=0.01$) thus the two questions were treated as separate constructs and analyzed separately. The remaining three items pertaining to perpetrator sympathy were also treated as separate constructs due to the low alpha scores (Cronbach’s $a = 0.50$).

Empathy towards the victim and the perpetrator were measured by 4 items (two items pertaining to empathy toward the victim, two items pertaining to empathy towards the perpetrator). The items were: “While reading the vignette, I experienced many of the feelings
that Mary (or James) may have”, “While reading the vignette, I felt as if Mary’s (or James’) feelings were my own”. The two items pertaining to victim empathy were summed to create the ‘Victim empathy’ variable ($r=0.72$, $p<0.001$) and the remaining two items were summed to create the ‘Perpetrator empathy’ variable ($r=0.71$, $p<0.001$).

Finally, six items (three items for the victim and three for the perpetrator) were used to assess perceived similarity or likeness (identification) with the victim and the perpetrator. The items included: “I feel that I have a lot of things in common with Mary (or James)”, “I know what it would be like to be Mary (or James)”, “I feel a similarity with Mary (or James)”. The three items pertaining to victim similarity were summed to create the ‘Victim similarity’ variable (Cronbach’s $a =0.96$) and the remaining three items were summed to create the ‘Perpetrator similarity’ variable (Cronbach’s $a =0.78$).

6.1.2.6 Comprehension check.

In order to ensure that participants had read the vignette and understood it, they were asked to answer a ten-item true or false questionnaire about the case. For example, “Mary was told that the incident was a secret between her and her father”. The answer to the question is true as James did tell Mary that what happened was to remain their secret. Only participants who answered a minimum of nine out of 10 questions (N= 209) correctly were included in the data analysis.

6.1.3 Procedure.

Participants were recruited from various online Australian fora and social network sites. The fora included: parenting fora, Yahoo general message boards, Australian football league fora, motorcycle racing forum, car racing fora, online gaming fora, fishing fora, 4-wheel driving fora, sewing, university student fora, fashion and wedding fora, and Channel
10 general message boards. Participation was anonymous and voluntary, and once participants agreed to consent they could withdraw at any stage. Prior to undertaking the study, ethics approval was granted for the project from the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix B). The survey was constructed using Adobe Dreamweaver and launched through the Deakin University server (ie. no external survey platform was used).

An invitation to participate in the study, along with a link to the survey was posted on each forum, directing participants to a Plain Language Statement (Appendix D). After reading the statement, participants could indicate their consent by clicking I AGREE (to participate). Alternatively they could exit the website. Each consenting participant was then directed to the survey which they completed and submitted.

Participants were asked to complete the demographic information questionnaire, then read one of two vignettes (varied for vignette length). Then they completed the 28 questions pertaining to the victim’s credibility, victim and perpetrator culpability, event seriousness, victim and perpetrator sympathy, empathy, similarity and 10 items pertaining to the comprehension check.

6.2 Results

Seven participants’ data were removed prior to the analysis due to incomplete data (participants who failed to fill out at least one of the questionnaires or who had missing data greater than 5%), or for failing to answer comprehension check questions correctly. An analysis of missing data was conducted and it was found that for the remaining participants (after deletion of aforementioned six participants), less than 5% of data was missing completely at random. These missing data were replaced by mean substitutions as outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). The data provided by the remaining participants are
summarised in Table 4. There were 35 males and 75 females who were randomly allocated a short vignette and 47 males and 52 females whom were randomly presented with a long vignette.

The ideal choice of analyses for this study would have been a Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), however, initial screening revealed that too many assumptions underlying MANOVA were violated. As a result of this, Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to test the hypotheses, and the results are presented in turn below.

### 6.2.1 Demographic analyses.

Analyses were conducted to test the effect of the demographics variables (Participant’s highest attained level of education, parental status and whether they had worked with children in the past) on judgements/dependent variables (victim credibility, victim and perpetrator culpability, seriousness of event, victim and perpetrator sympathy, empathy and similarity), across short and long vignettes.

#### 6.2.1.1 Vignette length and participants’ education.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicated that there was no significant difference in perceptions between those who responded to a short vignette or those who responded to a long vignette with an education of year 11 and below, those with a TAFE education nor for those who have attained a bachelor degree (or above). The results did however, indicate that those with year a 12 education who responded to a long vignette ($Mdn=8.00$, $M=8.12$, $SD= 1.74$) (compared to those with a year 12 education who responded to a short vignette [$Mdn=7.00$, $M=6.63$, $SD= 1.56$]) rated the victim to be significantly more credible($U=45.50$, $n_1=11$, $n_2=16$, $p<.03$, $r=-0.42$). No other significant differences were found.
6.2.1.2 Vignette length a participants’ parental status.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicated that those parents who responded to a short vignette \((Mdn=1.00, M=1.70, SD=1.23)\) (compared to those parents who responded to a long vignette \([Mdn=1.00, M=1.19, SD=1.66]\)) indicated feeling more sorry (sympathy) for the perpetrator \((U=2461.50, n_1=64, n_2=63, p<.03, r=0.26)\). No other significant differences were found.

6.2.1.3 Vignette length and working with children.

Mann-Whitney U test did not find a significant relationship between a history of working with children (those who indicated working with children and those who indicated not having worked with children) and any of the judgement variables across vignette length.

Due to the low effect sizes of the two significant findings within the demographic analyses, it was decided that the demographic variables were not likely to impact on the results of any further analyses and therefore, these variables were collapsed for the subsequent analyses.

6.2.2 Hypothesis 1: when responding to a short vignette (vignette containing less than 100 words to describe a sexual abuse scenario) men and women will differ significantly in their perceptions and attributions of abuse severity, victim credibility, and perpetrator and victim culpability. More specifically, women will be more pro-victim than men in their reported attributions. When responding to the longer vignette (vignette containing more than 100 words to describe a sexual abuse scenario) however, men and women will not differ in perceptions and attributions.

Contrary to expectations, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicated gender differences in only one of the ten attitude variables. Specifically, women ascribed
significantly less responsibility than men to the victim when responding to a short vignette ($U=1221.00$, $n_1=75$, $n_2=35$, $p<.00$, $r=0.20$). No significant gender differences were found in perceptions of perpetrator culpability nor in perceptions of victim blame and guilt. No significant gender differences were found in the three items pertaining to perceptions of event seriousness.

When the long vignette data were analysed, gender differences were found on four out of the ten attitude variables. Specifically, women ascribed a significantly higher degree of guilt than men to the perpetrator ($U=1056.50$, $n_1=52$, $n_2=47$, $p<.00$, $r=-0.21$). Women were significantly more likely than men to: believe that the victim will be negatively affected by the event, $U=1458.00$, $n_1=51$, $n_2=47$, $p<.00$, $r=0.23$; and that she would be traumatised by the event $U=1539.50$, $n_1=51$, $n_2=47$, $p<.00$, $r=0.30$. They also rated the event as more serious than did men $U=1303.50$, $n_1=51$, $n_2=47$, $p<.00$, $r=0.24$. No significant gender differences were found in ratings of victim credibility nor on the other items pertaining to perpetrator and victim culpability.

Overall, there was little support for Hypotheses 1. Gender differences were identified for the longer scenario, but only one for the shorter scenario. Each of these differences was however in the direction of women being more pro-victim than men.

6.2.3 Hypothesis 2: women will be more likely to sympathise, empathise and feel a sense of similarity with the victim than men in response to the short vignette but not in response to the longer vignette.
Hypothesis 3: men will sympathise, empathise and identify with the perpetrator more than women, irrespective of vignette length.

A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to assess whether men and women differed in their propensity to sympathise, empathise and identify (feel a sense of similarity) with the
victim as well as the perpetrator. The results indicated that there were gender differences in five out of the nine variables that were used to assess sympathy, empathy and identification. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, men were significantly more likely than women to: feel sorry for the alleged perpetrator \( U=1054.50, n_1=35, n_2=75, p<.05, r=-.20 \); to understand what the perpetrator was feeling \( U=712.00, n_1=35, n_2=75, p<.05, r=-.40 \); and to understand the perpetrator’s motivation \( U=596.50, n_1=35, n_2=75, p<.05, r=-.46 \). Men also indicated a significantly higher level of empathy for the perpetrator than women \( U=994.50, n_1=35, n_2=75, p<.00, r=-0.25 \), and they were significantly more likely to identify with the perpetrator than women \( U=523.50, n_1=35, n_2=75, p<.00, r=-0.50 \).

Contradictory to Hypothesis 2, no significant gender differences were found in victim sympathy, victim empathy, or victim similarity. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, men were significantly more likely than women, to sympathise empathise and identify with the offender.
Table 4

Median, means and standard deviations for vignette length, gender and perceptions of the victim and perpetrator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Males (N=35)</th>
<th>Females (N=75)</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Males (N=47)</th>
<th>Females (N=52)</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mdn</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mdn</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim credibility</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>7.31</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim culpability</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perp culpability</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event seriousness</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim negatively</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affected</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim traumatised</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious event</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Sympathy</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel sorry for victim</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 cont.

| Dependent variables | Short vignette | | | | | | | | Long vignette | | | |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                     | Males (N = 35) | Females (N = 75) | Males (N = 47) | Females (N = 52) |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
|                     | Mdn  | M   | SD  | Mdn  | M   | SD  | Sig  | Mdn  | M   | SD  | Sig  | Mdn  | M   | SD  | Sig  |
| Perp Sympathy       |      |     |     |      |     |     |      |      |     |     |      |      |     |     |      |
| Feel sorry for perp | 1.00 | 1.94| 1.37| 1.00 | 1.41| 0.91| .037 | 1.00 | 1.45| 1.02| .000 | 1.00 | 1.29| 0.27| .692 |
| Understood perp’s   | 2.00 | 2.46| 1.15| 1.00 | 1.56| 0.93| .000 | 2.00 | 2.55| 1.45| .000 | 1.00 | 2.02| 1.35| .056 |
| Feeling             | 3.00 | 3.05| 1.03| 2.00 | 1.92| 1.16| .000 | 3.00 | 2.72| 1.31| .000 | 2.00 | 2.15| 1.32| .021 |
| Tried understand    |      |     |     |      |     |     |      |      |     |     |      |      |     |     |      |
| perp’s motivation   |      |     |     |      |     |     |      |      |     |     |      |      |     |     |      |
| Victim Empathy      | 4.00 | 4.26| 2.26| 4.00 | 4.94| 2.32| .118 | 4.00 | 4.64| 2.39| .118 | 5.00 | 5.56| 2.65| .082 |
| Perp Empathy        | 2.00 | 2.91| 1.29| 2.00 | 2.30| 0.79| .000 | 2.00 | 3.02| 1.42| .000 | 2.00 | 2.40| 0.87| .008 |
| Victim Similarity   | 4.00 | 5.31| 2.78| 6.00 | 6.41| 3.86| .275 | 4.00 | 5.36| 3.41| .275 | 6.00 | 6.96| 5.61| .033 |
| Perp Similarity     | 8.00 | 7.48| 2.24| 4.00 | 4.94| 2.32| .000 | 6.00 | 6.72| 2.62| .000 | 6.00 | 3.93| 2.11| .051 |
Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to assess whether men and women differed in their ability to sympathise, empathise and identify (feel a sense of similarity) with the victim as well as the perpetrator when responding to a long vignette. The results indicated that there were gender differences in five out of the nine variables that were used to assess sympathy, empathy and identification (see Table 4). In support of Hypothesis 2, women were significantly more likely than men to: feel sorry for the victim \( (U=1384.00, n_1=52, n_2=47, p<.00, r=0.22) \); to understand how the victim felt \( (U=1537.50, n_1=52, n_2=47, p<.00, r=0.23) \), to empathise with her \( (U=5779.00, n_1=52, n_2=47, p<.05, r=0.16) \) and to identify with her \( (U=1517.50, n_1=52, n_2=47, p<.05, r=0.21) \). Consistent with Hypothesis 3, men, on the other hand, were significantly more likely to indicate understanding the perpetrator’s motivation (sympathise) than women \( (U=905.00, n_1=47, n_2=52, p<.05, r=-0.23) \), and empathise with him \( (U=906.00, n_1=47, n_2=52, p<.00, r=-0.26) \). Contrary to expectations, no significant gender differences were found in responses to the other two items pertaining to perpetrator sympathy, namely whether participants felt sorry for the perpetrator and whether they could understand what he was feeling. No significant gender differences were found in participants’ propensity to Identify (similarity) with the perpetrator.

6.2.4 Responding differences to vignettes within gender.

Due to the results indicating that gender differences varied across vignette length, follow-up Mann-Whitney \( U \) test analyses were conducted comparing men’s attributions or responses to short vignettes to those of men who responded to long vignettes. The same analyses were also conducted for women. The analyses found no significant differences in attributions between those men who responded to a short vignette and those men who responded to a long vignette. Similar results were found for women, with the exception of victim sympathy. Those women who responded to a long vignette, reported feeling
significantly more sorry for the victim than those women who responded to a short vignette $U=1454.00, n_1=51, n_2=76, p<.00, r=-0.22$. The effect size for the difference in means between the two groups, however, was not large enough to be meaningful. Overall, the results indicate that men and women’s attributions are unlikely to be affected by vignette length.

6.3 Discussion

The aim of the current study was to assess whether gender differences in perceptions, attributions and propensity to relate to an alleged child sexual abuse victim and perpetrator are affected by the level of detail (vignette length) that is provided to participants about a sexual abuse encounter. Analyses of the association between the demographic variables and the dependent variables were non-remarkable, with only two significant findings. It was found that those with a year 12 education who responded to a long vignette (compared to those with a year 12 education who responded to a short vignette) were significantly more likely to rate the victim as credible. Furthermore, parents who responded to a short vignette (compared to parents who responded to a long vignette) were significantly more likely to indicate feeling sorry for the perpetrator (sympathy). However, the effect sizes were low to moderate at best, which indicates that they were unlikely to affect the result. It was expected that men and women would differ significantly in perceptions when responding to a short vignette but they would not differ in perceptions when responding to a longer vignette. It was also expected that women would show a greater propensity to sympathise, empathise and identify with the victim than men when responding to a short vignette but these gender differences would not be evident among participants who responded to a long vignette. Finally, it was expected that men would be more likely than women to sympathise, empathise and identify with the perpetrator in the vignettes, regardless of vignette length. Contrary to the first expectations, men and women differed in both long vignettes and short vignettes. In fact, men and women differed in six out of 19 factors when responding to short vignette and nine
out of 15 factors when responding to a long vignette. When responding to a short vignette, men ascribed more responsibility to the victim than women. When responding to a long vignette, however, women ascribed more guilt to the perpetrator, believed that the victim would be significantly more negatively affected by the event, that she would be more traumatised, and rated the event to be more serious than did men. It is important to note however, that the effect sizes for these differences were small to medium which indicates that results need to be interpreted with caution.

Contrary to expectations, gender differences in participants’ propensity to sympathise, empathise and identify with the victim differed only among those who responded to a long vignette. More specifically, when responding to a short vignette, there were no significant gender differences in victim sympathy, empathy or similarity but gender differences did emerge for these variables among those participants who responded to a long vignette. Again, however, the effect sizes for these gender differences ranged from small to medium (ranging between .16 and .26) which indicates that these gender differences in participants’ propensity to sympathise, empathise and identify with the victim were marginal and not likely to be meaningful.

As expected, when responding to a short vignette, men were significantly more likely than women to sympathise, empathise and identify with the perpetrator. Men’s propensity to feel sorry for the perpetrator (sympathy measure) was significantly higher than that of women, however the effect size was small (.20). Interestingly though, men’s propensity to understand what the perpetrator was feeling (sympathy measure) and their propensity to understand his motivation (sympathy measure) was again, significantly higher than that of women and the effect sizes were large, .40 and .46 respectively. Men’s propensity to identify with the perpetrator was also significantly higher than women’s and the effect size was again large (.50). When responding to a long vignette, gender differences were found for propensity
to understand the perpetrators’ motivation (men again, scored significantly higher than women) but this time the effect size was small to medium (.23). Men were again significantly more likely than women to empathise with the perpetrator but the effect size was small to medium (.23). No significant gender differences were found in participants’ propensity to identify with the perpetrator if they responded to a long vignette.

In sum, although the hypotheses were not fully supported, there was a trend for women respondents to be more pro-victim, and men respondents to be pro-perpetrator. However, the finding that there were greater gender differences in perceptions when participants responded to a long vignette than the short vignette indicated that that perhaps men and women are affected by vignette length differently. Follow-up analyses comparing the responses of both men and women who responded to a short vignette to those who responded to a long vignette found this not to be the case. Neither men nor women who responded to a short vignette differed significantly from their same-sexed counterparts who responded to the long vignette in their perceptions and propensity to sympathise, empathise or to identify with either the victim or the perpetrator. The only exception to this was that women who responded to a long vignette had a significantly higher propensity to feel sorry for the victim than those women who responded to the short vignette. However, as the effect size for this was small (.22), the difference is not likely to be meaningful.

The results of the current study are therefore not entirely consistent with previous research (Davies & Rogers, 2009; Graham, Rogers & Davies, 2007; Jackson & Nuttal, 1993; Rogers & Davies, 2007; Rogers, Josey & Davies, 2007; Rubin & Thelen, 1996). Studies which have used short descriptions of child sexual abuse scenarios have typically found more gender differences in perceptions or attributions whereas studies that have relied on longer and more detailed description of a child sexual abuse scenario (Broussard & Wagner, 1988; Back & Lips, 1998; Collings & Payne, 1991; Maynard & Weiderman, 1997; Reynolds &
Birkimer, 2002; Waterman & Foss-Goodman, 1984) have typically found fewer gender differences. For example, Rogers, Josey and Davies (2007) who used a short vignette (51 words used to describe the abuse scenario) found that men and women differed significantly on four out of 5 factors (victim culpability, perpetrator culpability, victim credibility, mother culpability and abuse severity) with women being more pro-victim than men. Rogers and Davies (2007) who also utilised a short vignette, found that men and women differed on four out of four factors, namely they found that males tended to perceive the victim as less credible, less honest, the abuse to be less severe and rated the perpetrator as less culpable, than did women. Maynard and Wiederman (1997) who utilised a long vignette (143 words describing sexual abuse), on the other hand, found no gender differences in ratings of abusiveness, perpetrator responsibility and perpetrator blame. Similarly, Waterman and Foss-Goodman (1984) who also utilised a long vignette (270 words describing a sexual abuse encounter), found only one gender effect across five dependent variables (Victim fault, Offender fault, Parent fault, Reason for fault attribution and Sexual history). Specifically, male participants attributed significantly more fault to 15 year old male victims than female participants (victim age [7, 11 or 15 year-old], when victim gender and victim/perpetrator relationship were variables under investigation).

A possible explanation for the lack of consistency between the results of the current study and the above mentioned studies is that different stimuli were used. Previous researchers have included information about the victim’s personal interest and hobbies (Rogers, Josey & Davies, 2007) while others only mentioned her name and age (Waterman & Foss-Goodman, 1984). In this study, very little personal information was provided about the child (name and age only) but there was a great amount of detail about the alleged abuse from the child’s perspective. Furthermore, not all of the findings measured the same attitudinal variables and on the same scales which makes comparing these studies very difficult. A
limitation of the current study is that only the level of detail about an abuse scenario was manipulated therefore the content of the two vignettes were similar which makes it difficult to generalise the result of the current study across different types of texts. Future research could compare various types of texts but using the same dependent variable measures to assess how different vignette types may affect reported perceptions and/or judgements. A further limitation of the current study is that only the level of detail about an abuse scenario was manipulated, therefore the content of the two vignettes were similar which makes it difficult to generalise the result of the current study across different types of texts.

Future research could compare vignette designs to more realistic and perhaps even ambiguous accounts such as trial summaries or transcripts where the defendant and the accused have an opportunity to present their case. It is also clear from the current study that victim sympathy and empathy are areas worthy of further exploration as they were more affected by vignette length than the attitude variables.

6.3.1 Summary of Studies 1 and 2.

The findings of Study 1 that no gender differences were found in the proportion of inferences generated when participants responded to a long vignette (as opposed to a short vignette where men generated a greater proportion of inferences than women), suggested that perhaps inferences were responsible for the gender differences in reported perceptions that were found by previous studies which have used short vignettes (see Table 2). The results of Study 2 did not support this hypothesis, however.

Gender differences in attributions were found across both short and long vignettes but the effect sizes of the attitudinal variables were generally small. Gender differences in participants’ propensity to sympathise, empathise and identify with the perpetrator (men sympathising, empathising and identifying more with the perpetrator) when responding to the
short vignette, however, were more meaningful (higher effect sizes). These gender
differences in propensity to relate to the perpetrator appeared to reduced when men are
presented with a long vignette (evident in the lower effect sizes). Further analyses, however,
revealed that this was not the case. There were no significant differences in propensity to
sympathise, empathise and identify with the offender between those men who responded to
the short vignette and those who responded to a long vignette. Together, these results imply
that although men may make more inferences when they respond to a short vignette compared
to women, it is unlikely that these inferences will have an impact on their attributions.
Therefore, in sum, it is unlikely that inferences or research methodological factors such as
varying vignette length can explain the gender differences in attitude differences between
men and women, it is more likely that there are other factors underlying gender differences in
perceptions and judgements.

Based on the results of Studies 1 and 2, it is recommended that future research using
vignette designs to gauge perceptions and judgements regarding CSA, use longer rather than
shorter vignettes. It is less likely that participants will be relying on their inferences and more
on the case details when they are presented with more case information (long vignette). These
findings gave us the confidence to conduct the final study using the information from the
long vignette and presenting it as a trial summary vignette.
Chapter 7

Study 3

Combining the results of Studies 1 and 2, it appears that when participants are presented with more information about a CSA scenario, they will generate fewer inferences but gender differences in their reactions to the abuse as well as their ability to relate to an alleged victim and perpetrator, will still emerge. It may be that these gender differences will become more pronounced (higher effect sizes) as participants are presented with even more information about a CSA case (e.g. case summary detailing evidence from both sides of the case or a trial transcript). Or, it may be that gender differences in perceptions and judgements are not the result of research methodological factors but rather some other underlying factor such as dispositional empathy or knowledge/misconceptions that people hold about child sexual abuse.

Study 3 will further examine the role of empathy and its effect on perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse using a mock trial vignette which was modeled from the ‘long vignette’ in Studies 1 and 2. Using a mock trial vignette will provide the opportunity to also include a statement from the defendant (alleged perpetrator) making the material more ecologically valid and representative of a CSA trial. The study will also include a measure of dispositional empathy (Davis’ [1980] Interpersonal Reactivity Index) as well as a measure of child sexual abuse myth acceptance (Collings’ [1997] Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale) to assess whether knowledge or myth acceptance about CSA is related to participants’ attributions of credibility and culpability toward a complainant of CSA as well as participants’ ability to relate to (sympathise, empathise, identify) the complainant and defendant.

Child sexual abuse myths and stereotypes include false or overgeneralised beliefs associated with the mitigation of offender blame, the denial of abusiveness of CSA, and/or
the denial of the reality of most abuse incidents (Collings, 1997). Child sexual abuse myths may deny the prevalence of CSA or reflect restricted views of perpetrators and victims, cause harm through diminished awareness of CSA and the allocation of resources to prevent CSA and help victims, and/or dissuade victims from disclosing abuse (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Furthermore, as mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, it has been suggested that jurors may be affected, to some extent, by misconceptions and myths surrounding children’s testimonies (Andrews et al., 2002; Berkoff et al., 2008; Cossins, 2006a,b, 2008; Taylor, 2007) which can affect perceptions of complainant credibility and in turn, trial outcomes.

While studies have shown that the majority of research participants do not endorse CSA myths, a significant proportion of participants do (Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins & O’Brien, 2011; Quas, Thompson & Clarke-Stewart, 2005). This finding may partly explain the low conviction rates in CSA in Australia cases when compared to non-sex related cases (Fitzgerald, 2006). Due to the nature of CSA cases (frequently there is a lack of corroborative evidence) it is suggested that the relatively low conviction rates may be due in part, to misconceptions that jurors bring to the court room which impact on their decision-making, more so than the evidence that is presented in court (Cossins, Goodman-Delahunty & O’Brien, 2009; Taylor 2007). Furthermore, research has found that women tend to have better knowledge of CSA, and to be less accepting of CSA myths, (Calvert & Munsie-Benson, 1999; Gabora et al., 1993; Hubbartt & Singg, 2001; Quas et al., 2005) than men. Women have also been found to have more confidence in children’s cognitive abilities than men, to rate children as less likely to lie, to be less likely to confuse reality with imagination, and more likely to have good memories than were male respondents (McCauley & Parker, 2001; Rubin & Thelen, 1996). Men on the other hand have been found to be more suspicious of children’s testimony, rating children as more likely to have misunderstood the
intentions of the defendant, and to agree with the statement that the victim “encouraged the event in some way” (Quas et al., 2005). The findings of Studies 1 and 2 also lend further support to the growing evidence that when gender differences in perceptions and judgements emerge, women tend to be more pro-victim than men.

For these reasons, in a general sense, examining how CSA myths and empathy affect perceptions of complainants of CSA and defendants in CSA trials is an important step in understanding why conviction rates of CSA are so low, and how best to improve those rates. Secondly, whether myth acceptance can explain gender differences in reported perceptions and judgements regarding child sexual abuse is also worthy of study. The information gained could help in targeting education at jurors, particularly men, before they are presented with a CSA case. Jurors may need to be informed about child sexual abuse myths to ensure that case decisions are not based on false beliefs or emotional reactions toward either the complainant or the defendant. Furthermore, as pointed out by Cossins et al. (2009), little is known about the extent of beliefs and misconceptions about child sexual abuse that are common among the Australian population. The current study aimed to address this issue.

Based on the literature reviewed and findings from Studies 1 and 2, the following hypotheses were formed for Study 3:

1) Women will have higher dispositional empathy than men.

2a) Women will be more sympathetic, empathetic and see themselves to be more similar to the complainant than will men; b) men will be more sympathetic, empathic and see themselves to be more similar to the defendant, than will women.

3) Women will rate the complainant as more credible, sexually naive and less culpable than will men.

4a) Those who fail to sympathise, empathise or see themselves to be similar to both the complainant and defendant, will have lower dispositional empathy than those who do.
b) Those who sympathise, empathise and see themselves to be similar to both the complainant and the defendant, will have the highest level of dispositional empathy.

5a) There will be a significant positive relationship between perceptions of complainant credibility, and sexual naivety and dispositional empathy.

b) People who ascribe no culpability to the complainant, will have significantly higher levels of dispositional empathy than those who do.

6) Men will endorse CSA myths at a significantly higher rate than women.

7) Those who do sympathise, empathise and feel a sense of similarity with the complainant, will endorse significantly fewer CSA myths than those who do not.

8a) There will be a significant negative relationship between perceptions of complainant credibility, sexual naivety and endorsement of CSA myths.

b) Those who do ascribe some level of culpability to the complainant will endorse CSA myths significantly more than those who do not.

9) As the complainant ages, she will be attributed lower credibility and sexual naivety, but higher culpability. See Figure 4 for a graphic representation of these hypotheses.

Due to a lack of research in the field of child sexual abuse victim age and empathy, no predictions have been made regarding how complainant age would affect with whom participants relate (sympathise, empathise and identify); therefore analyses regarding complainant age and sympathy, empathy and similarity will be exploratory.
Figure 4. Graphic representation of the hypotheses

Participant Gender

Myth Acceptance (CSAMS)
1. Blame Diffusion
2. Denial of Abusiveness
3. Restrictive Stereotypes

Dispositional Empathy (IRI)
1. Fantasy Scale
2. Perspective Taking
3. Empathic Concern
4. Personal Distress

Complainant Credibility

Sexual Naivety:
1. Sexually naive
2. Mature enough

Culpability:
1. Blame
2. Responsibility
3. Guilt

Sympathy:
1. Complainant only
2. Defendant only
3. Both
4. Neither

Empathy:
1. Complainant only
2. Defendant only
3. Both
4. Neither

Similarity:
1. Complainant only
2. Defendant only
3. Both
4. Neither

Complainant Age
(5, 10 and 15 year old)
7.1 Methodology

7.1.1 Participants.

Previous research addressing differences between student samples and community samples in jury simulation studies have concluded that psychological research conducted solely with student samples, rather than community members, may misinform the likely behaviour of actual juries (Fox, Wingrove & Pfeifer, 2011; Hosch, Culhane, Tubb & Granillo, 2011; Keller & Wiener, 2011; McCabe & Krauss, 2011; Reichert, Miller, Bornstein & Shelton, 2011; Schwartz & Hunt, 2011). Therefore, a community sample was chosen for the current study (as well as the previous two studies) in an effort to increase the generalizability of the results. In this Study, there were 251 jury eligible, Australian citizens (100 males [39.8%] and 151 females [60.2%]), aged between 18 years and 64 years ($M = 30.11$ years, $SD = 9.23$). Of the participants, 24 (9.5%) had attained an education level of year 11 or below, 45 (17.9%) had completed year 12, 118 (46.8%) had attained a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) certificate, and 63 (25%) had attained a Bachelor degree or above. Of the participants surveyed, 133 (52.8%) had children, and 62 (24.6%) indicated that they worked with children. Finally, 180 (71.4%) of the participants indicated knowing someone who had been sexually abused.

It is important to acknowledge that the mean age of the study participants is slightly younger than that of the Australian population of 37.3 years (ABS, 2014), and the gender composition of the participants in the current study is not in line with the Australian population with 50.21% (ABS, 2014) of Australian residents being female versus 60.2% in this study. The 2006 Census also found that 15% of the Australian population had attained a Bachelor degree or above which is significantly lower than that the proportion of the participants in the current study of 25% (ABS, 2009). Furthermore, according to the Census, 27% of the Australian population had attained a TAFE qualification which is significantly
lower than that of the participants in the current study (43.8%). The Census does not separate levels of high school achievement in its analysis of population education attainment. Therefore comparisons between the current study participants and the Australian reference data could not be made for proportions of participants in the categories of year 11 or below, and year 12 education.

7.1.2 Materials.

The study was in the form of an online survey which comprised of a mock trial vignette which was varied for the age of the complainant (5, 10 and 15 years old).

A written scenario was chosen because it gave us the opportunity to reach a wider population base than if we were to conduct a mock trial scenario, and it provided the opportunity to experimentally control variables (such as complainant age). Early research in this area has shown relatively few if any differences between mock jurors’ decisions in reaction to written scenarios versus more elaborate videotaped testimony (Goodman, Golding, Hegelson, Haith & Michelli, 1987). Furthermore, using more realistic videotaped trial stimuli can have uncontrollable effects including the appearance, attractiveness of the actors etc., beyond that of gender.

The chosen vignette was very similar to the long vignette from Studies 1 and 2. The age of 5 years was selected because children under the age of 6 years have been found to be a high-risk age group, for example, Cashmore (1994) found that the majority of young children (mostly under the age of 6 years) do not get called to give evidence in trials and if they are to be called, they are likely to be deemed incompetent witnesses. The age of 10 years is another high-risk age group as studies have shown that the onset of abuse occurs at a mean age of 10 years, with most abuse starting before the age of 12 years (Andrews, Gould & Corry, 2002). Finally, the age of 15 years was selected based on previous findings that adolescents approaching adulthood appear to be perceived as quasi-adults, that is, possessing the ability
understanding sexual meaning, to engage in sexual activity consentinglly and to resist unwanted sexual contact (Davies & Rogers, 2006; Davies, Rogers, & Whiteleg, 2009) thus making them another high-risk age group. A female complainant was chosen for the current study because research indicates that the majority of victims of child sexual abuse are female (Bricknell, 2008).

7.1.2.1 Demographic questionnaire.

Items in the demographic questionnaire included: age, gender, education (year 11, year 12, Bachelor degree or above, or Training And Further Education [TAFE] certificate), parental status, whether the respondent worked with children (if yes, participants were asked to indicate for how many years) and in which state or territory the respondent lived.

7.1.2.2 Mock trial vignette.

The fictional trial vignette used was as an adapted version of the vignette used by Broussard and Wagner (1988) which was also used as the ‘long vignette’ in the previous two studies. An effort was made to describe the CSA scenario in a fashion that did not presume that the crime had taken place, because it was the intention of the study for participants to judge whether they believed the abuse occurred or not (for further discussion of methodological flaws regarding written scenarios in sexual abuse research, see Olsen-Fulero & Fulero, 1997). The trial vignette included the perspective of both the complainant as well as the defendant. The trial vignette read as follows:

Case summary.

Matter: Abuse allegations.

– Child sexual abuse allegations –standard of proof required to make a positive finding of sexual abuse –

Background.
The family friend was aged 36 at the time of the incident and the mother was aged 47. James, the family friend had known the family for a number of years. Mary was 5 (or 10 or 15) years old at the time of the alleged abuse. Mary was home when James came to watch a movie with her while Mary’s mother was out shopping.

*Sexual Abuse Allegations – Witness Testimony (Appellant)*.

During her testimony, Mary recalled that after she greeted James and let him in, she had been sitting on the sofa in the living room. She stated that James walked towards her and sat down on the sofa. She recalled that he told her that they were going to spend some time together and have some fun, watching a movie. While watching the movie she recollected that he placed his hand on her leg and began rubbing. James told her to “lie down on the sofa” and that he “starting rubbing all over with his hands”. Mary stated that when she pushed his hand away, he became “angry” and told her to “lie down and be quiet” and that she would enjoy this game, it would feel good. She stated that she tried to break free but he continued stroking her body even though she told him to stop, and then “he took all my clothes off and I was cold”.

When Mary was naked, she recalled that James began kissing her body, starting with her face and working his way down to her thighs. Mary stated that then James sat up and asked her to touch the front of his pants. Mary said that James took her hand and put it on his crotch, telling her how good it would feel. Shortly after, he “took off all his clothes” and lay on top of Mary while he fondled her buttocks. He continued fondling Mary’s genitals while she struggled to break loose, and she was told to touch his penis. She stated that James continued to kiss and touch her body. Mary reported that he ejaculated while rubbing himself against her. Mary left the living room shortly after this happened.

She stated that she was in her bedroom when he brought Mary her clothes and he told her “not to tell her mother what had happened and that is was going to be their secret”. Mary
said that she was in her room when her mother returned and did not mention anything about what had happened that afternoon. In the days following, Mary’s mother noticed that her daughter seemed very disturbed. Mary was experiencing nightmares and moodiness. She asked Mary if anything had been happening to which her daughter gave the aforementioned account.

*Sexual Abuse Allegations – Defendant Testimony.*

During his testimony, the defendant recalled that Mary had greeted him at the door and let him into the house. She then sat on the sofa in the living room. He stated that he walked towards Mary and sat down on the sofa next to her. The defendant claimed that he told Mary that they were going to spend some time together and have some fun watching a movie. The defendant claimed that none of the other accounts actually took place. He claims that the accusations were born out of fantasy, and that he would never molest a child.

### 7.1.2.3 Interpersonal Reactivity Index.

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis 1980) is a 28-item scale that uses a 5-point response scale to allow respondents to indicate the degree to which the items describe them (anchored by 0= does not describe me well and 4= describes me very well). The scale contains four separate subscales (seven items each): Perspective Taking, Fantasy Scale, Empathic Concern and Personal Distress. Perspective Taking (PT) measures social functioning, with higher scores being associated with more selfless concern for others’ feelings and reactions. The Fantasy scale (FS) measures emotionality with higher scores indicating a greater physiological arousal to another’s emotional experiences and a greater tendency to help another person. Empathic Concern (EC) measures the tendency to experience feelings of sympathy and concern for others, and Personal Distress (PD) measures a person’s proneness to feelings of anxiety and discomfort in emotional social settings, with high scorers on this subscale indicative of less rewarding social relationships and a tendency
to have lower self-esteem and poor interpersonal functioning. Test-retest reliabilities for the IRI have been found to be satisfactory, with correlations ranging from .61 to .79 for men and .62 to .81 for women (Davis, 1980). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the current study were as follows: FS = .82, PT = .78, EC = .78 and PD = .82. Similar results were also obtained by Bryant, Yarnold and Grimm (1996) in a study assessing 631 undergraduate university students: FS $\alpha$ = .83, PT $\alpha$ = .77, EC $\alpha$ = .81, and PD $\alpha$ = .78.

### 7.1.2.4 Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale

The Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale (CSA Myth Scale; Collings, 1997) is a 15-item scale with a 5-point response format (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). It was developed to measure acceptance of child sexual abuse myths and stereotypes. It is made up of three subtests, namely Blame Diffusion (BD), Denial of Abusiveness (DA), and Restrictive Stereotypes (RS). The Blame Diffusion subscale consists of six items which are summed to give the subscale score. Individuals scoring high on BD tend to subscribe to the belief that persons other than the offender – the child, the non-offending parent, or gay people in general – are to blame, or at least partly to blame, for any abuse the child experiences. The Denial of Abusiveness subscale is made up of five items which are summed to give the subscale score. Individuals scoring high on DA tend to subscribe to beliefs that serve to minimise the abusive nature of child sexual abuse, either directly, through attempts to redefine abuse as a benign or positive experience for the child, or through attempts to portray the child as an equal/consensual sexual partner. The Restrictive Stereotypes subscale is made up of five items which are summed to give the subscale score. Individuals scoring high on this subscale tend to subscribe to beliefs that serve to deny the reality of most abuse or to deny/minimise the undesirable consequences of abuse. Collings found the three factor scores of the CSA Myth Scale were highly correlated with scores on Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS; Burt, 1980) and the Jackson Incest Blame Scale (JBS; Jackson & Ferguson, 1983),
indicating good convergent and discriminant validity. Collings (1997) reported that the three subscales measured distinct types of myths relating to child sexual abuse, however he only reported the full scale’s Cronbach alpha which was .76, and the test-retest reliability coefficient, which was .87 (Collings, 1997). Similar full-scale Cronbach alpha (.88) was also found by Rheingold et al. (2007). The current study obtained the following Cronbach alphas: BD $\alpha=.78$, DA $\alpha=.70$, RS $\alpha=.70$, and full-scale $\alpha = .87$.

7.1.2.5 Sympathy, empathy and identify measures.

Eleven questions using a 7-point response format (1= strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = moderately agree, 7 = strongly agree) were used to assess sympathy, empathy and identification with the complainant and the defendant in the vignette. The questions were adapted from a study by Haegerich and Bottoms (2000) and are similar to the questions used in Study 2. The questions were adapted for the current study to suit the context of the mock trial vignette. Two questions were used to assess sympathy, one item for the complainant and one for the defendant; the two questions were “I feel sorry for Mary” and “I feel sorry for James”. Empathy towards the complainant and the defendant were measured by 5 items (three pertaining to empathy toward the complainant and two pertaining to empathy towards the defendant). The items were: “I can imagine what Mary may have been feeling when describing her abuse.”, “I can imagine what James may have been feeling when he was denying the abuse”, “While reading Mary’s account of what happened, I found myself feeling many of the emotions she may had felt during her testimony.”, “While reading Mary’s account of what happened, I found myself feeling many of the emotions she may had during her abuse.” and “While reading James’ account of what happened, I found myself feeling many of the emotions he may have felt during his testimony.” Finally, 4 items (two items for the complainant and two for the defendant) were used to assess perceived similarity or
likeness to the complainant and the defendant. These items were: “I feel that I have a lot of things in common with Mary”, “I feel that I have a lot of things in common with James”, “I feel I’m like Mary in many ways”, and “I feel I’m like James in many ways”.

In order to assess whether participants would sympathise (empathise and feel a sense of similarity) with the complainant only, the defendant only, both individuals or neither individual, the dependent variables (sympathy, empathy and similarity) were turned into categorical variables. To do this, the three questions pertaining to complainant empathy were combined to create a “Complainant Empathy” variable, which yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.83. The two questions pertaining to defendant empathy were combined to create the variable “Defendant Empathy” which was found to have a significant moderate, positive correlation ($r_s=.47, p = .001$). The two questions pertaining to complainant similarity were combined to create a “Complainant Similarity” variable, with the two items found to have a strong, positive correlation ($r_s=.80, p = .001$). Finally, the two questions pertaining to defendant similarity were combined to create a “Defendant Similarity” variable. These two items were found to have a moderate, positive correlation ($r_s=.67, p = .001$). There was one item to assess sympathy toward the complainant and one item to measure sympathy toward the defendant, therefore these two items became the “Complainant Sympathy” and “Defendant Sympathy” variables.

Once these variables were created, participants’ responses were coded as either scoring low (1-4 on a 7-point scale) or high (5-7 on a 7-point scale) on Complainant Sympathy, Defendant Sympathy etc. Following this, participants who scored high on Complainant Sympathy but low on Defendant Sympathy were categorised as “Sympathising with the complainant”; those who scored low on Complainant sympathy but high on defendant sympathy were categorised as “Sympathising with the defendant”; those scored low on complainant sympathy and low on defendant sympathy were categorised as “Not
Sympathising with either”; those who scored high on both complainant sympathy and defendant sympathy were categorised as “Sympathising with both”. Creating these variables, gave us the opportunity to compare the responses of participants who could relate to the complainant, the defendant, both or neither. Previous research has been criticised for ignoring this possibility (for a discussion, see Olsen-Fulero & Fulero, 1997).

7.1.2.6 Complainant credibility measures.

Attributions of credibility were assessed through a 4-item questionnaire, using a 7-point response scale (1= strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = moderately agree, 7 = strongly agree), Participants were asked to rate how believable and honest they felt the alleged complainant was. For example, the statements included “I believe Mary’s account of her sexual abuse” or “I believe that Mary is an honest witness and would not make false allegations”. Responses to the four items were added to create the “Complainant Credibility” variable Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$.

7.1.2.7 Complainant sexual naivety measures.

Perceptions of the complainant’s sexual naivety were assessed using two items with a 7-point response scale (1= strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = moderately agree, 7 = strongly agree). Participants were asked to answer the following two questions: “I believe that Mary is sexually naïve” and “Mary is mature enough to knowingly seduce an adult into sexual activities”. Due to the two items having a weak correlation ($r_s=.26, p = .001$), it was decided that the two items would be analyzed separately.

7.1.2.8 Culpability measures.

Culpability was measured using three items pertaining to the perceived level of blame, responsibility and guilt of both the complainant and the defendant. For example,
participants were asked “How responsible (guilty, or how much to blame) do you think each individual was for what happened?” and were then given options in the form of a sliding scale to choose the percentage they believed should be ascribed to the complainant and the defendant. There were 12 response options that allocated levels of responsibility to the complainant and the defendant that increased (and correspondingly decreased) by steps of ten percent. For example, Mary holds 0% of the blame for the abuse; James holds 100% of the blame for the abuse. Mary holds 10% of the blame for the abuse; James holds 90% of the blame for the abuse. A final option was that neither Mary nor James is to blame for the abuse (e.g., parents, society etc, are to blame for the abuse).

The vast majority of participants selected the option of 0% of blame, guilt and responsibility for the complainant, creating a ceiling effect. The rest of the responses were scattered across the remaining 11 options making statistical comparisons difficult. The analyses then compared those who attributed no blame (guilt or responsibility) to the complainant and those participants who were willing to ascribe some level of culpability to the complainant. Therefore, for the purposes of the analyses, participants’ responses were coded as follows: “No guilt for the complainant” (those who indicated 0% of the blame for Mary or ‘Neither Mary nor James is to blame for the abuse’) and “some guilt” for the complainant (those who indicated 10% or higher level of blame to Mary). The same process was adopted for the responsibility and guilt variables.

7.1.2.9 Comprehension check.

In order to ensure that participants had read the trial transcript and understood it, they were asked to answer a ten-item true or false questionnaire about the trial summary vignette. For example, “Mary was home alone with her father, James, when he sexually abused her”. The answer to the question is false as James was Mary’s minder/babysitter, not father. Only
participants who answered a minimum of nine out of 10 questions \((N = 251)\) correctly were included in the data analysis.

### 7.1.3 Procedure.

Participants were recruited from various online fora and social network sites. An invitation to participate in the study, along with a link to the survey was posted on each forum. As with the previous two studies, Study 3's survey was constructed using Adobe Dreamweaver and launched through the Deakin University server (ie. no external survey platform was used). The fora included: parenting fora, Yahoo general message boards, Australian Football League fora, motorcycle racing forum, car racing fora, online gaming fora, fishing fora, 4-wheel driving fora, kiting fora, university student fora, fashion and wedding fora, and Channel 10 general message boards.

Participation was anonymous and voluntary. Once participants agreed to consent they could withdraw at any stage by exiting the website. After reading the Plain Language Statement (Appendix E), participants could indicate their consent by clicking I AGREE. Alternatively they could exit the website. Each consenting participant was then directed to the survey which they completed and submitted. Participants were randomly allocated one of three mock trial summaries (5, 10 or 15 year old complainant).

Participants were asked to fill out the questionnaires in the following order: demographic questionnaire, PDS-BIDR, IRI, one of 3 mock trial summaries, followed by 20 questions pertaining to the complainant’s credibility, culpability, perceived sexual naivety, empathy sympathy, identifying, followed by the 10 item comprehension check. Prior to undertaking the study, ethics approval was granted for the project from the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendix B).
7.2 Results

Six participant's data were removed prior to the analysis due to incomplete data (participants who failed to fill out at least one of the questionnaires or who had missing data greater than 5%), or for failing to answer comprehension check questions correctly. An analysis of missing data was conducted and it was found that of the remaining participants (after deletion of aforementioned six participants), less than 5% of data was missing completely at random. These missing data were replaced by mean substitutions as outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). The resulting sample of 251 jury eligible participants included 100 males (39.8%) and 151 females (60.2%). Thirty three males and 38 females were randomly presented with a 5 year old complainant, 35 males and 54 females were randomly presented with a 10 year old complainant, 32 males and 59 females were randomly presented with a 15 year old complainant. Due to the anonymous nature of the study and random allocation of vignettes to each participant, we could not control for having equal genders per complainant age group. There is a large female to male ratio in the 15 year old victim age group therefore results need to be interpreted with caution here. Analyses conducted will include gender as a covariate to mitigate against this gender imbalance.

7.2.1 Demographic analyses.

A combination of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVAs) (where homogeneity of variance and covariance’s were satisfied or not found to be problematic [Hartley’s $F_{max}$ of less than 4]) and Chi Squares were conducted to assess the effect of participants’ demographic variables (level of education, parental status and history of working with children) on the dependent variables. Where too many assumptions of MANOVA were violated, an alternative analysis of Mann-Whitney U test was used. See Table 5 and 6 for medians, percentages, means and standard deviations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Year 11 or below</th>
<th>Year 12</th>
<th>TAFE</th>
<th>Bachelor degree or above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 24)</td>
<td>(N = 45)</td>
<td>(N = 118)</td>
<td>(N = 63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispositional empathy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>- 15.00 6.61</td>
<td>- 17.08 5.30</td>
<td>- 16.77 5.85</td>
<td>- 16.84 6.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective Taking</td>
<td>- 17.04 6.10</td>
<td>- 16.78 5.18</td>
<td>- 17.88 4.64</td>
<td>- 17.86 4.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Distress</td>
<td>- 10.58 5.88</td>
<td>- 12.53 6.84</td>
<td>- 9.96 4.90</td>
<td>- 10.98 5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sympathy with</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>- - - 78.3</td>
<td>- - - 68.9</td>
<td>- - - 86.4</td>
<td>- - - 87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>- - - 0.0</td>
<td>- - - 2.2</td>
<td>- - - 0.8</td>
<td>- - - 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>- - - 13.0</td>
<td>- - - 20.0</td>
<td>- - - 3.4</td>
<td>- - - 4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>- - - 8.7</td>
<td>- - - 8.9</td>
<td>- - - 9.3</td>
<td>- - - 7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathy with</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>- - - 52.2</td>
<td>- - - 48.9</td>
<td>- - - 56.8</td>
<td>- - - 63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>- - - 0.0</td>
<td>- - - 8.9</td>
<td>- - - 1.7</td>
<td>- - - 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>- - - 8.7</td>
<td>- - - 6.7</td>
<td>- - - 9.3</td>
<td>- - - 4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>- - - 39.1</td>
<td>- - - 35.6</td>
<td>- - - 32.2</td>
<td>- - - 30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Similarity with</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>- - - 13.0</td>
<td>- - - 8.9</td>
<td>- - - 10.2</td>
<td>- - - 27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>- - - 0.0</td>
<td>- - - 2.2</td>
<td>- - - 0.8</td>
<td>- - - 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>- - - 0.0</td>
<td>- - - 0.0</td>
<td>- - - 0.0</td>
<td>- - - 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>- - - 87.0</td>
<td>- - - 88.9</td>
<td>- - - 89.0</td>
<td>- - - 73.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant credibility</td>
<td>- 23.54 4.64</td>
<td>- 22.93 5.10</td>
<td>- 23.47 4.94</td>
<td>- 23.86 4.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table cont.</td>
<td>Year 11 or bellow</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Bachelor degree or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mdn</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complainant sexual naivety</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant is sexually naïve</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant can knowingly seduce adult</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complainant culpability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No blame</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some blame</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responsibility</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some responsibility</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guilt</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No guilt</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some guilt</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CSA Myth Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame Diffusion</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of Abusiveness</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>7.67</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6
Median, Means, standard deviations and percentages (of participants who agreed with the statements) for responding to the dependent variables by participant’s parental status and work experience with children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Has children</th>
<th>Works with children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mdn</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispositional empathy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective Taking</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic Concern</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Distress</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sympathy with</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathy with</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Similarity with</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant credibility</td>
<td>- 24.08</td>
<td>5.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has children</td>
<td>Works with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mdn</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Mdn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complainant sexual naivety</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant is sexually naïve</td>
<td>- 5.11</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant can knowingly seduce adult</td>
<td>- 5.97</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complainant culpability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No blame</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some blame</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responsibility</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some guilt</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CSA Myth Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame Diffusion</td>
<td>- 7.10</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of Abusiveness</td>
<td>- 6.73</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2.1.1  Participants’ highest level of education attained.

7.2.1.1.1  Education and dispositional empathy.

A MANOVA was conducted to assess whether participants’ education had an effect on the IRI subscales. No significant differences were found $F(3, 250) = 1.48, p = .12$; Wilks’ $\lambda = .93$; $\eta^2_p = .02$.

7.2.1.1.2  Education and myth endorsement.

A MANOVA was conducted to assess whether participants’ education level had an effect on responding to the three subscales of the CSAMS. The multivariate result revealed a significant association between participants’ education level and myth endorsement $F(3, 250) = 3.31, p = .00$; Pillai’s Trace = .11; $\eta^2_p = .03$. Univariate tests showed that there was a significant difference in scores on the BD subscale $F(3, 250) = 6.89, p = .00$, $\eta^2_p = .07$, in the DA subscale $F(3, 250) = 5.52, p = .00$, $\eta^2_p = .06$, as well as the RS subscale $F(3, 250) = 3.27, p = .02$, $\eta^2_p = .03$.

Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé post hoc criterion for significance also indicated that those with a year 12 education scored significantly higher on the BD subscale than those with a year 11 (or bellow) education ($d = -.72 [-4.28, -.17]$) as well as those with a TAFE qualification ($d = -.47 [.11, 2.95]$) and Bachelor degree ($d = -.96 [ .88, 4.05]$). Furthermore, those with a year 12 education scored significantly higher on DA subscale than those with a TAFE qualification ($d = .83 [.08, 3.17]$) and those with a bachelor degree qualification ($d = .49 [.73, 4.14]$). Post hoc analyses for the RS subscale did not meet significance levels.

7.2.1.1.3  Education and with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified.

Chi Square analyses were conducted to assess whether participants’ highest level of attained education had an impact on With Whom the Participants Sympathised, Empathised and felt a sense of Similarity with. No significant results were found.
7.2.1.1.4  Education and complainant credibility and sexual naivety.

A MANOVA was conducted to assess whether participants’ education had an impact on perceptions of the complainant’s credibility and sexual naivety. No significant results were found $F(3, 250) = .48$, $p = .88$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .98$.

7.2.1.1.5  Education and complainant culpability.

Chi Square analyses were conducted to assess whether participants’ level of attained education had an impact on perceptions of complainant Blame, Responsibility and Guilt. No significant results were found.

7.2.1.2  Participants’ parental status.

7.2.1.2.1  Participants’ parental status and dispositional empathy.

An analysis of variance was conducted to assess whether there was an association between participants’ parental status (having children vs. not having children) and the IRI subscale scores. The univariate results showed that those who had children scored significantly higher on the EC subscale $F(1, 250) = 11.15$, $p = .00$, $\eta^2 = .04$, than those who did not have children (see Table 8 for means and standard deviations). No other significant differences were found.

7.2.1.2.2  Participants’ parental status and myth endorsement.

An ANOVA was conducted to assess whether there was an association between participants’ parental status (having children vs. not having children) and the CSAMS subscale scores. The univariate results showed that those who did not have children, scored significantly higher on the BD subscale $F(1, 250) = 16.18$, $p = .00$, $\eta^2 = .06$, the DA subscale $F(1, 250) = 13.86$, $p = .00$, $\eta^2 = .05$ as well as the RS subscale $F(1, 250) = 24.60$, $p = .00$, $\eta^2 = .09$. These results indicate that those who had children are less likely to endorse CSA myths than those who did not have children, although the effects sizes indicate that these differences are not likely to be meaningful.
7.2.1.2.3 Participant’s parental status and with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified.

Chi Square analyses were conducted to assess whether participants’ parental status had an impact on With Whom the Participants Sympathised, Empathised and felt a sense of Similarity with. No significant results were found.

7.2.1.2.4 Participants’ parental status and complainant credibility and sexual naivety.

An ANOVA was conducted to assess whether there was an association between participants’ parental status (having children vs. not having children) and perceptions of the complainant’s credibility and sexual naivety. No significant results were found $F(1, 250) = 1.45$, $p = .22$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .98$. $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

7.2.1.2.5 Participants’ parental status and complainant culpability.

Chi Square analyses were conducted to assess whether participants’ parental status had an impact on perceptions of complainant Blame, Responsibility and Guilt. No significant results were found.

7.2.1.3 Participants’ work experience with children.

7.2.1.3.1 Participants’ work experience with children and dispositional empathy.

An ANOVA was conducted to assess whether there was an association between participants’ work experience with children (having worked with children vs. not having worked with children) and responding to the IRI subscales. It was found that those had worked with children scored significantly higher on the EC subscale than those had not worked with children $F(1, 250) = 4.61$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. No other significant differences were found.
7.2.1.3.2 Participants’ work experience with children and myth endorsement.

Due to too many violations of the assumptions underpinning ANOVA, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to assess whether there was an association between participants’ work experience with children (having worked with children vs. not having worked with children) and the subscales of the CSAMS. The results revealed that compared to those who had worked with children, those who had no experience with working with children scored significantly higher on the BS subscale ($U=7063.00$, $n_1=62$, $n_2=189$, $p<.00$, $r=0.16$), the DA subscale ($U=6786.00$, $n_1=62$, $n_2=189$, $p<.05$, $r=0.12$) as well as the RS subscale ($U=7049.00$, $n_1=62$, $n_2=189$, $p<.01$, $r=0.15$).

7.2.1.3.3 Participant’s work experience with children and with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified.

Chi Square analyses were conducted to assess whether there was an association between participants’ work experience with children (having worked with children vs. not having worked with children) and With Whom the Participants Sympathised, Empathised and felt a sense of Similarity. No significant results were found.

7.2.1.3.4 Participants’ work experience with children and complainant credibility and sexual naivety.

An ANOVA was conducted to assess whether there was an association between participants’ work experience with children (having worked with children vs. not having worked with children) and perceptions of the complainant’s credibility and sexual naivety. No significant results were found $F(1, 250) = 1.22$, $p=.30$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .98$. $\eta^2=.01$.

7.2.1.3.5 Participants’ work experience with children and complainant culpability.

Chi Square analyses were conducted to assess whether there was an association between participants’ work experience with children (having worked with children vs. not
having worked with children) and perceptions of the complainant’s Blame, Responsibility and Guilt. No significant results were found.

Due to the lack of significant findings of the demographic variables on any of the dependent variables measures (complainant credibility, sexual naivety, culpability and With Whom participants Sympathised, Empathised and felt a sense of Similarity with) and because the sample size of the current study was deemed to be too small to control for demographical variables as well as other factors such as participants gender and complainant age (5, 10 and 15 years old), it was decided that the demographic variables were not likely to impact on the results therefore, these variables were collapsed for the subsequent analyses.

7.2.2 **Hypothesis 1: women will have higher dispositional empathy than men.**

An ANOVA was conducted to test the first hypothesis that women would have higher dispositional empathy than men, as assessed by the four subscales of the IRI. The independent variable was gender and the dependent variables were the scores on each of the four subscales. Homogeneity of variances was satisfied, with the exception of the Personal Distress scores. An examination of Hartley's $F_{\text{max}}$ revealed a value of less than 4 ($F_{\text{max}} = 1.68$), therefore Levene’s test was considered to be non-problematic.

The results of the analysis supported the hypothesis. It was found that women scored significantly higher than men on all four subscales (see Table 7 for means, standard deviations and ANOVA results).
Table 7

Means and standard deviations for the four subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Males (N=100)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Females (N= 152)</th>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>η²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRI subscales</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>14.14</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>18.25</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>31.99</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective Taking</td>
<td>16.41</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>18.37</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic Concern</td>
<td>16.46</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>21.05</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>67.72</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Distress</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>14.78</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2.3 Hypothesis 2: a) women will be more sympathetic, empathic and see themselves to be more similar to the complainant than will men; b) men will be more sympathetic, empathic and see themselves to be more similar to the complainant than will women.

Chi-Square analyses were conducted to test the second hypothesis that women would be more likely to relate to the complainant than men, while the men would be more likely to relate to the defendant than women. The independent variable was participant gender and the dependent variables were With Whom the Participants Sympathised, Empathised and felt a sense of Similarity with.

7.2.3.1 Gender and with whom participants sympathised.

Chi Square analysis found that With Whom the Participants Sympathised (complainant, defendant, both or neither) varied significantly across gender $X^2(1, N = 251) = 22.26, p = .00$. An inspection of the adjusted residuals revealed that as expected, compared to men, women were significantly more likely to sympathise with the complainant only. Men
were significantly more likely to sympathise with both (complainant and defendant) or
neither. It is important to note that the majority of men (68.7%) sympathised with
the complainant only (compared to 91.4% of women). However, a further 14.1% of men also
sympathised with the complainant as well as the defendant, indicating that the vast majority
(82.9%) of men were able to sympathise with the complainant.

Table 8
With whom men and women sympathised, empathised and identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males (N= 100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both (compl and defendant)</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females (N= 152)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both (compl and defendant)</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both (compl and defendant)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: compl = complainant

7.2.3.2 Gender and with whom participants empathised.

A Chi Square analysis found that With Whom the Participants Empathised
(complainant only, defendant only, both or neither) varied significantly across gender $X^2(1, N$
$= 251) = 31.54, p<.001$. An inspection of the adjusted residuals revealed that as expected,
compared to men, women were significantly more likely to empathise with the
complainant only, whereas men were significantly more likely to empathise with neither the complainant nor the defendant. However, it is important to note that 44.5% of men were able to empathise with the complainant (compared to 77% of women), which indicates that a large proportion of men are also able to empathise with complainants of CSA. Contrary to expectations, men were no more likely than women to empathise with the defendant.

### 7.2.3.3 Gender and with whom participants identified.

A Chi Square analysis found that With Whom the Participants felt a sense of Similarity (complainant only, defendant only, both or neither) varied significantly across gender $X^2(1, N = 251) = 19.62, p<.001$. An inspection of the adjusted residuals revealed that as expected, compared to men, women were more likely to feel a sense of similarity with the complainant only, whereas men were more likely than women to feel similar with neither the complainant nor the defendant. These results partially support the hypothesis as it was expected that women would identify with the complainant more than men would, and that men would identify more with the defendant than women.

### 7.2.4 Hypothesis 3: women will rate the complainant as more credible, sexually naive and less culpable than will men.

A combination of ANOVA and Chi-Square analyses were conducted to test the third hypothesis which predicted that women would be more pro-complainant (rate the complainant as more credible, sexually naive and less culpable) than men. Chi-Square analyses were conducted to assess gender differences in perceptions of culpability (blame, responsibility and guilt).

### 7.2.4.1 Gender and complainant credibility and sexual naivety.

Homogeneity of variance was satisfactory for the two items pertaining to complainant sexual naivety, however, Levene’s test was found to be significant for complainant credibility. An examination of Hartley's $F_{\text{max}}$ revealed a value of less than 4 ($F_{\text{max}} = 1.84$),
therefore, Levene’s test was considered to be non-problematic. The results of the ANOVA indicated that women \((M=24.62, SD=4.00)\) found the complainant to be significantly more credible than men \((M=21.78, SD=5.44)\) \(F(1,249)=22.63, p=.00, \eta^2_p=.08\). There were no significant gender differences in perceptions of the complainant’s sexual naivety on either item (see Table 9).

Table 9

*Gender and perceptions of complainant credibility and sexual naivety*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Males (N=100)</th>
<th>Females (N=152)</th>
<th>(F)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
<th>(\eta^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complainant credibility</td>
<td>21.78</td>
<td>24.62</td>
<td>22.63</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant sexual naivety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant is sexually naïve.</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant can knowingly seduce adult</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2.4.2 Gender and complainant and defendant culpability.

A 2 (male, female) x 2 (No blame for the complainant, Some blame for the complainant) Chi square test of independence was performed to examine the association between gender and ratings of complainant blame (see Table 10). Contrary to expectations, the association between these variables was not significant indicating that there were no significant gender differences in ascribing blame to the complainant \(X^2(1, N = 248) = .19, p = .66\). A 2 (male, female) x 2 (No responsibility for the complainant, Some responsibility for the complainant), Chi square test of independence was also used to examine the relationship
between gender and ratings of the complainant’s responsibility. The association between these variables was significant ($\chi^2(1, N = 248) = 5.00, p = .02$) indicating that as expected, men (13.40%) were significantly more likely to ascribe some level of responsibility to the complainant than women (5.30%). A $2 \times 2$ (male, female) x 2 (No guilt for the complainant, Some guilt for the complainant), Chi square test of independence then examined the relationship between gender and ratings of complainant guilt. Contrary to expectations, the relationship between these variables was not statistically significant ($\chi^2(1, N = 248) = .03, p = .85$).

Table 10

*Gender and perceptions of complainant culpability (blame, responsibility and guilt)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complainant culpability</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=100)</td>
<td>(n=152)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No blame</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some blame</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responsibility</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some responsibility</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No guilt</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some guilt</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2.5  Hypothesis 4: a) those who fail to sympathise, empathise or see themselves to be more similar to both the complainant and defendant, will have lower dispositional empathy than those who do. b) Those who sympathise, empathise and see themselves to be similar to both the complainant and the defendant, will have the highest level of dispositional empathy.

Due to the significant gender differences found in dispositional empathy, three 4x4 MANCOVAs were conducted with gender as a covariate to test this hypothesis. The independent variables were (1) With Whom Participants Sympathised, (2) With Whom Participants Empathised, and (3) With Whom Participants felt a sense of Similarity (complainant, defendant, both or neither) and the dependent variables were the four IRI subscale scores, with perceiver gender being the covariate variable. Each DV in each condition of the IV was approximately normally distributed, therefore we can be reasonably confident that there were no major violations of the assumption of multivariate normality. Box’s M test indicated that there was no violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices (see Table 11 for means and standard deviations).

7.2.5.1  With whom participants sympathised and dispositional empathy.

The multivariate result did not reveal a significant association between With Whom Participants Sympathised and dispositional empathy $F(3,247) = .89, p>.05$; Wilks’ $\lambda = .95$; $\eta^2 = .01$. 
Table 11
Means and Standard Deviations/Standard Errors on the Interpersonal Reactivity Index subscales and whom participants sympathised, empathised, identified with and complainant culpability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal Reactivity Index subscales</th>
<th>Fantasy</th>
<th>Perspective Taking</th>
<th>Empathic Concern</th>
<th>Personal Distress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>16.74</td>
<td>.40b</td>
<td>17.84</td>
<td>.33b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>17.41</td>
<td>4.09b</td>
<td>12.47</td>
<td>3.36b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both (compl and defendant)</td>
<td>16.56</td>
<td>1.30b</td>
<td>16.94</td>
<td>1.07b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>15.46</td>
<td>1.24b</td>
<td>16.23</td>
<td>1.02b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>16.92</td>
<td>.49b</td>
<td>18.06</td>
<td>.40b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>16.79</td>
<td>2.17b</td>
<td>15.06</td>
<td>1.80b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both (compl and defendant)</td>
<td>17.98</td>
<td>1.31b</td>
<td>17.85</td>
<td>1.08b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>15.78</td>
<td>.65b</td>
<td>16.93</td>
<td>.53b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>17.72</td>
<td>.97b</td>
<td>17.48</td>
<td>.81b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>23.43</td>
<td>4.05b</td>
<td>14.17</td>
<td>3.38b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both (compl and defendant)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>16.37</td>
<td>.39b</td>
<td>17.64</td>
<td>.32b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant culpability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No blame</td>
<td>16.72</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>16.78</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some blame</td>
<td>15.36</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>16.63</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responsibility</td>
<td>16.75a</td>
<td>.381b</td>
<td>17.74a</td>
<td>.314b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some responsibility</td>
<td>15.70a</td>
<td>1.26b</td>
<td>16.39a</td>
<td>1.04b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No guilt</td>
<td>16.79</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>17.89</td>
<td>4.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some guilt</td>
<td>15.75</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>15.87</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: compl = complainant. aMean after controlling for gender, bStandard error
7.2.5.2 With whom participants empathised and dispositional empathy.

The multivariate result revealed a significant association between With Whom Participants Empathised and dispositional empathy, $F(3, 247) = 2.27, p = .00; \text{Wilks' } \lambda = .10; \eta^2 = .03$. Univariate tests showed that there was a significant difference in scores on the EC subscale $F(3, 247) = 6.85, p = .00, \eta^2 = .07$.

Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé post hoc criterion for significance also indicated that those who empathised with the complainant only (see Table 11 for means and standard errors) scored significantly higher on the EC subscale than those who empathised with the defendant only ($d = 1.10 [1.47, 7.98]$). As hypothesised, those who empathised with the complainant only, scored significantly higher on the EC subscale than those who did not empathise with either the complainant or defendant ($d = .53 [1.05, 3.47]$). Furthermore, those who empathised with the defendant only scored significantly lower on the EC subscale than those who empathised with both the complainant and the perpetrator ($d = 1.26 [-8.76, 1.43]$). Finally, those who empathised with both parties scored significantly higher on the EC subscale than those who did not empathise with either the complainant or the defendant ($d = .62 [-4.75, -.54]$).

7.2.5.3 With whom participants identified and dispositional empathy.

The multivariate result did not revealed a significant association between With Whom Participants felt a sense of Similarity (or identified with) and dispositional empathy $F(2, 248) = 1.32, p > .05; \text{Wilks' } \lambda = .04; \eta^2 = .02$. 
7.2.6  Hypothesis 5: a) there will be a significant positive relationship between perceptions of complainant credibility, and sexual naivety and dispositional empathy; b) people who ascribe no culpability to the complainant, will have significantly higher levels of dispositional empathy than those who do.

7.2.6.1 Complainant credibility and sexual naivety and dispositional empathy.

Partial correlation analyses controlling for gender (due to significant findings in previous analyses), were conducted to assess the relationship between the IRI subscale scores and perceptions of the complainant’s credibility and sexual naivety.

The results of the correlation analysis indicated that there was a significant, weak positive correlation between the EC scores and perceptions of the complainant’s credibility (see Table 12). There were no other significant associations between the dispositional empathy and perceptions of the complainant’s credibility and sexual naivety (on either of the two items pertaining to this construct).

Table 12
Partial correlations of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index with measures of complainant credibility and sexual naivety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal Reactivity Index subscales</th>
<th>Fantasy</th>
<th>Perspective Taking</th>
<th>Empathic Concern</th>
<th>Personal Distress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complainant credibility</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.140*</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compl sexual naivety</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>-.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compl is sexually naïve</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>-.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compl can knowingly seduce an adult</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>-.017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: compl = complainant. *p<.05.
7.2.6.2 Complainant culpability and dispositional empathy.

Two MANOVAs were conducted using the complainant/defendant culpability (blame and guilt) as the independent variable and the scores of each of the four subscales of the IRI as the dependent variables. For each MANOVA the IV had two levels - the complainant was ascribed no culpability (blame or guilt) or some level of culpability. Due to the significant gender differences in perceptions of complainant responsibility, a MANCOVA was conducted using complainant/perpetrator responsibility as the independent variable, the scores of the IRI as the dependent variables and gender as a covariate. For each DV in each condition, the IVs were approximately normally distributed therefore we can be reasonably confident that there were no major violations of the assumption of multivariate normality. Box’s M test indicated that there was no violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices.

Blame. Contrary to expectations, MANOVA results revealed no significant association between those who ascribed no blame and those who ascribed some level of blame to the complainant and dispositional empathy $F(1,246) = .93, p=.48$; Wilks’ $\lambda = .98; \eta^2_p = .01$ (See Table 8 for means and standard deviations).

Guilt. Contrary to expectations, the multivariate result revealed no significant difference in dispositional empathy between those who ascribed no guilt and those who ascribed some level of guilt to the complainant $F(1,246) = 1.46, p=.21$; Wilks’ $\lambda = .97; \eta^2_p = .02$.

Responsibility. Contrary to expectations, MANCOVA results revealed no significant association between those who ascribed no responsibility and those who ascribed some level of responsibility to the complainant and dispositional empathy $F(1,246) = 1.68, p=.15$; Wilks’ $\lambda = .97; \eta^2_p = .02$.
7.2.7 Hypothesis 6: men will endorse CSA myths at a significantly higher rate than women.

Due to violations of data normality and violations of homogeneity of variance (significant Levene’s tests), a combination of Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney U tests was chosen to test this hypothesis. The analysis revealed than men scored significantly higher (indicative of CSA myths endorsement) on all three subscales of the CSAMS than women, supporting Hypothesis 6 (see Table 13).
Table 13

*Means, Standard Deviations and Mann Whitney U test scores for gender and scoring on the Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSAMS subscales</th>
<th>Males (n=100)</th>
<th>Females (n=152)</th>
<th>Mann Whitney U test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mdn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame Diffusion</td>
<td>9.34</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of Abusiveness</td>
<td>8.95</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive Stereotypes</td>
<td>9.88</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>9.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.000*
7.2.8 Hypothesis 7: those who do sympathise, empathise and feel a sense of similarity with the complainant, will endorse significantly fewer CSA myths than those who do not.

A series of Kruskal-Wallis analyses were conducted in order to assess whether myth endorsement was associated with whom participants sympathised, empathised and felt a sense of similarity with. Significant results were followed up by Tamhane’s post hoc tests for pairwise comparisons (See table 14). Because gender was found to be a significant predictor of CSA myth endorsement, it would have been ideal to co-vary gender in the analyses for the hypothesis. However, this was not possible due to too many violations of the assumptions underlying ANCOVA. Thus, the results of the current analyses will be interpreted with caution.

7.2.8.1 With whom participants sympathised and myth endorsement.

The results indicated a significant relationship between with whom participants sympathised and scores on the BD subscale ($\chi^2= 21.38, p=.00, \eta^2= 0.08$), the DA subscale ($\chi^2=25.92, p=.00, \eta^2= 0.10$) as well as the RS subscale ($\chi^2= 11.07, p=.01, \eta^2= 0.04$). However, Tamhane$T2$ statistic did not reach acceptable significance levels for the BD subscales scores (See table 16 for means, standard deviations and medians). The results did however, indicate that, as expected, those who sympathised with the complainant only scored significantly lower on the DA subscale than those who did not sympathise with the complainant nor the defendant ($p=.05, d= -0.90 [-0.27, -0.17]$).

In addition it was noted that those who sympathised with the complainant only scored significantly lower on the DA subscale than those who sympathised with both the complainant and the defendant ($p=.02, d= -1.01 [-1.47, -0.54]$). Furthermore those who
sympathised with the defendant only scored significantly higher on the DA subscale than those who sympathised with both the complainant and the defendant \((p=.02, d=1.06 [-0.42, 2.55])\), and higher than those who did not sympathise with either the complainant or the defendant \((p=.01, d=1.02 [-0.45, 2.50])\). As with the BD subscale, Tamhane’s post hoc statistic for the RS subscale did not reach acceptable significance level.

7.2.8.2 With whom participants empathised and myth endorsement.

The results of a Kruskal-Wallis analysis indicated a significant relationship between With Whom Participants Empathised and scores on the BD subscale \(\chi^2 = 16.99, p=.00, \eta^2=0.07\) and the DA subscale \(\chi^2 = 8.28, p=.04, \eta^2=0.03\). No significant differences were found for the scores on the RS subscale \(\chi^2 = 2.91, p=.40\). An examination of TamhaneT2 statistic indicated that as hypothesised, those who empathised with the complainant only, scored significantly lower on the BD subscale than those who did not empathise with either the complainant or the defendant \((p=.02, d=-0.45 [-0.72, -0.17])\). Contrary to expectations, post hoc statistics did not reach acceptable significance levels for the DA subscale scores.

7.2.8.3 With whom participants felt a sense of similarity with and myth endorsement.

The results of a Kruskal-Wallis analysis indicated a significant relationship between With Whom Participants felt a sense of Similarity and scores on the BD subscale \(\chi^2 = 14.45, p=.00, \eta^2=0.06\), the DA subscale \(\chi^2 = 11.00, p=.00, \eta^2=0.04\) as well as the RS subscale \(\chi^2 = 9.51, p=.01, \eta^2=0.04\). An examination of TamhaneT2 statistic indicated that those who identified with the complainant only scored significantly lower on the BD subscale than those who did not identify with either the complainant or the defendant \((p=.00, d=-0.42 [-0.77, -0.06])\).
Table 14

*Kruskal-Wallis results for Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale scores and with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Blame Diffusion</th>
<th>Denial Abusiveness</th>
<th>Restrictive Stereotypes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mdn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sympathy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compl (n=207)</td>
<td>7.35</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant (n=2)</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>15.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compl (n=142)</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant (n=7)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both (n=19)</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither (n=83)</td>
<td>8.05</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Similarity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compl (n=36)</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant (n=2)</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>13.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both (n=0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither (n=213)</td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Compl = complainant. *p<.05, **p<.00
Post Hoc statistics did not reach acceptable significance levels for the DA subscale scores. Significant differences in RS scores were, however, found between those who identified with the complainant only and the defendant only ($p=0.01$, $d=-2.34 [ -3.86, -0.83]$). Those who identified with the complainant only also scored significantly lower on the RS subscale than those who did not identify with either the complainant or the defendant ($p=0.01$, $d=-0.45 [ 0.81, -0.09]$).

7.2.9 Hypothesis 8: a) there will be a significant negative relationship between perceptions of complainant credibility, sexual naivety and endorsement of CSA myths. b) those who do ascribe some level of culpability to the complainant will endorse CSA myths significantly more than those who do not.

7.2.9.1 Complainant credibility, sexual naivety and myth endorsement.

Due to the significant gender differences found in perceptions of complainant credibility, partial correlations were conducted to assess the relationship between the three CSAMS subscales scores and perceived complainant credibility. Spearman’s rho correlations were conducted to assess the relationship between the three CSAMS subscale scores and the two items pertaining to complainant sexual naivety. All correlations were significant, with the exception of one of the items pertaining to complainant sexual naivety (see Table 15), however the correlations were weak-moderate at best. The results indicate that as hypothesised, endorsing CSA myths was associated, albeit not strongly, with lower ratings of the complainant’s credibility and sexual naivety (See Table 15 for correlation values).
Table 15

*Partial correlations\(^a\) and correlations (Spearman’s rho) between the Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale subscales and complainant credibility and sexual naivety*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Blame Diffusion</th>
<th>Denial of Abusiveness</th>
<th>Restrictive Stereotypes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compl credibility</td>
<td>-.179(^{**})</td>
<td>-.252(^{**})</td>
<td>-.277(^{**})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compl is sexually naïve</td>
<td>-.149(^*)</td>
<td>-.089</td>
<td>-.126(^*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compl can knowingly seduce an adult</td>
<td>-.200(^{**})</td>
<td>-.227(^{**})</td>
<td>-.194(^{**})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Compl = complainant. \(^*p<.05, \^{**}p<.001\).

**7.2.9.2 Complainant culpability and myth endorsement.**

Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to assess the relationship between the CSAMS subscale scores (dependent variables) and perceptions of the complainant’s blame and guilt (independent variables) (see Table 16). An ANCOVA was then conducted to assess the relationship between the CSAMS subscale scores (dependent variable) and perceptions of responsibility (independent variable) with participant gender as a covariate (in light of the results of hypothesis one). Although the assumptions for an ANOVA were violated due to skewed data, it was decided that the sample size was large enough and ANOVA was robust enough to run an analysis controlling for perceiver gender (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

The results revealed that as expected, those who were willing to ascribe some level of blame to the complainant (compared to no blame), were significantly more likely to score higher (indicative of higher myth acceptance) on the BD subscale \( (U= 475.50, n_1=11, n_2=237, p<.00, r=-0.24) \), the DA subscale \( (U= 293.50, n_1=11, n_2=237, p<.00, r=-0.29) \) as well as the RS subscale \( (U= 449.0, n_1=11, n_2=237, p<.00, r=-0.23) \).
Similarly, as expected, those who were willing to ascribe some level of responsibility to the complainant also scored significantly higher ($M=10.92$, $SE=.56$) on the BD subscale than those who did not ascribe any responsibility ($M=7.50$, $SE=.17$) $F(1,248) = 34.24, p<.00$, $\eta^2_p = .12$. They also scored significantly higher ($M=10.46$, $SE=.60$) on the DA subscale than those who did not ascribe any responsibility ($M=7.07$, $SE=.18$) to the complainant $F(1,248) = 28.75, p<.00$, $\eta^2_p = .10$. As expected, those who were willing to ascribe some level of responsibility ($M=11.14$, $SE=.59$) to the complainant scored significant higher on the RS subscale than those who did not ascribe any responsibility ($M=7.84$, $SE=.18$) $F(1,248) = 28.14, p<.00$, $\eta^2_p = .10$.

Finally, as hypothesised, those who were willing to ascribe some level of guilt to the complainant (compared to no guilt) scored significantly higher on the BD subscale ($U=2262.00$, $n_1=32$, $n_2=216$, $p<.00$, $r=-0.22$), the DA subscale ($U= 1845.00$, $n_1=32$, $n_2=216$, $p<.00$, $r=-0.28$) as well as the RS subscale ($U= 2173.00$, $n_1=32$, $n_2=216$, $p<.00$, $r=-0.22$).

**7.2.10 Hypothesis 9: as the complainant ages, she will be attributed lower credibility and sexual naivety, but higher culpability.**

**7.2.10.1 Complainant age, credibility and sexual naivety.**

A MANCOVA was conducted to test the relationship between complainant age and perceived credibility and sexual naivety, while controlling for perceiver gender (covariate). The independent variable was complainant age (5, 10 or 15 year-old) and the three dependent variables were perceived complainant credibility and the two items pertaining to complainant sexual naivety. Results of the evaluation of assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance-covariance were satisfactory (see Table 17 for adjusted means and standard errors). The results reveal that there was a multivariate differences between the three complainant age groups, Pillai's Trace $=.32$, $F(2, 247) = 15.59, p<.05, \eta^2_p = .16$. 
Table 16

*Mann-Whitney U results for the Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale scores and ratings of complainant blame and guilt*

|                  | Blame Diffusion |           |           |         |           |           |           |           |         |           |           |           |         |           |           |           |           |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|                  | M               | SD        | Mdn       | U       | z         | M         | SD      | Mdn       | U       | z         | M         | SD      | Mdn       | U        | z         |           |
| Blame            |                 |           |           |         |           |           |         |           |         |           |           |         |           |         |           |           |
| No blame (n=237) | 7.60            | 2.78      | 6.00      |         |           | 7.11      | 2.90    | 6.00      |         |           | 7.92      | 3.04    | 7.00      |         |           |           |
| Some blame (n=11)| 12.00           | 4.85      | 11.00     | 475.50* | -3.90     | 12.72     | 3.87    | 12.00     | 293.50* | -4.57     | 12.27     | 3.66    | 13.00     | 449.00*  | -3.73     |
| Guilt            |                 |           |           |         |           |           |         |           |         |           |           |         |           |         |           |           |
| No guilt (n=216) | 7.48            | 2.48      | 6.00      |         |           | 6.96      | 2.78    | 5.00      |         |           | 7.79      | 2.90    | 7.00      |         |           |           |
| Some guilt (n=32)| 9.94            | 4.84      | 8.00      | 2262.00*| -3.45     | 10.06     | 4.14    | 9.00      | 1845.00*| -4.48     | 10.31     | 4.11    | 9.00      | 2173.00*| -3.42     |

*p<.001
Univariate tests showed that there was a significant difference in perceptions of credibility according to complainant age $F(2, 247) = 9.06, p<.05, \eta^2 = .06$. Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé post hoc criterion for significance indicated that as hypothesised, the 5 year old complainant was perceived as being significantly more credible than the 15 year old complainant ($p<.05, d = .45 [1.19, 3.99]$). Furthermore, as expected, the 10 year old complainant was perceived to be more credible than the 15 year old complainant ($p<.05, d = .43 [1.11, 3.75]$). Contrary to expectations, there was no significant difference between the 5 and 10 year old complainants in ratings of credibility.

Univariate tests also showed that there was a significant difference in perceptions of complainant sexual naivety across the complainant age groups. Specifically, there were significant differences in perceptions of the complainant’s perceived sexual naivety $F(2, 247) = 8.82, p<.05, \eta^2 = .06$ as well as her ability to knowingly seduce an adult into sexual activities $F(2, 247) = 47.71, p<.05, \eta^2 = .28$.

Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé criterion for significance indicated that as hypothesised, the 5 year-old complainant was perceived as being significantly more sexually naive than the 15 year old complainant ($p<.05, d = .65 [.60, 1.78]$), and the 10 year-old complainant was perceived to be more sexually naive than the 15 year-old complainant ($p<.05, d = .47 [.32, 1.44]$). Contrary to expectations, however, there was no significant difference between the 5 and 10 year old complainants in ratings of sexual naivety. Furthermore, Post hoc analyses also indicated that the 5 year-old complainant was perceived as less knowledgeable to seduce an adult into sexual activities than a 15 year-old complainant ($p<.05, d = 1.42 [1.46, 2.35]$), and the 10 year-old complainant was also seen as less knowledgeable to seduce an adult into sexual activities than a 15 year-old complainant ($p<.05, d = 1.27 [1.31, 2.15]$). Again, there were no significant differences in attributions between the 5 and 10-year old complainants.
Table 17

Mean scores and standard deviations for perceptions regarding child sexual abuse as a function of complainant age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude variables</th>
<th>5 year old (n=72)</th>
<th>10 year old (n=88)</th>
<th>15 year old (n=92)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complainant credibility</td>
<td>24.49 .53</td>
<td>24.33 .47</td>
<td>21.90 .69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant sexual naivety Complainant is sexually naïve</td>
<td>5.61 .22</td>
<td>5.30 .20</td>
<td>4.42 .19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant can knowingly seduce an adult.</td>
<td>6.69 .16</td>
<td>6.52 .15</td>
<td>4.78 .14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2.10.2 Complainant age and culpability.

A 3 (5, 10, 15 year old) x 2 (some guilt, no guilt) Chi Square analysis was conducted to evaluate whether there was a significant relationship between the complainant age and attributions of culpability (blame, guilt and responsibility) toward the complainant (see Table 18 for distributions). Contrary to the hypotheses, the Chi square analyses found no significant association between age and blame and responsibility. Results did however, indicate that guilt varied significantly across complainant age $\chi^2(2, N = 248) = 7.03, p<.05$. An inspection of the adjusted residuals revealed that as expected the 15 year old child was ascribed the highest level of guilt of the three age groups.
Table 18

Percentage of participants whom found the complainant to be culpable for abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complainant culpability</th>
<th>Complainant age</th>
<th>Blame</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Guilt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 year old</td>
<td>10 year old</td>
<td>15 year old</td>
<td>χ²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=72)</td>
<td>(n=88)</td>
<td>(n=92)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blame</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No blame</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some blame</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (n=98)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responsibility</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>94.3%</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some responsibility</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (n=151)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responsibility</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>98.1%</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some responsibility</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guilt</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No guilt</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>7.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some guilt</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2.10.3 Exploratory analysis: complainant age and with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified.

Due to a lack of research in the field of child sexual abuse complainant age and empathy, no predictions were made regarding how complainant age would affect With Whom Participants relate (sympathise, empathise and identify). Therefore the following analyses regarding complainant age and sympathy, empathy and similarity were exploratory in nature (see Table 19). The results of Chi Square tests suggested that there was no association between complainant age and with whom participants sympathised, empathised or identified. This implies that the participants are no more likely to feel sorry for a five year old female complainant than a 10 or 15 year old female complainant. The descriptive data in Table 17 illustrates that the majority of participants were able to sympathise and empathise with the complainant, regardless of their age, but the vast majority could not identify with
them (see Table 19). The results also found that the vast majority of participants did not sympathise, empathise or identify with the defendant. Table 20 provides a summary of the significant and non-significant findings of Study 3 and Figure 5 provides a graphic representation of the hypotheses and significant main effects.

Table 19

*Complainant age and with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified with*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complainant culpability</th>
<th>5 year old (n=72)</th>
<th>Victim Age 10 year old (n=88)</th>
<th>15 year old (n=92)</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>.269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>.484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20

Summary of the results of Study 3: Significant and non-significant findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Fantasy</th>
<th>IRI (dispositional empathy)</th>
<th>Personal Distress</th>
<th>Blame</th>
<th>CSAMS (myth scale)</th>
<th>Restrictive Stereotypes</th>
<th>Complainant Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Perspective Taking</td>
<td>Empathic Concern</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diffusion</td>
<td>Denial of Abusiveness</td>
<td>5 yr old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>W&gt;M</td>
<td>W&gt;M</td>
<td>W&gt;M</td>
<td>M&gt;W</td>
<td>M&gt;W</td>
<td>M&gt;W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>W&gt;M</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>&lt;neither and both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>W&gt;M</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>W&gt;M</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>&gt;neither and both</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>&lt;neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>&lt;both</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>&gt;neither</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>M&gt;W</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity</td>
<td>Complainant only</td>
<td>W&gt;M</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>&lt;neither</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defendant only</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>W&gt;M</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Sexually naive</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowingly seduce adult</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culpability</td>
<td>Blame</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>M&gt;W</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: M=Men, W=Women, NS=Non significant. 

a) those who empathised with the complainant only, scored significantly higher on EC than those who empathised with both and those with did not empathise with either. 
b) those who empathised with defendant only, scored significantly lower on EC than those who empathised with both parties. 
c) those who empathised with both parties, scored significantly higher on EC than those did not empathise with either parties. 
d) those who scored higher on EC, also rated complainant to be more credible. 
e) those who sympathised with the complainant only, scored significantly lower on the BD subscale than those sympathised with both and those who did not sympathised with either. 
f) those who sympathised with the defendant only, scored significantly higher on the DA subscale than those who sympathised with both or those who did not sympathise with either parties. 
g) those who empathised with the complainant only, scored significantly lower on the BD subscale than those who did not empathise with either parties. 
h) those who identified with the complainant only, scored significantly lower on the BD subscale than those who did not identify with either parties. 
i) those who identified with the defendant only, scored significantly lower on the RS subscale than those who identified with the defendant only and those whom did not identify with either parties. 
j) high scores on the CSAMS subscales were significantly correlated with low rating of complainant credibility. 
k) high scores on the CSAMS subscales were significantly correlated with low ratings of perceived complainant sexual naivety. 
l) those who were willing to ascribe some level of blame, responsibility and guilt to the complainant, scored significantly higher on all three subscales of the CSAMS.
Figure 5. Graphic representation of the hypotheses and significant main effects found

- **Sympathy:**
  1. Complainant only
  2. Defendant only
  3. Both
  4. Neither

- **Empathy:**
  1. Complainant only
  2. Defendant only
  3. Both
  4. Neither

- **Myth Acceptance (CSAMS):**
  1. Blame Diffusion
  2. Denial of Abusiveness
  3. Restrictive Stereotypes

- **Participant Gender**

- **Dispositional Empathy (IRI):**
  1. Fantasy Scale
  2. Perspective Taking
  3. Empathic Concern
  4. Personal Distress

- **Complainant age**
  (5, 10 and 15 year old)

- **Similarity:**
  1. Complainant only
  2. Defendant only
  3. Both
  4. Neither

- **Complainant Credibility**

- **Sexual Naivety:**
  1. Sexually naive
  2. Mature enough

- **Culpability:**
  - Blame
  - Responsibility
  - Guilt

- **Significant main effects**
- **No significant main effects**
7.3 Discussion

The aims of Study 3 were twofold, firstly to examine the factors that may explain the gender differences in perceptions and judgements regarding CSA that previous research has found, and secondly, to understand the myths, perceptions and judgements regarding CSA held by the Australian public.

7.3.1 Summary of the main findings.

The current study lends further support to previous studies which have found that a substantial minority of laypeople endorse myths about child sexual abuse and that the endorsements of these myths can affect perceptions of complainant credibility, sexual naivety and attributions of culpability toward a complainant. Furthermore, the results of the current study are consistent with previous research that has found gender differences in myth acceptance, perceptions and judgements regarding CSA. Men scored significantly higher on all three subscales of the CSAMS than women (indicating the endorsement of myths). The current study also lends support to previous researchers’ speculations (Bottoms, 1993; Wellman, 1993) that women are more likely than men to empathise with CSA complainants. Furthermore, the current study also lends support to the theory that dispositional empathy may impact on jurors’ ability to relate to a complainant and defendant. However, when controlling for gender, dispositional empathy was not found to impact on perceptions of complainant credibility and culpability.

7.3.2 Participant gender.

7.3.2.1 Gender, dispositional empathy, sympathy, empathy and similarity.

As expected, compared to men, women were found to have significantly higher levels of dispositional empathy on all four subscales of Davis’ (1980) Interpersonal Reactivity Index. Furthermore, compared to men, women reported feeling more sympathy and empathy toward the complainant, and felt a greater sense of similarity with her. The results also indicate that women are significantly more like likely than men to sympathise, empathise and
feel a sense of similarity with the complainant only, while men are more likely to not sympathise, empathise or feel a sense of similarity with either the complainant or the defendant. One exception was that when it came to sympathy, where men either sympathised with both parties or neither.

The unexpected finding that men were no more likely than women to empathise with the perpetrator is not consistent with previous research in the area of rape and empathy which has found that men are more likely to empathise with the defendant in a rape trial than women (Brady, Chrisler, Hosdale, Osowiecki & Veal, 1990; Ching & Burke, 1999; Deitz, Blackwell, Daley & Bentley, 1982; Jimenez & Abreu, 2003; Osman, 2011). This may indicate that there is a distinction between the way men respond to child sexual abuses cases and rape cases, particularly pertaining to empathy. This is an important finding as previous research has relied on studies addressing perceptions and myths toward rape victims to predict how participants would respond to child sexual abuse cases (see Collings, 1997; Muller, 1991).

Due to the lack of research in the area of sympathy (majority of the research has focused on the concept of empathy) and child sexual abuse, it is not possible to compare the results of the current study to those of previous research. The results of the current study do however, lend support to the theory (Escalas & Stern, 2004; Haegerich & Bottoms, 2000) that there is a distinction between the concepts of empathy and sympathy, particularly between men and women. For example, the vast majority of men (82%) were able to feel sorry for the complainant (sympathise), however the majority (55.5%) did not empathise with her. Similarly, the majority of women sympathised (95.3%) with the complainant but fewer empathised with her (77%). It may be that there was not enough information from the complainant and defendant in the case scenario for participants to emotionally connect to the characters on a deeper level. The level of emotional connection may be more heightened in a
jury situation where both the complainant and defendant display varying emotions during the trial, which has been found to affect case outcomes (Golding, Fryman, Marsil & Yozwiak, 2003). Complainant and defendant demeanor may include facial expressions, voice intonation, and displays of emotion which can affect the way in which jurors respond either character (Golding et al., 2003), particularly when the evidence presented is weak or ambiguous and jurors begin to rely on their biases (Kerr, Hymes, Anderson & Weathers, 1995). For example, Golding et al. (2003) examined victim demeanor on mock jurors’ decisions in a simulated child sexual abuse trial. Mock jurors read a trial summary vignette in which the primary independent variable was the demeanour of the complainant (i.e., calm, teary, hysterical crying). In addition to reading the summary, participants viewed pencil drawings of the witnesses that were presented as “courtroom drawings”. The results showed that the teary condition led to more guilty verdicts and a greater belief in the complainant than the other demeanour conditions. The study also found that women were more positive toward the complainant than were men, and the authors concluded that “it is possible that female mock jurors identified and sympathised more with the complainant than the male mock jurors” (p. 1319). The results of the current study may indicate that women’s propensity to sympathise and empathise more with the complainant than men, may mean that women would be more affected by the emotional testimony of a child than men is a court room context.

As expected, women (21.2%) were more likely to identify with the complainant than men (3%), but men (2%) were no more likely to identify with the perpetrator than women (0%). The results of the current study are consistent with previous research in the area of perceptions regarding rape victims which have found that men were less likely to identify with a victim (Deitz & Byrnes, 1981; Osman, 2011) in a rape trial than were women (Deitz, Littman & Bentley, 1984; Osman, 2011). Research in the area of identifying with a child
sexual abuser (as opposed to a rapist) is non-existent (to the author’s knowledge); it may be that men did not sympathise or indicate identifying with the defendant in the current study because it would akin to saying that they are like a child abuser themselves. Furthermore, previous research has found that knowing a rape victim increases one’s empathy toward rape victims (Deitz, Blackwell, Daley & Bentley, 1982; Barnett, Tetreault & Masbad, 1987). Perhaps this dynamic may be why women were more likely to identify with the victim and be more sympathetic and empathic towards her than men.

7.3.2.2 Gender and complainant credibility, sexual naivety and culpability.

Consistent with previous research addressing participants gender and victim credibility (Golding, Alexander, & Stewart, 1999; Golding, Fryman, Marsil, & Yozwiak, 2003; Golding, Sego, & Sanchez, 1999; Golding, Stewart, Yozwiak, & Sanchez, 2000; Insquith, Levine & Sheiner, 1993; Rubin & Thelen, 1996; Yozwiak, Golding, & Marsil, 2004), women were significantly more likely than men to believe that the abuse occurred, and that the complainant was trustworthy and honest (credible). Generally, both men and women rated the complainant to be credible but both parties indicated some level of skepticism with men ($M=21$) being more skeptical than women ($M=24$ with a maximum credibility score being 28).

Contrary to expectations, no significant gender differences were found in perceptions of complainant’s sexual naivety. Burt and Estep (1981) suggested that child complainants are not considered mature enough to be attributed responsibility for sexual assault, as their actions would not be considered intentional. The current study found no significant gender differences in perception of the complainant’s sexual naivety which indicates that men and women were equally convinced about the complainant’s sexual naivety (collectively scoring on average 5 out of 7, with 7 indicating that the complainant is sexually naïve). As expected women ascribed significantly less responsibility toward the complainant than men. Men
(13.4%) were more than twice as likely as women (5.3%) to ascribe some level of responsibility to the complainant.

However, contrary to expectations there were no significant differences between men and women in their ratings of the complainant’s blame or guilt. The number of participants willing to ascribe some level of blame to the complainant was very low (5.2% of men and 4% of women); however, the number of participants willing to ascribe some level of guilt to the complainant was more than double (13.4% of men and 12.6% of women). While it is encouraging that the vast majority of participants were supportive of the complainant, it may not mean that this belief in the complainant would transpire to a guilty verdict. For example, previous research by Pozzulo, Dempsey and Crescini (2010) found that some mock jurors allocated 80% guilt to an alleged CSA perpetrator, but still rendered a ‘not guilty’ verdict. The results indicate that jurors may hesitate to render an absolute verdict of either guilty or not guilty if they are not 100% sure of the defendant’s guilt. Therefore, although it appears that participants in the current study were quite supportive of the complainant, this may not transpire to a guilty vote if there is any doubt about the complainant’s credibility.

Theoretically, the results of the current study also indicate that there is a conceptual difference between blame and guilt. They also highlight a concern that one in ten Australians are willing to ascribe some level of guilt to a child for her sexual abuse. Of particular concern here is that the complainant was depicted as resisting the abuse according her statement, therefore there was no question of consent if participants believed that the abuse took place (which majority did).

The lack of gender differences in ascribing blame and guilt to the complainant are inconsistent with the findings of previous research in which male respondents were found to attribute greater responsibility or blame to CSA victims (Bottoms, Davies & Epstein, 2004; Graham, Rogers & Davies, 2007; Insquith, Levine & Scheiner, 1993; Rubin & Thelen, 1996).
As most scenarios in CSA research studies assume the veracity of the complainant’s account and inform participants that abuse had occurred, it may be that the lack of significant gender differences in perception of culpability are due methodological factors. For example, the case summary used in the current study included the accounts of both parties involved and was written in a way that did not imply that the abuse had occurred, allowing participants to decide whether they believe the abuse had occurred. This ambiguity may have led some participants to identify good reasons behind the actions of the perpetrator which may have led to them to sympathise and empathise with him and even start to see his actions as somewhat justifiable or excusable (Exline & Zell, 2009).

A similar non-significant association between participant gender and victim blaming was also found by Broussard and Wagner (1988) and Collings and Payne (1991). A possible explanation for the lack of gender differences offered by Collings and Payne was the research methodology used, namely the use of vignettes which were used by Collings and Payne, Broussard and Wagner, and the current study. Collings and Payne hypothesised that divergent attributions by male and females are more likely in cases where attempts are made to ensure the realism of the rape descriptions (for example, in studies where videotapes of supposed victims are used). Studies utilising less detailed vignettes (for example, Graham, Rogers & Davies, 2007) than the one used in the current study, however, have found gender differences in attributions of responsibility or blame to the victim. It may be that ambiguity of the detailed mock trial vignette used in the current study caused participants to evaluate the case with more caution and view the complainant’s account with more skepticism.

Furthermore, unlike previous research which has used Likert scales to assess perceived victim or perpetrator guilt or blame, and have found significant gender differences (Bottoms, Davis & Epstein, 2004) on these measures, the design of the current study asked participants to assign a percentage of guilt and blame which may also account for the lack of significant
findings. For example, participants were asked “How guilty do you think each individual is for what happened?” and participants were asked to assign what percentage of guilt or blame they believed each individual should hold for ‘what happened’ (e.g. “Mary holds 30% of the guilt for the abuse; James holds 70% of the guilt for the abuse”). Participants were also given the option to indicate that both parties held equal blame or guilt or that neither party was to blame or held any guilt for the incident. It may be the case that future research is needed to evaluate how style of questioning (Likert scales compared to open ended questions, for example) impacts on evaluations of complainant culpability.

In summary, participants were favorable toward the complainant indicating a tendency to believe and trust her, and the vast majority of participants did not hold her accountable for the alleged abuse. There was still, however a small but significant proportion of the participants (particularly men) who are skeptical of the complainant’s credibility, and were willing to ascribe some level of culpability to her. Complainant credibility has been found to be one of the most important and influential factors in the outcome of a CSA case (Goodman et al., 1998; Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2011), therefore it is important not to dismiss even a small amount of skepticism. A recommendation that has been made by previous researchers (Cossins, 2008; Cossins et al., 2009; Cromer & Goldsmith, 2001; Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2010; Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2011; Klettke et al., 2010) to combat skepticism regarding the factors that can affect complainant credibility has been to include mandatory judicial directions that provide educative information to jurors, as many jurors interpret a child’s counterintuitive behaviours (such as delayed complaint, for example) to be indicative of the unreliability of the complainant. The results of the current study lend further support to this recommendation.
7.3.3 **Dispositional empathy and demographics.**

The results of the current study found that participants who indicating having children of their own as well as those participants who had worked with children in the past, scored significantly higher on this subscale than those who did not have children and those who had no experience working with children. However, the effect sizes were small and therefore caution is needed when interpreting these results.

7.3.4 **Dispositional empathy and sympathy, empathy and similarity.**

Scoring high on the Fantasy scale of the IRI is thought to be indicative of a greater physiological arousal to another’s emotional experiences and a greater tendency to help another person (Davis, 1980). Contrary to expectations, there were no significant differences in scores on this subscale according to with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified.

The Perspective taking subscale is thought to measures social functioning, with higher scores being associated with more selfless concern for others’ feelings and reactions (Davis, 1980). Contrary to expectations with whom participants sympathised, empathised or felt a sense of similarity, was not predictive of this subscale.

The Empathic Concern subscale is thought to measure a tendency to experience feelings of concern for others (Davis, 1980). Contrary to expectations, there were no significant differences in scores on the EC subscales based on with whom participants sympthatised or felt a sense of similarity. As expected however, those who empathised with the complainant only, scored significantly higher on this subscale than those who empathised with the defendant only as well as those who did not empathise with either party. Furthermore, those who empathised with the defendant only, scored significantly lower on this subscale than those who empathised with both parties. Those who empathised with both parties, also scored significantly higher on this subscale than those who did not
empathisewith either the complainant or the defendant. Overall, these results imply that when people have a propensity to feel concern for others, they are likely to empathise with a complainant of CSA, but not the defendant.

The Personal Distress subscale is thought to assess self-oriented anxiety when experiencing others in distress. Participants with a high score on this subscale tend to have less rewarding social relationships and tend to have lower self-esteem and poor interpersonal functioning (Davis, 1980). It was found that those who empathised and identified with the complainant only, scored significantly higher on this subscale than those who did not empathise or identify with either party.

In summary, it appears that those who rate themselves higher on dispositional empathy, are also more likely to empathise with the complainant of CSA. Interestingly, dispositional empathy was not found to differ across with Whom Participants Sympathised and felt a sense of Similarity. These scores only differed among With Whom Participants empathised. These results may mean that jurors higher in dispositional empathy may favor the complainant in a CSA trial rather than the defendant. Those scoring lower on dispositional empathy were found to not empathise with either the complainant or the defendant. Given that women scored significantly higher on dispositional as well situational empathy, this may explain the gender differences that previous research has found in perceptions and judgements regarding CSA.

7.3.5 Dispositional empathy, perceptions and judgements.

Contrary to expectations, dispositional empathy was not found to be predictive of ratings of complainant credibility (with the exception of the EC subscale) and sexual naivety, when controlling for gender. As pointed our earlier, perceived complainant credibility has been found to play a central role in determining case outcomes, and the results of the current study indicate that those who show a propensity to be concerned for another individual’s
welfare (Empathic Concern) were more likely to view the complainant as being a credible witness. It is important to note, however, that although the correlation was significant even after controlling for the effect of perceiver gender, it was very low (.14) and caution needs to be taken when interpreting these results.

With regards to complainant culpability, no significant differences were found between low and high scorers on the four subscales of the IRI on ratings of complainant blame, responsibility and guilt. One possible explanation for this may be that as stated earlier, participants were generally not likely to rate the complainant as culpable for the abuse, creating a ceiling effect for these variables.

In summary, it appears that dispositional empathy as measured by the IRI scale, was not found to affect perceptions of the complainant’s credibility, sexual naivety nor perceptions of culpability. Although as expected, women scored significantly higher on all four subscales of the IRI, once the effect of gender was statistically controlled for, the results of the current study found no evidence that dispositional empathy impacts on perceptions regarding a CSA complainant. These finding are contrary to the expectations of the current study and are not consistent with the speculation of previous researchers who have proposed that empathy may play a role in explaining poor attitudes towards CSA. High scorers on the IRI scale showed a propensity to empathise with the complainant but not the defendant which is an interesting finding. One could expect that those higher in dispositional empathy may empathise with both parties (the complainant for possibly being the victim of abuse and the defendant for possible wrongful accusation) but these results indicate that the empathy is directed at the complainant. This propensity to empathise with the complainant may reflect the high level of credibility with which she was viewed. The vast majority of participants believed the complainant’s account of abuse (even though the results indicated some level of
skepticism) which may then account for why the empathy was directed at the complainant and not the defendant, participants believed she was abused.

### 7.3.6 Child sexual abuse myth acceptance and demographics.

The results indicated that compared to those with a TAFE or Bachelor degree qualification, those participants with a maximum of a year 12 education were found to score higher on the Blame Diffusion and Denial of Abusiveness subscales. Participants who did not have children of their own were also found to endorse these myths as well as myths relating to Restrictive Stereotypes, at a higher rate than parents. These results indicate that having children and having attained a higher level of education may make people in the community more informed about CSA or more aware of the myths surround child sexual abuse. Parental status and education were not however, found to have an effect on any of the measures relating to perceptions of the complainant’s credibility, sexual naivety, culpability nor their ability to sympathise, empathise or identify with the characters in the vignette.

### 7.3.7 Child sexual abuse myth acceptance and observer gender.

As expected, women were significantly less likely to accept myths about child sexual abuse across all three subscales of the CSAM scale than men. This is consistent with previous research addressing gender and child sexual abuse myth acceptance. For example, male jurors have been found to: hold misconceptions about child sexual abuse more strongly than female jurors (Cossins et al., 2009; Gabora, Spanos & Joab, 1993), to be more skeptical than women about children’s claims of sexual abuse (Quas, Bottoms, Haegerich & Nysse-Carris, 2002; Quas, Thompson & Clarke-Stewart, 2005) and to give higher estimates of false reports of child sexual abuse by children than women (Quas, Thompson & Clark-Stewart, 2005). Juror instructions and education campaigns need to be targeted specifically at men to combat and challenge CSA myths. Such targeted education campaigns may ultimately lead to a change in knowledge and perceptions regarding CSA and thus, greater reporting rates as
well as conviction rates of offenders. As Ceci and Friedman (2000) highlighted, as long as a sizeable minority of jurors hold CSA myths, expert testimony is important in juror education. The findings of the current study reveal that, even when a majority of individuals hold correct beliefs, a large minority may not.

### 7.3.8 Child sexual abuse myths, perceptions and judgements.

Individuals scoring high on the BD subscale are said to ascribe to the belief that persons other than the offender – the child, non-offending parent, or gay people in general – are to blame, or at least partly to blame for the abuse (Collings, 1997). The current study found that individuals who were willing to ascribe some level of blame, responsibility and guilt to the complainant (compared to those who did not) scored significantly higher on the BD subscale. Furthermore, scores on the BD subscale were significantly correlated with ratings of the complainant’s credibility and sexual naivety. More specifically, as participants BD scale scores increased, their ratings of the complainant’s credibility and sexual naivety decreased. These results indicate that accepting myths that take blame away from a perpetrator or minimise this culpability, can result in an increased tendency to view the victim as lacking in credibility and shift culpability onto the child victim.

Individuals scoring high on the DA subscale are said ascribe to beliefs that serve to minimise the abusive nature of child sexual abuse, either directly, through attempts to define abuse as benign or a positive experience for the child, or through attempts to portray the child as an equal or consensual sexual partner (Collings, 1997). Endorsement of the items in this subscale also reflects perceptions that children are seductive and invite sexual abuse, and if they were really being harmed, they would speak up.

The current study found that individuals who were willing to ascribe some level of blame, responsibility and guilt to the complainant (compared to those who did not) scored
significantly higher on the DA subscale. Furthermore, scores on the DA subscale were significantly correlated with ratings of the complainant’s credibility and sexual naivety. More specifically, as participants’ scores on the DA subscale increased, the scores on complainant’s credibility and sexually naivety scores decreased. These results suggest that participants who believe that children are capable of initiating sexual encounters or that children who delay reporting the abuse may actually enjoy the sexual abuse were more likely to rate the child as not being a credible witness, as well as being culpable for her abuse. These results are concerning when considering that research consistently indicates that most victims delay disclosing for significant periods of time and many may never disclose at all until the abuse is discovered in some other manner (Paine & Hansen, 2000; Shaffer, Leventhal & Asnes, 2011; Sorenson & Snow, 1991). Furthermore, previous research (Pozzulo et al., 2010) addressing the relationship between length of delay between the end of abuse and time of reporting (2 vs. 15 vs. 30 years) and mock juror decisions found that the length of delay in reporting CSA, significantly affected guilt ratings (with higher guilt ratings when there was a shorter delay in reporting abuse) and was found to significantly predict sentence recommendations, with lengthier sentences being associated with the shortest delay conditions.

Individuals scoring high on the RS subscale are said to ascribe to beliefs that serve to deny the reality of most abuse or to deny/minimise the undesirable consequences of abuse (Collings, 1997). It is important to understand how such beliefs affect perceptions and judgements regarding CSA, as sexual abuse of children often leads to serious mental health consequences for victims into adulthood (Higgins & McCabe, 1994; Mullers & Dowling, 2008). Higher rates of major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, dysthymia, anxiety disorder, suicide ideation and attempts, substance abuse and re-victimization (to name a few)
have been found among those with a history of CSA when compared to those without a history of abuse (Mullers & Dowling, 2008).

The results of the current study found that individuals who were willing to ascribe some level of blame, responsibility and guilt to the complainant (compared to those who did not) scored significantly higher on the RS subscale. Furthermore, as individuals increasingly endorsed myths that denied the reality of abuse, their ratings of the child’s credibility and sexual naivety decreased. It appears that participants who have a predisposition to denying or minimizing the consequences of abuse may become more skeptical of the child’s claims of abuse, but also be more likely to view the victim as being culpable for her abuse.

In summary, the endorsement of all three subscales of the CSAMS was significantly related to negative perceptions and judgements regarding the complainant on all attitude measures (credibility, sexual naivety and culpability) which indicates that addressing issues surrounding CSA myth or lack of knowledge about the area of CSA may be the most important factor in juror and community education, particularly to those with a lack of tertiary education and those who do not have children.

7.3.9 Child sexual abuse myth endorsement and sympathy, empathy and similarity.

The current study found that participants who sympathised with the complainant only, scored significantly lower on the DA subscale than those who sympathised with both the defendant and the complainant, and those who did not sympathise with either parties. Furthermore, those who felt sorry for the defendant, scored significantly higher on the DA subscale than those who sympathised with complainant and the defendant as well as those who did not sympathise with either. These results may indicate that those who have more knowledge about the consequences or abusiveness (DA subscale) of child sexual abuse are
more likely to feel sorry for the complainant in some way, perhaps because there is awareness of the impact sexual abuse can have on the victim.

The current study similarly found that those who empathised and identified with the complainant only, scored significantly lower on the BD subscale than those who did not empathise or identify with either the complainant or the defendant. These results may indicate that those who do not accept myths about victim culpability are more likely to empathise and feel a sense of similarity with the victim to some degree than those who cannot empathise or identify with either parties. No other significant differences were found. Previous research by Hockett, Saucier, Hoffman, Smith and Craig (2012), addressing rape myth acceptance and victim empathy found that acceptance of rape myths (Rape Myth Acceptance Scale) was associated with negative attitudes toward rape victims as well as lower levels of empathy toward them. The results of the current study are consistent with the Hockett et al. study and imply that those who do not endorse myths about CSA tend to also empathise with the complainant/victim. Perhaps this indicates that greater propensity to defuse blame away from the perpetrator (and thus onto the victim, parents or society) also means a decrease in the participants’ propensity to empathise with the complainant.

7.3.10 Complainant Age.

Previous research suggests that attributions of victim responsibility in cases of CSA increase with age while perceptions of credibility decrease, but it is unclear at which age this begins because vignettes or scenarios have generally depicted children in mid-childhood and mid-adolescence. One aim of the current study was to investigate how the complainant was evaluated on credibility and culpability across three complainant ages, namely 5, 10 and 15 years. Furthermore, participants’ ability to sympathise, empathise and feel a sense of similarity with the complainant as well as the defendant was also assessed across the three victim ages.


7.3.10.1  Complainant age, perceptions and judgements.

It was expected that as the complainant ages, she will be perceived as being less credible and sexually naïve and thus, more culpable for the abuse. More specifically, it was expected that the 5 year-old complainant would be viewed as more sexually naïve and credible (believable, trustworthy and honest) but less culpable (blameworthy, guilty and responsible) for her abuse than the 10 year-old and 15 year-old complainant. Similarly, it was also hypothesised that the 10 year-old would be rated as more credible and sexually naïve, but less culpable than the 15 year old complainant. Due to a lack of research in the field of child sexual abuse, complainant age and empathy, no predictions were made regarding how complainant age would affect participant’s ability to relate (sympathise, empathise and feel a sense of similarity) with her and the perpetrator.

The hypothesis that as the complainant ages, she will be perceived as being less credible and sexually naïve and thus, more culpable for abuse was partially supported. The 5 and 10 year old complainants were perceived as being significantly more credible (believable, honest and trustworthy) and sexually naïve than the 15 year old complainant. The 15 year old child was also significantly more likely to be ascribed some level of guilt than her younger counterparts. Although the number of participants willing to ascribe some level of guilt to the complainants was low, 9.7% of participants who were in the 5 year-old vignette condition were willing to ascribe some level of guilt to a 5 year old child and 8% of those in the 10 year old vignette condition were willing to ascribe guilt to a 10 year old child for her abuse. Ascription of guilt was the highest for the 15 year old child with 20.5% of participants in that vignette condition willing to ascribe some level of guilt to her. These results indicate that there is a significant proportion of the population who believe that a child as young as 5 years old holds some level of guilt for her abuse, which highlights the need for education.
Contrary to expectations, there were no significant differences between the 5 and 10 year old complainants on ratings of credibility, sexual naivety nor culpability which implies that in terms of credibility, children aged 10 years and younger are perceived as being equally believable, honest and trustworthy but this general positive regard begins to decline somewhere between the age of 10 and 15 years. Furthermore, no significant differences in ratings of blame and responsibility were found across the three complainant age groups with the data indicating that children are generally viewed as not being blameworthy or responsible for their abuse. The lack of significant difference between the 5 and 10 year old complainants on ratings of credibility is not consistent with previous research by Davies and Rogers (2009) who found that the 5 year old complainant was deemed to be more honest than the 10 year old complainant.

The present findings lend support to the suggestions made by Bottoms and Goodman (1994) that compared to older children, younger children are perceived to be low on competence (cognitive ability, resistance to suggestion), yet high on trustworthiness (honesty, sincerity) which appear to increase jurors’ attributions of credibility to young CSA victims. The results of the current study found that this is particularly true for children aged between 5 and 10 years. It appears that when victim witnesses are this young, jurors see them as being credible witnesses, that is, they are too young and naive to fabricate such events and too young to have ulterior motives for falsely accusing someone of sexual abuse. However, they still have the cognitive capacity to give an accurate account of events. The credibility of the witness begins to decrease and culpability increases somewhere between the age of 10 and 15 years where girls begin to be perceived more like adult rape victims and less like children. These results are consistent with observations that adolescent girls tend to be viewed as quasi-adults possessing the ability to understand sexual meaning, to engage in sexual activity consensingly and to resist unwanted sexual contact (Davies & Rogers, 2006, Davies, Rogers
&Whiteleg, 2009). Future research may wish to address why adolescents and pre-adolescent children are viewed as being less credible in order to help target education at the community and perhaps educate jurors that children under the age of 16 are “children” and that they do not have the mental or legal ability to consent to sexual encounters (with the exceptions outlined in Table 1).

7.3.10.2 Complainant age, sympathy, empathy and similarity.

Due to a lack of research in the area of victim age and sympathy, empathy and identified with the victim and alleged perpetrator of child sexual abuse, no predictions were made. The current study found no significant differences according to complainant age in with whom participants sympathised, empathised and identified. Sympathy for the complainant was generally high, with the 10 year old child (93.2%) receiving the highest level of sympathy, followed by the 15 year old (90.1%) and surprisingly, the 5 year old child receiving the lowest (87.5%). The ability of participants to empathise and identify with the complainants was not as high as sympathy, indicating that the two concepts of sympathy and empathy are separate. For example, 87.5% of the participants felt sympathy for the 5 year old child but only 59.7% of the participants felt as though they could empathise with her and only 15.3% could identify with her to some degree.

7.3.11 Limitations.

Limitations of Study 3 include the lack of ecological validity which is inherit with the use of vignette designs. Research cannot replicate the complexity of case information, jury deliberation, the effects of the various emotions displayed by an complainant and defendant, and the impact of these emotions on jurors and the real consequences of a conviction. The current research does, however, allow us to understand the types of misconceptions and perceptions that some jurors may walk into a courtroom with. Furthermore, the finding that community members can feel some level of emotion towards a fictional character and that
these emotions can impact on judgements about a complainant’s credibility in a vignette
design is an important one. Considering the findings of previous research (Nomura & Akai,
2012) that empathy for characters in fictional stories was found to correlate statistically
significantly with empathy for real people, one can argue that emotional responses are only
likely to be intensified when a jury member is faced with a ‘real’ child or defendant.

A further limitation of the current research is that due to the low number of
participants indicating feeling sympathy or empathy for the defendant only, meant that
analyses could not be conducted to control for gender for hypothesis 7 (the relationship
between myth endorsement and with whom participants sympathised, empathised and
identified). The low number of participants indicating feeling sympathy, empathy and
similarity with the defendant only may be a questionnaire related issue, however these
questions were compiled based on previous research (Back & Lips, 1998; Deitz, Littman &
Bentley, 1984; Edson, Escalas & Stern, 2003; Smith & Frieze, 2003) as well empathy theory
(Davis, 1980). Further research wishing to understand the impact of sympathising,
empathising and identifying with a defendant only, would need to draw on a much higher
sample of participants. A further limitation of the sample size was that we could not analyse
all factors by complainant age while controlling for gender. A limitation of the material used
in the current study is that although there was information from the defendant included in the
vignette, it was not the same length as the information that was provided by the complainant.
Future research may wish to address this methodological issue. Furthermore, the term
‘appellant’ was used vignette to describe the complainant which participants may have
interpreted as thought the prosecution lost the case at trial and have appealed the decision. This
information could have coloured the responses of those who are knowledgeable about legal
terminology, therefore future research may wish to refer to the complainant as the “witness”
only. Finally, the current study did not address verdict as the aim of the study was to assess
the existing attitudes (which have been found to affect case outcomes) among a sample of the
Australian community, future research could address this issue perhaps using a mock trial
transcript and asking participants to give a verdict. The implications and recommendations
from the current study will be discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 8: Final Discussion

The current thesis sought to investigate and expand our knowledge related to perceptions that community members hold regarding child sexual abuse, and to understand the factors underlying gender differences in perceptions and judgements regarding CSA. The need for this research arose in the context of the conviction rate of alleged child sex offenders being the lowest of all crimes in Australia (Taylor, 2007 see Figure 2). As the Victorian Law Reform Commission (2004) concluded “Juries can be influenced by their own experience and attitudes and may rely on common myths about sexual assault during decision making” (p.xxxviii). This has led to organisations such as the Australian Institute of Criminology (as well as other researchers, professionals and commentators in the field of CSA) to call for research aimed at understanding the misconceptions that the Australian public holds, and the impact of these misconceptions on trial outcomes.

As outlined in Chapter 2, research has generally found that women tend to be more pro-victim than men in their perceptions and judgements regarding CSA victims but studies have neglected to address the reasons behind these perception differences. One of the aims of the current thesis was to try and address this. Based on the observations that previous studies which have employed shorter vignettes found more gender differences than studies which have employed longer and more detailed CSA vignettes, it was proposed that perhaps methodological factors could account for the gender differences in reported attitudes. Thus, Study 1 focused on methodological issues and the results indicated that men were more likely than women to infer information about a CSA case when they were presented with a short vignette but no significant gender differences in inferences were found when participants who responded to a long vignette. Study 2 then examined whether these inferences would impact on participants’ sympathy, empathy, similarity, perceptions of event seriousness, victim credibility and culpability. The results indicated that it was unlikely that inferences would
impact on the dependent variables because although there were significant differences in the attitude variables between those who responded to short and long vignettes, the differences were deemed not to be meaningful (small effect sizes). Although Study 2 indicated that these gender differences in inferences were not likely to have a strong impact on the attitude variables, the decision was made to carry out Study 3 with an adapted version of the long vignette with the inclusion of a statement from the defendant, to increase ecological validity.

The thesis then sought to address the question of whether gender differences in perceptions and judgements regarding CSA could be explained by dispositional empathy and myth endorsement. The results of Study 3 were consistent with those of previous research which has found gender differences in dispositional empathy (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006) as well as myth endorsement regarding child sexual abuse (Cossins et al., 2009). Women were found to have a significantly higher level of dispositional empathy on all four subscales of the IRI (Davis, 1980) and endorsed significantly fewer myths regarding child sexual abuse on all three subscales of the CSAMS (Collings, 1997). As expected, women (95%) were also significantly more likely than men (84%) to sympathise with the complainant, as well as empathise (77% vs 44% respectively), and identify (21% vs 3% respectively) with her. Contrary to expectations, men were no more likely than women to sympathise, empathise or feel a sense of similarity with the defendant. They were more likely than women to indicate not sympathizing, empathising or identifying with either party, which suggested that they felt less emotional connection with the characters. There were no significant gender differences in ability to relate to the defendant only, which was contrary to expectations. Interestingly, once gender was statistically controlled for, dispositional empathy was not found to be associated with complainant credibility, perceived sexual naivety or culpability.

The results of the current study were consistent with that of previous research which found gender differences in perceptions regarding CSA victims. Men (13%) were more likely
than women (5%) to ascribe some level of responsibility to the complainant and to rate her lower on credibility. However, no significant gender differences were found in perceptions the complainant’s sexual naivety nor in attributions or blame and guilt. The lack of gender differences in the culpability measures may be related to the fact that the current study included a statement from the defendant, which other attitudes studies have largely ignored (Olsen-Fulero & Fulero, 1997). One may argue that the inclusion of the defendant’s statement may have introduced some level of ambiguity into the decision making about whether participants believed the complainant or not. The results, however, indicate that despite some level of skepticism from both genders, both men and women were generally believing of the complainant. There was a significant gender difference in perceptions of credibility, however, an examination of the effect size, indicated that this gender difference was trivial with 8% of the variance in complainant credibility being explained by gender. Dispositional empathy could not explain the culpability results but myth endorsement could.

Endorsing myths regarding child sexual abuse was significantly associated with lower ratings of complainant credibility, lower attributions of sexual naivety, and higher ratings of complainant blame, responsibility, and guilt. These results were significant even after the effects of gender were controlled for, indicating that CSA myth endorsement is a strong predictor of case judgements and perceptions of CSA complainants, more strongly than empathy. They indicate that jurors’ perceptions of a victim’s truthfulness and believability may be negatively affected by their misconceptions about child sexual abuse. These results highlight the need for a change in the way in which child sexual abuse cases are trialed whether it be through juror education before a CSA case is presented, judicial warnings or through more drastic changes. Recommendations will be discussed in more detail later.

Finally, the current thesis also sought to address the gap in research regarding how complainant age affects attributions and perceptions of victims. A review of past research
indicated that as victims age, they are perceived to be less sexually naïve, less credible and thus more culpable for their abuse. Previous research has generally addressed children in middle childhood to late adolescence and neglected younger children therefore the current thesis sought to systematically address victim age by varying victim age from 5, 10 and 15 years. The results of the Study 3 found no significant differences in perceptions of those exposed to the 5 and 10 year old complainants, indicating that perhaps children under the age of 10 are perceived as equally credible, sexually naïve and culpable. Significant differences emerged between the 5 and 15 year old complainants as well as between the 10 and 15 year old complainants. The 5 and 10 year old complainant were perceived as being significantly more credible, sexually naïve and less guilty than the 15 year old complainant. These results indicate that somewhere between the ages of 10 and 15, as a child approaches adolescence, their credibility begins to decline and the level of guilt people are willing to ascribe to them, goes up. These results may then inform any legislative changes that need to be made in terms of educating jurors particularly about culpability and explaining to jurors that children under the age of 16 cannot give legal consent for sexual relations (with the exceptions outlined in Table 1).

8.1 Implications of the current findings and recommendations

For child sexual abuse conviction rates to improve and for CSA prevention efforts to be effective, it is important to understand the factors that affect juror decision making, namely the factors affecting perceived complainant credibility. Some of the factors that have been found to affect perceptions of the complainant credibility include juror gender, empathic concern, myth endorsement and complainant age. Myth endorsement and attitudes toward child sexual abuse may also influence perpetration along with psychological responses and reaction to disclosure (Ullman & Filipas, 2005). On a broad scale, educating the general
public can benefit prevention, reporting, intervention efforts and conviction of offenders (Cossins, 2006a,b).

The results of the current study also lend further support for the need to change the way in which child sexual abuse cases are trialled in the legal system. Because of the unique characteristic of CSA cases (lack of eyewitnesses, lack of forensic and other corroborative evidence, delayed reporting etc [Cossins, 2006 a,b; Yurchesyn et al., 1992]) sexual abuse cases rely heavily on witness testimonies, which makes these cases unique from other crimes. One recommendation would be to educate jurors (focusing particularly on men) either in the form of psychological expert testimony or judicial direction, about CSA and dispelling common myths that jurors may hold which then should enhance perceptions of victim credibility, and in turn, increase the conviction rates. This is particularly the case when juries are male dominated or when a jury is led by foreman. Expert witnesses may be useful in terms of overcoming males’ increased tendency to be unduly skeptical of children’s claims. Previous research by Goodman-Delahunty et al. (2011) addressing the timing of the presentation of expert evidence found that expert evidence had the greatest impact on jurors when it was presented before the child testified (rather than after). These finding indicate that when myth dispelling evidence is presented prior to a child testifying, then the jurors are less likely to rely on their myths and stereotypes regrading CSA and their decision-making capacities are improved. Therefore, based on the findings of Goodman-Delahunty et al. and the findings of the current thesis regarding the effect of myth acceptance on perceptions of complainant credibility, it is recommended that a substantive judicial direction summarizing scientific research findings regarding CSA (myth dispelling information) be delivered just before the child witness gives evidence, that is, at the time when jurors will be forming their credibility assessments.
A major limitation, however, of introducing reform measures in the form judicial warning or juror education in CSA cases, is that the Australian legal system has a history of not complying with these reforms (Eastwood & Patton, 2002). In their extensive review of the experiences of CSA complainants in the Australian criminal justice system as well as interviews with judiciary and defence personnel, Eastwood and Patton (2002) found that despite reforms to the way in which CSA cases are trialled (the way in which cross-examinations are conducted, for example) around Australia, these legislative changes have been minor and ineffective. For example, the review found that a number of prosecutors who were interviewed commented that some judges and magistrates frequently refused the use of screens and support persons even when the child was under the age of twelve (which the children had a right to under Section 21A of the *Evidence Act 1977* (Queensland)). Furthermore, one Queensland judiciary personnel commented that “Even when there are legislative changes, lawyers can take a couple of years to even know it’s around.” (pp 100). In addition, a quote from a Queensland defense attorney noted that judicial warnings that should no longer be used, are still being given: “It used to be the rule of practice that juries were warned that they had to be very careful and cautious in assessing the evidence of a child…A lot of judges still give that direction…” (pp.106). These quotes are just two of many from the Eastwood and Patton review, reflecting the issues surrounding the introduction of new reforms, like the ones proposed earlier.

The argument has been put forth by Eastwood and Patton (2002) that legislative changes, even of the form of judicial warnings which were proposed earlier, would fail and thus, the authors argue that “reforms must go beyond legislation and include a paradigm shift” (pp. 127). This suggestion has also been echoed by others such as Cossins (2006a,b), Convenor of the National Child Sexual Assault Reform Committee, whom have also suggested the need for a drastic change in the form of having a specialised approach to sex
offences in Australia. This would include the introduction of specialised prosecution teams, judicially managed lists, special Legal Aid grants, witness support staff, specialised court staff, and the establishment of a specialist court. Essentially, it would remove jurors from the prosecution of CSA cases and replace them with a specialised team of prosecutors, defence attorneys and judges who are required to undergo specialist training in relation to child development issues and the dynamics of sexual assault (Cossins, 2006a,b). Such an approach has been successful in other countries such as South Africa and Canada (comprehensive data that has been recorded over a 15 year period since it’s establishment), where the conviction rate offenders and sentencing lengths were found to be significantly higher (Cossins, 2006a,b). Briefly, in this system, Judges take on a more significant role compared to traditional adversarial proceedings. They identify the contentious facts and the judge determines the weight to be given to the evidence along with the manner in which it is presented. Judge alone trials would give the opportunity to overcome the prejudicial effects of juries such as jurors’ misconceptions, myths and emotional connection (or lack thereof) to a complainant and/or defendant and the impact of these prejudices on the outcomes of CSA cases. The results of the current study thus, lend further support to such a major reform.

8.2 Unique contribution of the current thesis to knowledge about CSA

The unique contributions of the current thesis include the research methodology focus of Studies 1 and 2 which sought to systematically address whether vignette length could potentially impact on what we currently know about the gender differences in perceptions and judgements regarding CSA. Previous researchers such as Collings and Bodill (2003) also addressed such methodological issues and called for others to also address these issue to ensure that as researchers, we are using valid tools to understand perceptions of CSA more clearly.
Further unique contributions of the current thesis include using materials (mock trial vignette) which not only includes evidence from the complainant, but also from the defendant. This is an aspect of CSA and sexual abuse attitude research which has been criticised as lacking (Olsen-Fulero & Fulero, 1997). Another unique aspect of the current thesis includes the assessment of dispositional empathy (IRI) together with situational empathy (With Whom Participants Sympathised, Empathised and Identified) in the area of child sexual abuse. Previous researchers (Bottoms, 1993; Insquith et al., 1993; Haegerich & Bottoms, 2000; Tennfjord, 2006) have found a relationship or stated that there may be a relationship between empathy and sexual abuse perceptions and have asked for further research to be conducted in this field. The current thesis aimed to address this gap in research.

Finally, the current thesis not only addressed a sample of an Australian community’s myths about child sexual abuse, but also assessed whether the endorsement of these myths affects perceptions and attributions of culpability towards a CSA complainant. Previous research by Cossins et al. (2009) addressed myth endorsement among an Australian sample, but did not assess whether these myth had a direct impact on perceptions of credibility and culpability. The current thesis supports the authors’ speculations or claims that there is a relationship between myth endorsement and attributions towards CSA.

8.3 Limitations of studies 1, 2 and 3

Aside from the already discussed limitations of each study in their respective chapters, there were limitations in the research design which were common to all three studies. Firstly, due to the anonymous nature of the studies, analyses could not be conducted to assess how many participants were recruited from each type of fora (of which there were over 30) and whether this could have impacted on the results. Secondly, although the three studies included comprehension checks which assessed whether participants had attended to and understood the content of the vignettes, they did not however, include an algorithm to
assess whether participants were taking too long or too little time to complete the studies. Future research may wish to address this issue.

8.4 Conclusions

In conclusion, the current thesis has found that: generally, women were more pro-complainant than men; dispositional empathy does not significantly impact on attributions towards a CSA complainant; adolescent complainants are seen in a more negative light than their younger counterparts; and child sexual abuse myth endorsement is strongly associated with perceptions of credibility, sexual naivety and attributions of culpability. The results of the current study lend further support for the need to educate jurors regarding child sexual abuse to dispel myths before they process a CSA case. Alternatively, the results of the current study also lend further support to the recommendations made by the National Child Sexual Assault Reform Committee (Cossins, 2006a,b) to remove jurors all together from sexual abuse cases and to trial these cases in specialised courts in an effort to reduce the biased way in which jurors process CSA cases.
References


www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Disability_Injury_Prevention_Rehabilitation_child.pdf


# Appendix A: International prevalence of childhood sexual abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Population of Inference</th>
<th>Data Gathering$^a$</th>
<th>Definition of CSA$^b$</th>
<th>Sample size$^c$</th>
<th>CSA Prevalence$^d$</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barthauer &amp; Leventhal (1999)</td>
<td>El Salvador: rural community</td>
<td>FTF</td>
<td>sexual activity: &lt;18 C, NC</td>
<td>- 83</td>
<td>- 17.00%</td>
<td>91.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collings (1997)</td>
<td>South African: students,</td>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>- 640</td>
<td>- 34.80</td>
<td>87.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fergusson et al. (1996)</td>
<td>New Zealand: birth cohort of 18 yr olds born in Christchurch.</td>
<td>FTF</td>
<td>sexual activity: no gender breakdown</td>
<td>1019</td>
<td>3.40% 17.30%</td>
<td>80.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filkenhor et al. (1990)</td>
<td>U.S: national survey Ages 18+</td>
<td>Tele</td>
<td>sexual activity: &lt;18 C, NC</td>
<td>1145 1481</td>
<td>16.00% 27.00%</td>
<td>76.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleming et al. (1999)</td>
<td>Australia: women with alcohol problems. Ages 18+</td>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>any sex, C, NC &lt;12. Unwanted sex 12-16 yrs C, NC</td>
<td>- 710</td>
<td>- 20.00%</td>
<td>65.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kercher &amp; McShane (1984)</td>
<td>Texas: Ages 18+</td>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>sexual activity: &lt;18 C, NC</td>
<td>461 593</td>
<td>3.00% 11.00%</td>
<td>53.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singh et al. (1996)</td>
<td>Malaysia: paramedical students 20 to 24 years</td>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>sexual activity: &lt;18 C, NC</td>
<td>141 471</td>
<td>2.10% 8.30%</td>
<td>95.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Fanslow et al. (2007)         | New Zealand: 18 to 64 years | FTF                | unwanted sexual activity unspecified <15 | - 2855         | 23.50% 66.90% | 28.20% Waikato
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Population of Inference</th>
<th>Data Gathering&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Definition of CSA&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Sample size&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>CSA Prevalence&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Briere &amp; Elliot (2003)</td>
<td>U.S: national sample</td>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>sexual activity &lt;18 (5+ yrs perpetrator)</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>14.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bendixen et al. (1994)</td>
<td>Norway: university students 16 to 58 years</td>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>sexual activity &lt;18, C, NC</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen, Dunne &amp; Han (2004)</td>
<td>China: high school students 16 to 24 years</td>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>sexual activity &lt;16, C, NC</td>
<td>1145</td>
<td>1155</td>
<td>10.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schein et al. (2000)</td>
<td>Israel: patients visiting family doctor. 18 to 55 years</td>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>sexual activity, C, NC age not specified (5+ yrs perpetrator)</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>16.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russel (1988)</td>
<td>San Francisco: USA Random sample, 18+ years</td>
<td>FTF</td>
<td>extrafamilial: sexual activity &lt;14, C rape only 14 to 17 years. Intrafamilial: any sexual Contact &lt;18 years, C, NC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson et al. (1993)</td>
<td>New Zealand: random selection 18 to 65 years</td>
<td>SAQ &amp; FTF</td>
<td>unwanted sexual activity &lt;16 years, C, NC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgarth &amp; Ormstad (2000)</td>
<td>Sweden: students, 17 years</td>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>unwanted sexual activity &lt;16 years C, NC</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>1129</td>
<td>3.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> FTF = face-to-face interview; SAQ = self-administered questionnaires; Tele = telephone survey.  
<sup>b</sup> Definition of CSA given in the study followed by age qualifying as 'child', other conditions given in brackets, C = contact sexual activity, NC = noncontact sexual activity.  
<sup>c</sup> Includes the actual number of respondents used in data analyses.  
<sup>d</sup> Based on the actual number of respondents who participated.
Appendix B: Ethics Approval
Human Ethics Research

Office of Research
Integrity Research Services Division
70 Elgar Road Burwood
Victoria Postal: 221 Burwood Highway
Burwood Victoria 3125 Australia
Telephone 03 9251 7123 Facsimile 03 9244 6581 research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

Memorandum
To: Dr Bianca Klettke
School of Psychology

cc: Andrea Bennet

From: Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DU-HREC) 19 November, 2009

Date: HREC 19 November, 2009

Subject: 2009-157

An investigation of differences in vignette designs

Please quote this project number in all future communications.

The application for this project was considered at the DU-HREC meeting held on 26/10/2009. Approval has been given for Andrea Bennet, under the supervision of Dr Bianca Klettke, School of Psychology, to undertake this project from 19/11/2009 to 19/11/2012.

The approval given by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee is given only for the project and for the period as stated in the approval. It is your responsibility to contact the Human Research Ethics Unit immediately should any of the following occur:

- Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
- Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time.
- Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project.
- The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
- Modifications are requested by other HREC’s.

In addition, you will be required to report on the progress of your project at least once every year and at the conclusion of the project. Failure to report as required will result in suspension of your approval to proceed with the project.

DU-HREC may need to audit this project as part of the requirements for monitoring set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
Appendix C: Plain language statement Study 1

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Participants

Plain Language Statement

Date: 20/09/09

Full Project Title: The effect of memory in participants regarding child sexual assault vignettes

Principal Researcher: Dr Bianca Klettke
Student Researcher: Andrea Bennet

This Plain Language Statement and Consent Form is three pages long. Please make sure you have all the pages.

1. Your Consent

You are invited to take part in this research project.

This Plain Language Statement contains detailed information about the research project. Its purpose is to explain to you as openly and clearly as possible all the procedures involved in this project so that you can make a fully informed decision whether you are going to participate.

Please read this Plain Language Statement carefully. Feel free to ask questions about any information in the document. You may also wish to discuss the project with a relative or friend or your local health worker. Feel free to do this.

Once you understand what the project is about and if you agree to take part in it, you may continue with the survey. Please note that participation in an online survey implies that you indicate that you understand the information and that you give your consent to participate in the research project.

You are encouraged to print a copy of the Plain Language Statement to keep as a record.

2. Purpose and Background

My name is Andrea Bennet and I am a PhD student conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr Bianca Klettke at Deakin University, Australia. The purpose of this project is to assess lay peoples’ memory when reading an account of child sexual abuse.

A total of 100 people will participate in this project.

The majority of research into attitudes about child sexual assault have been conducted using vignettes (short descriptions of a scenario) yet no studies thus far, have been conducted that evaluate how people perceive these vignettes. The current study is a pilot study that will evaluate peoples’ memories for different types of information. The results from the current pilot study will then be used in the design of a future study which will evaluate peoples’ attitudes towards child sexual assault.
You are invited to participate in this research project because you are over the age of 18 years and are an Australian citizen (jury eligible). Therefore, we seek your views and perceptions via an online survey. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to read a fictional account of child sexual abuse and then you will be asked to recall as much information as you can.

The results of this research will be used to help the student researcher, Andrea Bennetto obtain a Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) degree.

3. Funding
This research is funded by Deakin University

4. Procedures
Participation in this project will involve reading a short account of a child sexual abuse scenario and they you will be asked to recall as much information as you can by typing what you remember. Participation in this study should take approximately 15 minutes of your time.

Data will be monitored by the data administrator.

5. Possible Benefits
You will hopefully gain awareness about the issue of CSA and insights into your own attitudes. However, We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this project.

6. Possible Risks
The research poses a minimal risk. Participation is entirely voluntary and you can cease to participate at any point with no disadvantage to you. Furthermore, the material presented will be adapted from previous research. The vignette that you will be asked to read will include a description of an abuse scenario between a child and her father which may be distressing. If you do find that you feel distressed due to the content of the study, please call the Centre for Sexual Assault (CASA) on (03) 9635 3610 or 1800 806 292. CASA is a 24-hr telephone counselling service staffed with experienced and trained counsellors. As stated above, Participation is entirely voluntary and you can cease to participate at any point with no disadvantage to you.

There may be additional unforeseen or unknown risks.

7. Privacy, Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information
You will not be asked to provide potentially identifiable information therefore your participation in this study is entirely confidential. Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) will be used to secure online data collection and transmission of information. Any information obtained in connection with this project will be stored as a computer file on the student's computer which is password protected. The information will be stored for 6 years after which time the data will be destroyed, as per University policy.

If you give us your permission by selecting ‘Continue’ at the end of the Consent Form, we plan to publish the results via a chosen journal and potentially present the findings at relevant conferences.

8. Results of Project
You have the option of receiving a brief report of the results at the completion of the research. Please contact Andrea Bennet with your request

9. Participation is Voluntary
Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Because you will not be asked to provide and identifiable information, it will not possible to withdraw your data.
Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with Deakin University.

Before you make your decision, a member of the research team will be available to answer any questions you have about the research project. You can ask for any information you want. Indicate your consent (after reading the Consent Form) only after you have had a chance to ask your questions and have received satisfactory answers.

10. Ethical Guidelines
This project will be carried out according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

The ethics aspects of this research project have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Deakin University.

11. Complaints
If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:
The Manager, Office of Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, Facsimile: 9244 6581; research-ethics@deakin.edu.au.

Please quote project number EC 2009-157.

12. Reimbursement for your costs
You will not be paid for your participation in this project.

13. Further Information, Queries or Any Problems
If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project (for example, any side effects), you can contact the principal researcher or the student researcher.

The researchers responsible for this project are:
Dr Bianca Klettke (Principal Researcher)  Andrea Bennet (Student Researcher)
School of Psychology  School of psychology
221 Burwood Hwy  1 Geringhap Street
Burwood, VIC 3125  Geelong, VIC, 3217
Tel: 03 92446774  Tel: 03 52278419
e: biancak@deakin.edu.au  e: abali@deakin.edu.au
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Participant

Plain Language Statement

Date: 04/09/09

Full Project Title: An investigation of community attitudes towards child sexual abuse

Principal Researcher: Dr Bianca Klettke

Student Researcher: Andrea Bennet

Associate Researcher(s):

This Plain Language Statement and Consent Form is three pages long. Please make sure you have all the pages.

14. Your Consent

You are invited to take part in this research project.

This Plain Language Statement contains detailed information about the research project. Its purpose is to explain to you as openly and clearly as possible all the procedures involved in this project so that you can make a fully informed decision whether you are going to participate.

Please read this Plain Language Statement carefully. Feel free to ask questions about any information in the document. You may also wish to discuss the project with a relative or friend or your local health worker. Feel free to do this.

Once you understand what the project is about and if you agree to take part in it, you may continue with the survey. Please note that participation in an online survey implies that you indicate that you understand the information and that you give your consent to participate in the research project.

You are encouraged to print a copy of the Plain Language Statement to keep as a record.

15. Purpose and Background

My name is Andrea Bennet and I am a PhD student conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr Bianca Klettke at Deakin University, Australia. The purpose of this project is to find out how the Australian public perceives child sexual assault. This study will investigate how people ascribe blame, responsibility, culpability and victim credibility in child sexual abuse cases. Consequently, Australians are eligible for jury duty, therefore the perceptions of the general public equate to the perceptions of potential jurors.

A total of 400 people will participate in this project.
Child sexual assault is a prevalent crime in Australia and worldwide, yet prosecution rates remain low. In most instances of child sexual assault, there is a lack of physical evidence therefore the most significant factor in a trial are the jurors’ perceptions of the child-witness. Previous research shows that attitudes towards children's credibility, memory, suggestibility, consent, responsibility and blame have been viewed differently. It is therefore important to understand how jurors’ make decisions in based on the child’s testimony.

You are invited to participate in this research project because you are over the age of 18 years and are an Australian citizen (jury eligible). Therefore, we seek your views and perceptions via an online survey. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire and then to read a fictional account of child sexual abuse. You will then be asked respond to questions that will address your attitudes and perceptions based on the fictional account.

The results of this research will be used to help the student researcher, Andrea Bennetto obtain a Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) degree.

16. Funding
This research is funded by Deakin University.

17. Procedures
Participation in this project will involve filling out an online survey. Participants will be asked to read a vignette which will be a summary of a child sexual assault scenario, and then to respond to a questionnaire. The survey should take you approximately 20-30 minutes to fill out.

Data will be monitored by the data administrator.

18. Possible Benefits
Participants will hopefully gain awareness about the issue of CSA and insights into their own attitudes. However, we cannot guarantee or promise that anyone will receive any benefits from this project.

19. Possible Risks
The research poses a minimal risk. Participation is entirely voluntary and you can cease to participate at any point with no disadvantage to you. Furthermore, the material presented will be adapted from previous research. The vignette that you will be asked to read will include a description of an abuse scenario between a child and her father which may be distressing. If you do find that you feel distressed due to the content of the study, please call the Centre for Sexual Assault (CASA) on (03) 9635 3610 or 1800 806 292. CASA is a 24-hr telephone counselling service staffed with experienced and trained counsellors. As stated above, Participation is entirely voluntary and you can cease to participate at any point with no disadvantage to you.

20. Privacy, Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information
You will not be asked to provide potentially identifiable information therefore your participation in this study is entirely confidential. Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) will be used to secure online data collection and transmission of information. Any information obtained in connection with this project will be stored as a computer file on the student's computer which is password protected. The information will be stored for 6 years after which time the data will be destroyed, as per University policy.

If you give us your permission by continuing with the survey, we plan to publish the results via a chosen journal, potentially present the findings at relevant conferences and the results will form a part of the student researcher’s thesis.
21. Results of Project
You have the option of receiving a brief report of the results at the completion of the research. Please contact Andrea Bennet with your request.

22. Participation is Voluntary
Participation in any research project is voluntary. **If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to.** If you decide to take part and change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Because participants will not be asked to provide and identifiable information, it will not possible to withdraw data.

Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with Deakin University.

23. Ethical Guidelines
This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

The ethics aspects of this research project have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Deakin University.

24. Complaints
If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:
The Manager, Office of Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, Facsimile: 9244 6581; research-ethics@deakin.edu.au.

Please quote project number EC 2009-157.

25. Reimbursement for your costs
You will not be paid for your participation in this project.

26. Further Information, Queries or Any Problems
If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project (for example, any side effects), you can contact the principal researcher or the student researcher.

The researchers responsible for this project are:
Dr Bianca Klettke (Principal Researcher)   Andrea Bennet (Student Researcher)
School of Psychology   School of Psychology
221 Burwood Hwy   1 Geringhap Street
Burwood, VIC 3125   Geelong, VIC, 3217
Tel: 03 92446774   Tel: 03 52278419
e: biancak@deakin.edu.au   e: abali@deakin.edu.au
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Participant

Date: 15/03/11

Full Project Title: An investigation of community attitudes towards child sexual abuse

Principal Researcher: Dr Bianca Klettke

Student Researcher: Andrea Bennet

Associate Researcher(s):

This Plain Language Statement and Consent Form is three pages long. Please make sure you have all the pages.

27. Your Consent
You are invited to take part in this research project.

This Plain Language Statement contains detailed information about the research project. Its purpose is to explain to you as openly and clearly as possible all the procedures involved in this project so that you can make a fully informed decision whether you are going to participate.

Please read this Plain Language Statement carefully. Feel free to ask questions about any information in the document. You may also wish to discuss the project with a relative or friend or your local health worker. Feel free to do this.

Once you understand what the project is about and if you agree to take part in it, you may continue with the survey. Please note that participation in an online survey implies that you indicate that you understand the information and that you give your consent to participate in the research project.

You are encouraged to print a copy of the Plain Language Statement to keep as a record.

28. Purpose and Background
My name is Andrea Bennet and I am a PhD student conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr Bianca Klettke at Deakin University, Australia. The purpose of this project is to find out how the Australian public perceives child sexual assault. This study will investigate how people ascribe blame, responsibility, culpability and victim credibility in child sexual abuse cases. Consequently, Australians are eligible for jury duty, therefore the perceptions of the general public equate to the perceptions of potential jurors.

A total of 200 people will participate in this project.
Child sexual assault is a prevalent crime in Australia and worldwide, yet prosecution rates remain low. In most instances of child sexual assault, there is a lack of physical evidence therefore the most significant factor in a trial are the jurors’ perceptions of the child-witness. Previous research shows that attitudes towards children’s credibility, memory, suggestibility, consent, responsibility and blame have been viewed differently. It is therefore important to understand how jurors’ make decisions in based on the child’s testimony.

You are invited to participate in this research project because you are over the age of **18 years and are an Australian citizen (jury eligible)**. Therefore, we seek your views and perceptions via an online survey. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire and then to read a fictional court case summary of child sexual abuse. You will then be asked respond to questions that will address your attitudes and perceptions based on the fictional account.

The results of this research will be used to help the student researcher, Andrea Bennetto obtain a Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) degree.

29. **Funding**

This research is funded by Deakin University.

30. **Procedures**

Participation in this project will involve filling out an online survey. Participants will be asked to read a vignette which will be a summary of a child sexual assault scenario, and then to respond to a questionnaire. The survey should take you approximately 20-30 minutes to fill out.

Data will be monitored by the data administrator.

31. **Possible Benefits**

Participants will hopefully gain awareness about the issue of CSA and insights into their own attitudes. However, we cannot guarantee or promise that anyone will receive any benefits from this project.

32. **Possible Risks**

The research poses a minimal risk. Participation is entirely voluntary and you can cease to participate at any point with no disadvantage to you. Furthermore, the material presented will be adapted from previous research. The vignette that you will be asked to read will include a description of an abuse scenario between a child and her father which may be distressing. If you do find that you feel distressed due to the content of the study, please call the Centre for Sexual Assault (CASA) on (03) 9635 3610 or 1800 806 292. CASA is a 24-hr telephone counselling service staffed with experienced and trained counsellors. As stated above, Participation is entirely voluntary and you can cease to participate at any point with no disadvantage to you.

33. **Privacy, Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information**

You will not be asked to provide potentially identifiable information therefore your participation in this study is entirely confidential. Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) will be used to secure online data collection and transmission of information. Any information obtained in connection with this project will be stored as a computer file on the student's computer which is password protected. The information will be stored for 6 years after which time the data will be destroyed, as per University policy.

If you give us your permission by continuing with the survey, we plan to publish the results via a chosen journal, potentially present the findings at relevant conferences and the results will form a part of the student researcher’s thesis.
34. **Results of Project**
You have the option of receiving a brief report of the results at the completion of the research. Please contact Andrea Bennet with your request.

35. **Participation is Voluntary**
Participation in any research project is voluntary. **If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to.** If you decide to take part and change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Because participants will not be asked to provide and identifiable information, it will not possible to withdraw data.

Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with Deakin University.

36. **Ethical Guidelines**
This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

The ethics aspects of this research project have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Deakin University.

37. **Complaints**
If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:
The Manager, Office of Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, Facsimile: 9244 6581; research-ethics@deakin.edu.au.

Please quote project number EC 2009-157.

38. **Reimbursement for your costs**
You will not be paid for your participation in this project.

39. **Further Information, Queries or Any Problems**
If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project (for example, any side effects), you can contact the principal researcher or the student researcher.

The researchers responsible for this project are:
Dr Bianca Klettke (Principal Researcher)   Andrea Bennet (Student Researcher)

School of Psychology          School of psychology
221 Burwood Hwy                1 Geringhap Street
Burwood, VIC 3125             Geelong, VIC, 3217
Tel: 03 92446774              Tel: 03 52278419
e: biancak@deakin.edu.au      e: abali@deakin.edu.au